

# FORMAT

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1975 SILVER MEDAL  
AWARD WINNER  
**GORDON MALEN**

# GORDON MALEN: SILVER MEDAL AWARD MAN FOR '75

By **BUNNIE CASSELL**

"Everyone talks about something called 'the Corporate Image'. It's my feeling that every company has a triple image: what the advertising says the firm is like . . . what the company is, in fact, like . . . and what the public currently thinks it is like. When the firm is as good as the ads say — and the public agrees — then you're doing a good job."

The stocky, smiling, grey-haired man ought to know. He's spent the past 29 years nurturing the image of First National Bank of Minneapolis, watching its deposits grow from \$407 million to \$1.3 billion. ("I'm uncertain whether that's because of, or in spite of, my efforts . . . anyhow, First Minneapolis is now the 67th largest bank in America.")

If his employers would seem certain he's doing a good job, so would his peers. Gordon M. Malen has just been selected winner of the Advertising Club of Minnesota's 1975 Silver Medal Award. ("I'm delighted — but how in Heaven's name did they choose me, over some of the others?")

Gordy's present title is Assistant Vice President and Director of Public Relations. That's impressive, but only partially revealing. What he's really been, all these years, is a shirt-sleeve, pipe-smoking, typewriter-pounding advertising/public relations man. How the desk-plate reads doesn't matter a lot to Malen, so long as he makes certain everything said about First Minneapolis projects the proper image.

"Many people ask, 'Can you really see Advertising and Public Relations as being compatible?' . . . well, I certainly do. Both are strong arms of the marketing function. Both have a decided effect upon sales — and combined, they establish the corporate identity. I've always had one hand in Advertising, and the other in Public Relations; I love that double involvement."

To Gordon Malen, involvement means active participation, in and out of the office. He's been an Ad Club member since 1950, serving as Secretary/Treasurer from 1952 to 1956, when at the death of Tres Goetting, he became Ad Club President. After that, he be-

came A.A.F. Eighth District Governor. Malen was the man who rewrote the Ad Club's by-laws in 1953; they're basically still with us. Later, he wrote the constitution for the A.A.F. Eighth District. (He was also, in 1954, the first Ad Club director to propose membership for women. That one took a bit longer, but you see what happened.)

"There are so many people who've helped me so much, along the way — and no practical means to return those favors. So the best way I can repay is to work with, and help others . . . particularly the young people."

This he has done, in great abundance. Malen was six years a lecturer on Advertising at Northwestern University's School of Financial Public Relations. From 1969 to 1972, he served locally on the Bankers Area-Wide Advertising Program. Just recently, he's been Advertising/Marketing Instructor at the Minnesota Bankers School at St. Olaf College.

"I often tell students Advertising is really just a sophisticated form of door-to-door selling. You knock on the door,



the owner opens it a crack, and you have about 10 seconds to say something meaningful before it slams in your face. That 10-second message is your headline. If you score with it, the door opens another crack, and you get about 40 seconds to speak your piece. That's the body copy of your ad. . . . Now, naturally, if you're neat and well-dressed—in other words, the product of a good art director—that door opens a lot faster."

Gordy has also been extremely active in both Public Relations and Promotion. He was a National Director of the Financial Public Relations (now, Bank Marketing) Association, and Twin Cities Area President in 1950-51. He has been P.R. Chairman of the Minnesota Bankers Association, 1972 P.R. Chairman for the Kiwanis Club, P.R. Chairman for Minnesota Grand Lodge, A.F. & A.M., since 1972, P.R. Chairman for the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District since 1973, and a member of the P.R. Committees of the American Red Cross and the United Way. Malen has likewise been 1962 Finance Chairman for the Minnesota

Press Club, Minnesota Promotion Chairman for the U.S. Savings Bond Division, and Minneapolis Chairman for the Macalester Challenge Fund. He has served actively on the Minneapolis Downtown Council's Promotion Committee since its 1956 inception, and the Promotion Committee of the Greater Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce, which gave him its Distinguished Service Award in 1972.

