
"The biggest get-rich-quick operation in America in three decades"

COUSIN DUD'S HADACOL

MAYNARD STITT

IT TAKES JUST one strange word to name the biggest get-rich-quick operation America has witnessed in the last three decades. It is, as you may have guessed, "Hadacol," seven letters which now appear on millions of bottles of a dark brown, evil-tasting fluid that a grimacing, gulping, leering America is rapidly making the most profitable substance ever to appear in the bonanza-ridden world of over-the-counter drugs and medicines. Behind the meteoric success of Hadacol is just one man, a jumping, chortling, black-haired bundle of energy, Dudley (Koo-zan Dud) Joseph LeBlanc. Of average height and weight and ruddy complexion, LeBlanc wears rimless glasses, lives mostly on crayfish, Old Forrester bourbon, and personally prepared vitamin pills. At 56 he has the demonic energy and absolute confidence of a commercial Alexander hungering for new trade-worlds to conquer.

Born in barefoot, poverty-ridden

Cajun country, LeBlanc, now a Louisiana State Senator with an even chance to end up in the shoes once filled by the equally dynamic Huey Long, sits behind a mammoth desk in his Lafayette headquarters and pinches himself as he cheerfully contemplates the pinnacle to which fate and an inherent aptitude for selling things has raised him. During the fiscal year 1951, LeBlanc expects to gross from \$75,000,000 to \$100,000,000 from the sale of Hadacol or more than six times the amount Sterling Drug will gross from the next best-selling, over-the-counter drug, Bayer's aspirin. Million-dollar receipt days are so common for Hadacol now that the goggle-eyed staff no longer even bother to record them. It has taken exactly three years for LeBlanc to reach the stage where he can toss around millions in a business started with \$4,000 that LeBlanc wheedled from a friendly small-town bank president. And it all began with a pain in LeBlanc's toe.

The pain struck the LeBlanc talon in 1947 and started to grow almost as rapidly as Hadacol. "It jumped to the other foot" LeBlanc reminisces, "and I went to see a doctor. He said I had the gout and gave me his treatment. I got worse and figured I should see another doctor. The next one said I had the arthur-itis and he treated me. I didn't get no better and I said to him maybe I should see somebody else. I didn't tell this one about the other two doctors and he told me I had the beri-beri. And I got worse.

"So I went to a hospital in New Orleans. I was there sixty days and the specialists kept on examining me and holding conferences. The pain was awful. From my feet it climbed into my legs and up into my arms and shoulders. And nothing was doing me any good.

"Then the missus came over to see me. When she was leaving the room I heard her say to the nurse: 'He is really sick. I never saw Dudley look so bad. I just don't know if I'll ever see him alive again.'

"That worried me. Heh, Heh," chortles LeBlanc.

LeBlanc decided to take matters into his own hands, and had himself transported out of the hospital on a cot. At the exit, a doctor friend who didn't know he had been ill stopped to chat with the groaning future tycoon on his litter. LeBlanc managed to describe his symptoms and scoffed weakly at the doctor's in-

sistence that he could cure the ailment.

"But I let him try anyway, heh, heh," says LeBlanc. "He gave me shots and I began to feel much better. In two days I was able to use my hands. Inside of a week I could shave and it wasn't long before I could walk with crutches. But I just couldn't find out what it was the Doc was shooting into me. He wouldn't talk and he would hide the bottle so I couldn't see the label. 'Dudley,' he says to me, 'you are in the patent medicine business and I'm not letting you know what this is.' He was smart. Heh, heh.

"Pretty soon I got to where I could come to the office. One day he was busy and he told the nurse to give me my shots. She wasn't so smart as him. Nor as careful either. She left the bottle on the table. When she finished I gave her that old Southern Chivalry, you know, 'after you, Gertrude.' As soon as she turned her back I shoved the bottle in my pocket. Heh, heh."

LeBlanc subjected the label to a close scrutiny and discovered that the miracle cure contained vitamins B-1, 2 and 6. Only at this stage in his career, he didn't know the difference between a vitamin and a juniper berry. He went to a friend who had a bookstore and obtained a book on vitamins. He took it back to his hotel, read it the same night, returned early the next morning and took away nine more books.

