

Where's the Beef? It's Licensed

By Reg P. Wydeven
September 17, 2011

My junior year of high school, we had a school trip to New York City. It was a great time, as we got to see 'Cats,' the Statue of Liberty and Niagara Falls. While walking the streets of the city, however, I was stopped on three separate occasions by tweenage girls asking for my autograph. The boy band New Kids on the Block was in town for a concert, and apparently I had a resemblance to Joey McIntyre, one of the members of the group.

As a young man trying to be a tough guy, I was offended to be confused with a pretty boy off the cover of Tiger Beat magazine. McIntyre, along with brothers Jordan and Jonathan Knight, Danny Wood and Donnie Wahlberg hammed it up on stage singing bubblegum pop music while dancing choreographed routines.

Meanwhile, the following year Donnie's brother, Mark Wahlberg and his band Marky Mark and the Funky Bunch, scored a huge hit with their song 'Good Vibrations.' Marky Mark was known as a beefcake and for prancing around onstage shirtless in his Calvin Klein underwear.

Twenty years later, the Wahlberg brothers have sold almost a combined 100 million albums and have starred in countless movies. Their next project: burgers. You might say that Donnie, the ham, and Mark, the beefcake, are on a roll.

The duo, along with their brother, Paul, plan on opening Wahlburgers Restaurant in their hometown of Boston. The main attraction at the Wahlbergs' eatery will, of course, be the Wahlburger. Before serving their first patty, however, the brothers had to obtain the licensing rights to use the name 'Wahlburger' from Tom Wahl's restaurant in Avon, New York. The chain of eight restaurants was started by brothers Tom and Bill Wahl in 1955.

The Wahls own the federal trademark rights to the name 'Wahlburger,' but agreed to license it to the Wahlbergs for an undisclosed amount. A license involves one party granting permission to another party to use licensed material, such as copyrighted works or a name. This isn't the first time a celebrity licensed their name to a hamburger, however.

During the Green Bay Packers' Super Bowl run in the mid-1990s, its defense was anchored by 6'2" 350-pound noseguard Gilbert Brown. In addition to devouring running backs, Brown was also known for his mass consumption of burgers. He would purportedly visit a Green Bay Burger King restaurant every night after practice and order a double whopper with cheese. Eventually, the chain named a hamburger after him: the Gilbert Burger.

Burger King used Brown's name to market the Gilbert Burger throughout Northeast Wisconsin. The burger consisted of a double whopper with double cheese, double lettuce, double tomato, double mayo, double onion, double ketchup and, according to the manager of a Green Bay Burger King, "no pickle because Gilbert doesn't like pickles."

Last year the Pack won the Super Bowl by defeating the Pittsburgh Steelers, led by quarterback Ben Roethlisberger. With a name like that, you just knew he would get a patty named after him.

Peppi's Old Tyme Sandwich Shops, a chain of popular restaurants in Pittsburgh, features a beef, sausage and egg sandwich donned the 'Roethlisburger.' Big Ben lent his name to the restaurant after he led the Steelers to the 2004 AFC championship game. The next year, after he became the youngest quarterback to win a Super Bowl, the Roethlisburger, which costs \$7 – after his jersey number – was being sold like hotcakes.

While I learned many things in law school, I was never able to determine whether Supreme Court Chief Justice Warren Burger had ever licensed his name for a sandwich. If he did, I bet it was a Court-er pounder.

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