—Think that's enough for one raspy-voiced, ever-cheerful joiner? Not for Gordy! He has also been a Director of the Minneapolis Aquatennial Association (recipient of its 1965 "Director of the Year" award), a Director of the Figure Skating Club of Minneapolis, and the Macalester Alumni Association. He is Secretary/Treasurer of the Minnesota Chapter of the Society of Former Special Agents for the FBI (more about that shortly), and national President of the William Wood College (Fulton, Mo.) Parents Association in 1968-69. He's a member of Lynnhurst Lodge, A.F. & A.M., the Minneapolis Consistory of the Scottish Rite, Zuhrah Temple of the Shrine,

Mount Olivet Lutheran Church—and all other organizations named above.

When Malen isn't at a meeting, he's most often at a typewriter—daytimes, night-times, weekends.

"Well-meaning friends claim I make a mistake in taking my work home so often. But I like writing with fewer interruptions. Especially when the assignment is something I know I'll truly enjoy . . . then I really savor it, that way!"

Writing is his vocation, avocation, and favorite preoccupation. Lois Malen learned long ago to accept the tap-tap of the downstairs typewriter as quiet companionship. ("I've simply become a lover of night baseball, a TV addict, a seamstress and knitter," she sighs philosophically. "Oh, I used to get awfully mad, every time he turned down a good job offer elsewhere! But how many other women have husbands who get up every morning happy to go to work because they love the job so much?") While he can't honestly recall a day he didn't look forward to work, Gordy admits there have been



some—just a very few—when he afterward wished he hadn't gone.

Originally a newspaperman, Malen now finds greater challenge in writing ad copy, as opposed to news releases. But it's a close decision. When he isn't composing for First Minneapolis, or one of those countless extracurricular committees, he's writing magazine articles. Just recently, "Small World" (the Volkswagen magazine) ran his feature on that White Bear couple who had their beloved old "bug" cubed for a coffee table.

Born across the river, Gordy knew before graduation from St. Paul Central that he'd have to be a journalist. He edited the student newspapers and yearbooks at Central, and at Macalester College, where his majors were journalism, political science, and paleontology. ("That last?—It interested me; I'm always curious.") He received his B.A. in 1936, right on the haunches of the Great Depression.

"In my Macalester graduating class there were just two guys who had jobs waiting, and I wasn't either of them. That final afternoon, I plodded home to the parental front porch, opened the newspaper to the classified section, and saw a blind ad: 'Young man wanted, to learn the Advertising business'. So I applied, and became an advertising trainee at First National Bank of St. Paul . . . earning \$75 a month, and worth nearly every nickel of it!"

In 1938 Malen moved on to the St. Paul Dispatch/Pioneer Press, as reporter, feature writer, and aviation editor. He was Assistant City Editor at the outbreak of World War Two. Like most recent college grads, he began trying to arrange a military officer's commission. But fate had another type of governmental job in mind.

"One of my duties for the Dispatch was the Federal run. I was in and out of the St. Paul FBI office every day, becoming fairly friendly with its men. When they suggested I might qualify as a Special Agent, I jumped at it!"

For four years, Malen was an FBI man—first in Baltimore and Miami, then in New York City. In Manhattan, he began writing news releases as well as investigative reports. That led to assignment at Washington, D.C., where he and one other agent wrote all of the FBI press releases, and Malen became an Administrative Assistant to the late J. Edgar Hoover.

In 1946, he returned to the Twin Cities, and a post at First National Bank of Minneapolis, as assistant to the late Ben S. Woodworth. ("I owe so much, to so awfully many. First, of course, to my father, William H. Malen, a railroad man. Next, my FBI Chief Lov Nicols and T. Glenn Harrison, first City Editor of the St. Paul Pioneer Press. And lastly, my First Minneapolis predecessor, Ben Wood-

worth. There have been many, many treasured friendships, but none topped these four.")

In those days, the Bank's advertising budget was around \$45,000; now, it's well over a million. The scope of each ad has increased in relation to the scope of the budget.

"When I started, bank ads were often smaller than those of local shoe stores! Now, the size of bank ads better bespeaks the institution's role in the community. . . . Looking back, I have difficulty in picking out one campaign over another. There wasn't any time for horn-blowing; by the time one campaign was ready for appearance, I was well into the next project."