While LeBlanc was in the hospital, his business, the Happy Day Company, makers of Happy Day headache powder (LeBlanc began marketing this product during the recession when he figured that people probably needed a headache remedy as badly as he did) had gone to smash but his lack of an organization didn't stop Cousin Dudley. He started working on a preparation containing vitamin B complex. When he obtained a satisfying compound, he set up a factory in a barn, mixing the stuff in a barrel with the help of six girls. He sent out generous samples to the ailing people he knew. When rhapsodic replies and fervent demands for more began bulging his mail, Dudley knew he had something. A genius for salesmanship, a gift for financial manoeuvres, and the peculiarities of current taxation all combined to set off a merchandising explosion that has stunned every Madison Avenue advertising and promotion expert. Hadacol is a synonym for Hiroshima to our high-powered sales strategists and nobody knows yet what the consequences will be.

THERE WERE AUGURIES of the Hadacol boom in LeBlanc's early career, episodes which didn't make the headlines but showed him to be a promising rookie. LeBlanc was born on a farm in patois-speaking "Cajun" country and only began to learn English when he went

to school. Education-hungry, LeBlanc wanted something better than a knowledge of the three r's but found himself short of money, a condition that was to prove recurrent. He wasn't stopped for long even then. Never exactly bashful, he went to the President of Southwestern Louisiana Institute at Lafayette and asked for a job waiting on tables. The quota of waiters was filled and he was offered a job as a dishwasher. He took it but a current girl friend thought dishwashing undignified. He quit and surveyed the opportunities about him.

Near where he lived, LeBlanc noticed that the local tailor displayed a sign offering to press suits for thirty cents. He thought he could make a profit by slicing a nickel off the price. A nearby window offered irons at \$3.25. LeBlanc had 90 cents in his jeans. He strolled in and calmly asked the shopkeeper if he would take 70 cents as down payment. LeBlanc is a hard man to turn down. The man said yes and he was in the pressing business. He expanded quickly, ringing in members of his extensive family, as is his custom. He finally left a flourishing tailor shop to his four brothers and, at the age of eighteen, soon after he was graduated, he got a job selling tobacco. "I tacked up Bull Durham signs and called on druggists and any other place that could sell tobacco," he relates. "All the time I kept telling Mr. Hill if he

would only give me more signs I would sell more tobacco.”

American Tobacco's loss was the drug world's gain. After a World War I stint at Camp Hancock, Georgia, LeBlanc shot back into Cajun country like a guided missile, successfully hawking shoes, tobacco and patent medicine. While traveling about, LeBlanc launched a burial insurance company, key to many a new-fledged Southern fortune. It made enough money and attracted enough attention to get him elected to the State Legislature. In 1932 he had the temerity to run for Governor against Kingfish Long's personally selected candidate, O.K. Allen. LeBlanc rooters insist to this day that he won at the polls and the Long acolytes swiped the election in machine-controlled New Orleans voting districts. The defeat was a double blow to LeBlanc. Huey's legislature promptly passed a measure that put his insurance company out of business.

LeBlanc sold the assets of his company to a group of Houston businessmen for \$320,000. It was still a sizeable sum to an erstwhile Cajun farm boy who likes to enjoy himself, and LeBlanc decided to retire. Fortune never lets its favorites alone, however. Lolling in Florida with his family, LeBlanc neglected to stay in touch with his banker and broker. When communications were re-established he was informed that he had been sold out and was right

back where he started from—broke. Heaving a few quick sighs, he bounced right back to sell the public what he figured it needed as badly as he did—the aforementioned headache remedy.

LeBlanc's experience in sliding out of tight corners and operating on a frayed shoestring, stood him in good stead when he began marketing Hadacol. All he had at first was the preparation and a few orders. There were two banks in town and he walked into both and used all the arguments in his varied arsenal to pry \$4,000 loose from them. He was refused. Therefore, when he went to see a friend of his who was president of a bank in New Iberia, La., he stunned him with a request for \$25,000.

“He sat back and just looked at me for a spell,” LeBlanc relates. ‘Dudley,’ he says, ‘I can't let you have \$25,000, the Board would throw me out on my ear.’ Well, I asked him what they would do if he let me have \$20,000. ‘The same thing,’ he says. Well, I knew they wouldn't because they had found a lot of oil on his land and he owned the bank. I finally let him down easy for a loan of only \$4,000. It was all I wanted in the first place, heh, heh!”

