

## The Ineffable Hathaway Shirts Of David Ogilvy



**The man in the Hathaway shirt**

AMERICAN MEN are beginning to realize that it is ridiculous to buy good suits and then spoil the effect by wearing an ordinary, mass-produced shirt. Hence the growing popularity of HATHAWAY shirts, which are in a class by themselves. HATHAWAY shirts were infinitely long ago—a matter of years. They make you look younger and more distinguished, because of the subtle way HATHAWAY cut them. The whole shirt is tailored more precisely, and is therefore more comfortable. The tails are longer, and stay in your trousers. The buttons are unadorned—plain. Even the stitching has an unobtrusive elegance about it.

Above all, HATHAWAY make their shirts of remarkable fabrics, selected from the four corners of the earth—Worlles, and Jerny, from England; various lints from Scotland; sea island cotton from the West Indies; hand-woven muslin from India; broadcloth from Manchester; fine linens from Paris; best Madras silk from England; exclusive cotton from the best weavers in America. You will get a great deal of quiet satisfaction out of wearing shirts which are in such impeccable taste.

HATHAWAY shirts are made by a small company of dedicated craftsmen in the little town of Waterville, Maine. They have been so in men and boy, for one hundred and twenty years.

At better stores everywhere, or write C. F. HATHAWAY, Waterville, Maine, for the name of your nearest store. In New York, telephone OX 1-5366. Prices from \$1.95 to \$18.00.

David Ogilvy presents clothes and eye patches.

### Describing the Indescribable

What is the definition of the word *ineffable*?

Jim O’Gara, associate editor of **Advertising Age**, posed this question to **David Ogilvy** in response to his popular **Hathaway** shirt ads. Buried in the copy of a 1953 ad was a description of the material. The linen was “ineffably male.” O’Gara had no idea what the word meant so he asked around the office. After interviewing 22 staffers, an industrial reporter was able to define it as, “incapable of being expressed in words.” Curious, O’Gara contacted the head of public relations at **Hewitt, Ogilvy, Benson & Mather** to

further investigate. After several unsatisfactory answers from the staff, Ogilvy was questioned and caught off guard.

“I think it means ‘supremely,’” he said, “... but I think it’s a dreadful phrase, and I wish I hadn’t used it.”

### **Borrowing From The Bible**

Later that day Ogilvy called O’Gara back with a much more satisfying answer. He admitted nipping the word from a hymn based on **Psalm 104**. Though not cited, there is a passage that references clothing: “Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment: who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain.”

Ogilvy later said, “I am pretty sure it came from the Bible or a hymn ... practically everything I’ve stolen came from one or the other.”

The lesson? Confusion can be avoided by using everyday words. As was the case with O’Gara, you don’t want a word or poor phrasing to overshadow the product you are selling.

In his 1983 book [\*Ogilvy on Advertising\*](#), Ogilvy described his method for dealing with copywriters that insist on using flowery words they read in a Keats poem. “When copywriters argue with me about some esoteric word they want to use, I say to them, ‘Get on a bus. Go to Iowa. Stay on a farm for a week and talk to the farmer. Come back to New York by train and talk to your fellow passengers in the day-coach. If you still want to use the word, go ahead.’”

### **And About That Eye Patch...**

Ogilvy’s agency was only a couple years old when it began work for the Maine clothing manufacturer. A story approach was employed to generate an air of sophistication for the product.

Art director Vincent DeGiacomo selected model **George Wrangell** because of his distinguished look and Ogilvy’s insistence that he look like a writer and have a mustache. On the way to the shoot, Ogilvy bought an **eye patch**. He had a weird obsession with eye patches that began at 10 years of age (he had a stylish teacher that rocked one). Two versions of the ad were shot: a plain version and an eye patch version. Ogilvy explained to the client that the eye patch would attract the curiosity of readers.

The ad debuted in the September 22, 1951 issue of the *New Yorker*. For four years they only appeared in the magazine (high end magazine = high end product). Annual sales tripled.

And magazines like *Ad Age* and *Newsweek* wrote articles on it.

*“The Unspeakable Ad,” Newsweek, March 9, 1953.*