Some of First Minneapolis' "firsts", of course, stand out in sharp relief. Malen was the first Twin Cities bank ad manager to recommend sponsorship of a TV program. This was First's "Crusade in Europe", which premiered in April, 1950 on Channel 4 (then, WTCN-TV). It touched off a progression of First Minneapolis TV shows, such as "Dollars and Sense" on KSTP-TV in 1951, hosted by a bright young chap named Randy Merriman. Then there was "Foreign Intrigue" on Channel 5, and KSTP-TV's "Hawf Past Eight", with popular St. Paul Dispatch cartoonist P. J. Hoffstrom. First National also sponsored the first commercial TV colorcast originating in this area. It was WCCO-TV's "Country Holiday", presented December 29, 1954, when the entire Twin Cities contained some 275 color TV sets.

Running squarish fingers through his sparse grey hair, Gordy glows in growing reminiscence.

"Around 1956, we tore down the old structures at 6th Street and 2nd Avenue South, in anticipation of major construction. First Minneapolis declared the clearing a civic area, and dubbed it 'Centennial Plaza' . . . remember the skating, and the music? We televised several 'live' outdoor skating shows, produced by Kenn Barry. Usually, these came on Christmas Night. Lyman Wakefield, then a V.P. here, was a figure skating enthusiast, and so was I."

"First Bank Notes", the popular longtime WCCO Radio show, premiered May 3, 1954, slipping neatly into the 7:30-8:00 a.m. slot formerly occupied by "Dayton's Musical Chimes". When Dayton's advertising manager Maurice McCaffrey departed to set up his own agency, he came around with tantalizing whispers. The department store just might cancel its morning program . . . would First Minneapolis like to step in?

"It was all very hush-hush. Ward Olmsted, Sr., Lyman Wakefield and I met on a Sunday afternoon, to hash out the whole idea in Lyman's kitchen. We had First's order in before anyone else in town knew the time was available! . . .

Well, grateful as we were to Maury, we weren't about to drop Olmsted & Foley. But we did retain McCaffrey as a Special Consultant for awhile . . . it seemed only fair . . . and he was a great help."

The procession of principals on that morning broadcast read like pages from a sentimental album, now. Joyce Lamont retained her post throughout, but she had six popular partners: the late Ed Viehman, the late Gordon Eaton, Jack Huston, Bob DeHaven, Ray Scott, and finally, Dick Chapman. Today, of course, time purchases have become too costly for full half-hour sponsorship. But First Minneapolis still has two five-minute news segments between 7:30 and 8 a.m.

Gordy grins from sideburn to sideburn when anybody brings up film production; movies, too, figured high among his varied projects. While with the FBI, there were 20th Century Fox's "House on 92nd Street", and RKO's "Ramparts We Watch". Since then, with First Minneapolis, there were three films on the Minnesota Twins, the great "Minnesota: Star of the North" produced in conjunction with the Bank's 1957 Centennial (seen by over 2,500,000 and still drawing requests), and a new film story of the University of Minnesota sports, which Malen currently has in production. But his widest smiles follow queries about the May, 1960 grand opening of that fabulous 27-story First National Bank Building, harbinger of all later major Downtown Minneapolis construction.

"Remember how we clocked that giant fireworks display, shot off the Bank roof? . . . We got Honeywell to construct a huge gyroscopic stellar clock, with a near plastic 40 ft. dome, on the First Bank Plaza. The clock tracked the star, Alpha Ursa Major, 600 trillion miles out in space. At exactly the right moment, the circuit was closed by passage of the star's rays, which triggered the fireworks. . . . Now, by my calculation, that actual glimmer left Alpha Ursa Major in the year 1857, when the First National Bank of Minneapolis originally opened for business. The light gleam arrived here in 1960, just in time for the new Bank opening—a press agent's dream!"