With the quick decisiveness and financial *sang-froid* that marks his enterprises, LeBlanc promptly shot \$2,500 of his hard-loaned capital into radio, billboard and newspaper

advertising. He and his brother then hit the sales trail as quickly as they could get packed. They returned from the first week's campaign with \$5,217 worth of orders. The second week they came back loaded with another \$11,000 worth. As usual there was a hitch in the proceedings. They didn't have that much stock or the cash with which to pay for the ingredients. LeBlanc returned to the jobbers who had given him the orders. In return for payment in advance, he proposed to give them a 10 per cent addition to their regular 16 $\frac{2}{3}$ per cent discount. The jobbers agreed and Hadacol started to roll. Total sales in 1947 were just under \$40,000; in 1948, \$200,000, in '49, \$2,400,000, and in 1950 sales shot up to the awe-inspiring total of \$24,000,000.

What happened?

LEBLANC, it seems, had run into the problem that snarls up nearly every growing, profit-making business these days — taxes. Only LeBlanc didn't spend his nights juggling figures or his days cursing the government. He cut the Gordian knot with a single, impatient stroke and plunged his company into a daffy and apparently limitless paper prosperity. After selling two million dollars worth of Hadacol in 1949, he paused in October of that year to take stock and consult his accountant. He was informed that he would have to pay \$100,000 in

taxes on his 1949 take. "What is my net profit for 1949?" he asked "\$300,000," he was told. LeBlanc reached for his telephone and got hold of his advertising agency in Houston.

The LeBlanc mind had simply put two and two together and come up with an inevitable four. Since he didn't have anything resembling the money with which to pay the taxes, the only thing to do was wipe out his profit. And the quickest way to wipe it out was to spend it legally — on advertising.

When the agency executive caught his drift, a series of strangled, hysteric noises came over the wire. "Dudley," he screamed, "you can't do this. You're crazy! Nobody ever spent that much money. You'll break me! You'll break yourself! How much you got in your account — a hundred dollars! And I'm only a little agency. Besides we can't buy that much advertising space in a week!"

"I just kept on talking," says LeBlanc, "and pretty soon I persuaded him to come on over to the office. I took a shot of whiskey and gave him one. We talked. I began to feel richer and took another one. So did he. We talked some more. Pretty soon he felt rich too. We finally spent all that money between Christmas and New Year's eve when every other advertiser was taking a rest. Some of the newspapers objected to the time, but we

stuck to our plan. It paid off. In the first six weeks of 1950, we received as many orders as we got in all of '49."

The landslide had begun. Since then, the state of Louisiana, the patent medicine business, the advertising world, the medicinal, chemical and retail drug businesses have been quaking, with no end to the tremors likely in the immediate future. Expert merchandisers of proprietary medicines, lured from the big Eastern companies by LeBlanc, say that in the last two years they believed that Hadacol had "peaked" at least six times. But the sales curve keeps passing peak after peak in every one of the 32 states in which it is actively promoted. By now, they have stopped estimating the Hadacol potential and devote themselves to preparing and "propelling" the LeBlanc elixir.

Until LeBlanc levels off his monster promotion campaign it is impossible to guess just what the Hadacol maximum is. And as long as the tax-collector stands at his elbow ready to take a big chunk out of any profits made by the family-held LeBlanc corporation it looks like Cousin Dud will go on following a policy of pumping out the money as fast as it comes in. The financial picture of Hadacol continues to shift rapidly. This is LeBlanc's account of the results of his 1950 operations: "We got orders for \$24,000,000 worth of Hadacol

and shipped \$20,000,000 worth. That meant about \$5,000,000 for me. What have I got? I paid some taxes. I bought a million dollars worth of trucks. I've got \$2,500,000 in inventory, \$2,000,000 in accounts receivable and \$162 in the bank."

The size, speed and off-the-cuff tactics of Hadacol promotions would curl the hair of any orthodox advertising manager. In April of this year, for example, LeBlanc publicists began preparing announcements informing the public that in May for the first time Hadacol would spend a million dollars in a single month. About the beginning of May, they discovered that they had already spent more than a million in the month of April.

