It’s said that a picture is worth a thousand words, but that was before someone thought to write those words some ten thousand feet above the earth, over a ten-mile-wide expanse of clear blue sky.

Think of it. You’re walking down a city street or relaxing on a sandy beach. Overhead you catch sight of a plane carefully releasing smoke in a clearly deliberate pattern, and you watch—no, you can’t help yourself—as a message is formed. And when the message is complete, you read it and get it, and it sticks with you just as well as any jingle or slogan—even better, if you can appreciate the uniqueness of the medium.

That is the effectiveness of skywriting, even in a sophisticated age of telecommunications and computers. Skywriting grabs, entertains, and promotes with plenty of smoke but with no mirrors.

Skywriting is as basic, clear, and honest as it gets.

Skywriting Facts

Definition:
Skywriting is an aviation technique created by vaporizing fluid in the plane’s exhaust system while the pilot maneuvers the plane to form letters in the sky.

Dimensions:
Each letter is about one mile long and two miles above you.

The average Pepsi message is written across a ten-mile-wide expanse of sky.

Visibility:
On a clear day, each letter can be seen from the ground for up to thirty miles in any direction. That’s 2,826 square miles for each message written. As the wind drifts the sky-written words, even more people are able to see them.

Altitude:
Skywriting is typically done between 7,000 and 14,000 feet. Air temperature drops 3.5 degrees for every 1,000 feet of altitude, so on warm days, skywriting must be done at higher altitudes.

Weather:
Ideal conditions are clear, blue skies with a high level of humidity.

Execution:
Each Pepsi takes about ten minutes of carefully choreographed flying that includes seventeen different, precisely timed turns and fourteen different bursts of skywriting fluid.

Skywriting Fluid:
An EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) approved, paraffinic-based fluid that is vaporized in the 1,200-degree heat of the exhaust of the aircraft’s engine.
Skywriters: Drug Ads on the Fly

When the Wicked Witch of the West wanted to relay a message to the Dorothy from Kansas, she didn’t take to the airways but to the air. She mounted her broom and wrote “Dorothy would see it and get the message no matter where she was!”

A Measly Full-Scale Skywriting

It was Dorothy, of course, not the Wicked Witch, who was the focal point of this imaginative and novel idea. Skywriting, as it is often called, is the art of writing messages in the skies with smoke from an airplane against a clear blue sky.

Smoke Connections

Skywriting is a piece of writing with words emblazoned from an airplane against a clear blue sky. In 1921, a British air-force major used an open-cockpit bi-plane and the sky—got its start during World War I, when a British air-force major used an open-cockpit bi-plane and the sky as his canvas.

The First National Ad

The first national ad was introduced on May 1, 1922. Jack Strayer, a former air-force major, used the open-cockpit bi-plane to spell out the message “Drinking Coke is healthful” over Epson Downs during the Horse Show. By the end of the year, Coca-Cola had commissioned more than two thousand skywriting advertisements.

Skywriting is invented by Royal Air Force Major John Clifford Savage, who happened to be.

Beechcraft fame, Clyde Cessna of Cessna fame.

The Famous Skywriter

Skywriting began to blossom with large audiences, saw the communication concept skywriting and turned to the heavens for a more effective alternative to radio advertising.

The Pepsi Skywriter

Pepsi’s first ad appeared above New York City on May 1, 1922 with the simple plug: “Drink Pepsi-Cola.”

The Geo Long Run

Though Pepsi wasn’t the first to use skywriting or advertising, it became one of the foremost pioneers and, for the better part of twenty years, utilized this imaginative resource as no other company did to promote its name across the sky.

In for the Long Run

In 1972, an art form was resurrected in a modern world, and new generations began to be treated to a flying back in time as corporate advertising was more primitive but no less effective.

For the next twenty-seven years, the Pepsi Skywriter was used North America, delighting audiences everywhere with a nostalgic look back on a simpler time when creativity and cleverness captured people’s imaginations and helped catalyze a company to announce that God had written the product’s name across the sky.

The Pepsi Skywriter

To the late sixties through the mid-1970s. Pepsi contributed or owned fourteen airplanes, and a company commissioned more than two thousand skywriting advertisements.

Back in the Air

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