In the corner of Malen's comfortable Marketing Services office (517 Marquette), a giant shovel stands against the wall. It's engraved with the date of January 24, 1958, the First Minneapolis groundbreaking. Place of honor on his desk belongs to carefully-mounted marine fossils, 400 to 500 million years old, traced back to the Ordovician Sea period—and found in bedrock under the corner of 5th Street and 2nd Avenue South, during the excavation.

"During the construction period, we received such a constant stream of favor-

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**MALEN (Continued)**

able print-and-air publicity, we could actually realize a modest reduction in First's regular advertising schedule. . . . This, of course, merely conserved funds toward that all-out Grand Opening in 1960! Over 50,000 people toured the new building in a single weekend."

Maybe Malen's major thrill was finding his photo, along with that of the late President Dwight D. Eisenhower, on the cover of LIFE Magazine. That was taken during Ike's visit to the First National Bank Plaza. But as Gordy says, you look back and find it has all been fun.

"Advertising is a very peripatetic business. While most of my peers have enjoyed performing their specialties for a number of different companies during our years around town, I've found equal satisfaction in doing many things for just one. I love writing . . . love making rough layouts . . . and love administrative duties, too."



He has a healthy respect for good commercial art, perhaps born of his own penchant for drawing and daubing. ("I was part of that flourishing Girard Art Club, fondly remembered by many Ad Clubbers, but finally admitted my talents were pretty minor. Realization came when I'd put my soul into a painting, only to hear the instructor comment mine was an interesting 'primitive' style!")

But Gordy's highest admiration goes to the advertising agencies who have served as "right hands" during his 29 years at First Minneapolis. The first of them, Olmsted & Foley, were followed in 1961 by BBD&O, and then in 1969 by Stevenson & Associates. ("Our account executive, Eugene LaVaque is invaluable; we couldn't enjoy a finer Agency relationship.")

It was Ward Olmsted, Sr. and John Foley who stood by in 1953, as Malen became ("for better, or for worse") the first Twin Cities bank ad manager to introduce premiums. The initial incentives were wallets. First Minneapo-

lis followed, through the years, with many others — umbrellas, coffee mugs, shrubs and greenery, larger premium promotions like that which brought the late Bennett Cerf to town with his Dictionary, and Lowell Thomas' visit during the World Atlas giveaway. None of these, Gordy claims, has produced the sustained interest of First's present "Authentic English Stoneware" program.

"So often, services and pricing, as well as personal competence and friendliness, vary little from one bank to another. Premiums provide an effective point of difference . . . but these can be overdone, and should never run consistently. A premium promotion is best used as a merchandise peak-up, like a sale at a department store. . . . A successful premium program is almost like a 13th month on the calendar, in terms of results. Contrary to the critics, people opening accounts this way usually continue to deposit as regularly as others, with one exception; those who open accounts with the minimum required deposit show slightly higher attrition. But overall, our results have been very good —and it has been lots of fun."

Everything has been fun for Gordon Malen, who makes enthusiasm his key to the full life. His grey/green eyes light, when you bring up his other chief love: the family. Lois and Gordy have two grown-and-married children, and two grandtots. These are Krissie and Brett, offspring of Jane and Barry Yantis, St. Joseph, Missouri. Peter Malen, now with General Mills' subsidiary, Parker Brothers at Salem, Massachusetts, captained the Macalester Swimming Team just like old Dad. ("Peter has done just fine. . . . People used to say, 'You must be Gordon Malen's son'. Now they meet me and ask, 'Are you by any chance related to Peter Malen'?"

Soon retirement will be creeping closer. ("Would you believe it's only three more years?") Gordy rather hopes it will open up more adventures. He'll probably concentrate on writing magazine articles ("unless I locate a job as a greenskeeper; I like gardens almost as well as typewriters") but he's receptive to new ideas —and just slightly haunted, by one pervasive memory.

"I was just a kid in high school, enamored with journalism, when I took out a certain library book. The author had been a newspaperman, then a private-eye, and then press agent for a big bank. Since then, I've become a newspaperman, FBI agent, and P.R. Director for the Bank. But darned if I can recall the book's last chapter! . . . Oh well, it'll be great to just wait and see."

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- #1 Adults 18-24
- #1 Adults 18-34
- #2 Listeners 12-24

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