These think-as-you-go Hadacol campaigns have been greeted with hoots and snorts by the experts who have yet to answer one overwhelming argument: they sell Hadacol at an atomic clip.

These days, the advertisements and testimonials are relatively mild. Since a rough joust with the Federal Trade Commission, LeBlanc never makes claims that Hadacol will cure any disease. The label modestly calls it "a dietary supplement" and the testimonials set forth how much better people feel after taking a few helpings. According to some people, the Hadacol lift is due to the fact that it contains 12 per cent alcohol. LeBlanc argues that with wine as

cheap as it is, it is unlikely that anybody would pay Hadacol prices for its alcoholic effect. "Besides," he explains, reaching for the Old Forrester bottle, "it tastes so bad, I don't see how anybody could drink enough to get high on it."

What no one has been able to estimate is the sales impact of the sexy stories that circulate about Hadacol. The organization denies that nine gag writers are kept locked in a padded cell to turn them out and the Senator doesn't even keep a file of them. He does enjoy them well enough to retell them with droll gusto. A favorite is the one about the gaunt, haggard man who describes his loss of appetite and well-being to a doctor and pensively opines that "It might have started with Hadacol." "Of course, that's the trouble," rejoins the M.D. "That stuff is no damn good. Stop taking it immediately!"

"It ain't me that's taking it," the patient explains. "It's my wife!"

LeBlanc gets a big kick out of the testimonial of one woman who wrote that she had formerly been troubled by insomnia. If her husband snored or jerked the covers she promptly woke up and never got back to sleep again. If one of the children sleeping with her cried out or coughed, she did not close her eyes again until dawn. "I'm cured," she wrote to LeBlanc. "After taking ten bottles of Hadacol, I can now sleep with almost anybody."

Seldom at a loss, LeBlanc was left speechless when the most dignified of old ladies congratulated him after a lengthy speech in New Orleans. She capped her effusive praise by leaning forward and whispering in his ear, "The reason I love to hear you talk, Mr. LeBlanc, is that I just *love* dirty stories."

THE REAL SECRET of this mammoth success story is simply the sales-crazy genius of LeBlanc. Working at a furious clip, bolstered by an afternoon nap and a 9:30 P.M. bedtime, fortified through the day by nips of Old Forrester and doses of his private red pills ("they contain E-5, good for the reproductive organ"), LeBlanc wears out a succession of aides and associates in any working day. He begins at six A.M. and on an average day spends most of his time summoning executives, bouncing in and out of offices, seeing a large share of the average 60 callers a day and often deciding which of his executives should see the rest. The management group, which LeBlanc is constantly taking along on his trips, keeps up with him as best it can. Working at an insane, unrehearsed and unpredictable pace, they get more work done in a day than a well-organized, formal, appointment-by-schedule outfit does in a week.

Well-paid by New York, or any other, standards, as the length of "Cadillac Row" outside the build-

ing testifies, LeBlanc's executives are expected to eat, breathe and sleep "Hadacol propelling." When Dudley is away on a trip, no one is prepared to say just how many employees the company has; LeBlanc hires likely talent throughout the land on the spot.

The roster includes somewhere between 950 and 1,000 employees, including the office and plant force at Lafayette, the 120 salesmen and the drivers of the 167 mammoth Hadacol trucks, which pull away to their 50,000-mile-a-year routes on headways that would make a New York subway dispatcher gasp. The trucks serve as moving billboards: drivers are instructed to sleep only at night, and they also bring back to the plant materials unobtainable in Louisiana. Trim Louisiana lasses in white nylon smocks on which two-inch letters spell Hadacol, are constantly occupied dumping the bags of incoming mail into huge cartons, sorting and routing letters. Although little Hadacol goes through the Lafayette post office, incoming and outgoing Hadacol mail keeps eight to ten postal clerks busy at all times. Since Hadacol burgeoned, one postmaster has died and the present one has had a nervous breakdown, from which he recovered, friends assert, by taking Hadacol.

Every weekday at 3:30 P.M., Senator LeBlanc rouses himself from his siesta and jumps back behind his desk for another two and a half fast

and furious hours. Then he gets behind the wheel of his Cadillac hard-top convertible to drive 16 miles through flat rice fields to his home in Abbeville, La., zipping past the buggies of the Cajun farmers who jog along the wide shoulders of the paved highway. At home he dines, *en famille*, with the attractive, motherly, Mrs. LeBlanc, an ex-school teacher whom he spotted on a railroad station some forty years ago and married after a four-year courtship. Usually dining with them are their two youngest children, 16-year-old Bertha Ann who plans to be a ballet dancer, and 12-year-old Morgan, whom Dudley calls *Ca-boose* — "he was the last one."

During the rest of 1951 New Orleans will probably see much of the Senator. Though he has not yet officially thrown his hat into the ring, the office of the "Businessmen for LeBlanc for Governor" association will probably serve as his campaign headquarters. The phenomenon of a medicine man shooting for the chair once occupied by Kingfish Long is not strange, in the South, particularly when you consider the fact that LeBlanc is President Pro Tempore of the State Senate and has been a power in Louisiana politics for twenty-five years. He suffered something of an eclipse after his ill-fated gubernatorial campaign in 1932 but has since gained constantly in strength and prestige.

Strongly behind LeBlanc at the

moment are numbers of anxiety-ridden Louisiana businessmen who realize that action is needed to remedy the situation created by the routing of U. S. defense contracts to Texas. Truman, you see, still remembers the Dixiecrat rebellion. No regular party support, no handouts, is still the Washington line. As a result, Louisiana is being slowly drained of skilled labor, thereby dimming its prospects for future industrial developments. Governor Long's efforts to entice new private enterprise to the state have thus far failed to impress anybody. LeBlanc's worshippers say he has brought twice as much industry to the state as all other efforts combined.

Nobody mentions the fact that if the Hadacol promotion machine is harnessed to a political campaign, unprecedented results may take place. But nobody forgets it, either. Every ad for Hadacol, every billboard, every truck and sales speech might be hurled into the fray. And no one knows what Roman candle tactics and pinwheel promotions might rocket out of the home of the Hadacol wizards. Opponents have already charged that in back country parishes the ballot will read "Hadacol for Governor" and that every bottle will include a ballot. About the only thing that can be safely anticipated in the campaign is the unexpected.

LeBlanc himself says that since he is 56, if he is ever going to run,

it will have to be now. Election day takes place in January, 1952. Once the contest is over, win or lose, some order may come to the House of Hadacol.

At one time, Cousin Dud told members of his family that he would be satisfied when sales hit a thousand dollars a day. With sales sometimes hitting a million a day, no new goal has been fixed. LeBlanc has his private estimate of where Hadacol sales would "hold" if he ever decided to "go normal," but he keeps it to himself. In all probability he will continue to plough back his profits until election day is past.

ONE OF THE outstanding, short-term, money-makers in American history, LeBlanc has learned that he lives in a period in which fortunes don't belong to the fortunemakers. The time will come when it will no longer be fun for even a sales-happy wizard to see just how much he can get people to buy. When that day arrives, D. J. LeBlanc will become a wealthy, crayfish-and-bourbon loving Louisiana citizen managing a respectable company that once "propelled a meritorious product" to the summit of merchandising. Unless, of course, LeBlanc decides to sell the whole shebang for a thumping multi-million dollar sum of which the government will magnanimously allow him to keep 75 per cent. These days, it pays to retire.

IN
THE
MERCURY'S
OPINION



***Our Korean Defeat
Will Be Historic***

SOME FUTURE GIBBON, reflecting on the decline of the United States of America, may write:

"The Eighth of July, 1951, was a pivotal date in the history of the

great republic. Up to that date, for one hundred seventy-five years, America had known grandeur and victory. In all its wars the nation had forced its enemies — the enemies of mankind — to sue for peace. A white flag had never been substituted for the Stars-and-Stripes. The American people had always demanded victory: as late as 1945 they had taken pride when Hitler's emissaries surrendered to Eisenhower; they had evidenced satisfaction when a little man in a top hat scaled the steel side of the battleship *Missouri* to surrender to MacArthur.

"Yet, in a scant six years after 1945, so vitiated had been the nation by Communist propaganda, and so inept had its leadership become, that the republic was willing to accept its first defeat. After an expenditure of twenty thousand lives and twenty billion dollars, after