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WLBZ Radio, (April 06 1957) "Interview with Joe Culligan of NBC on the Concept of Imagery Transfer". *WLBZ Radio Station Records*. MS 608. Tape 19, part 2. Special Collections, Raymond H. Fogler Library, University of Maine.

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Transcript of a sound recording in MS 608, WLBZ Radio Station Records, Bangor, Maine, 1931-1973

Title: Imagery Transfer Interview

Date: April 6, 1957

Recording number: Tape 19, part 2

Length of recording: 5:00

[Transcript begins]

ANNOUNCER: Now, let's hear more about this theory we were telling you about from a man who spent much time and thought developing it and applying it to radio entertainment and advertising, Mr. Joe Culligan at the microphone. Don, if you will.

DON RUSSELL: Imagery transfer, a new phrase in the vocabulary of a lot of people, and with me in Radio Central, the principal proponent of imagery transfer, Mr. Joe Culligan, Vice President in charge of the entire NBC Radio Network. Joe, I have some questions for you. What is imagery transfer?

MATTHEW J. CULLIGAN: Imagery transfer is a deceptively simple name for a human phenomenon, which is that words and sounds, even though they be a very small fragment of an initial experience, have the wonderful ability to trigger out of the deepest recesses of the memory a recall of that experience. And it doesn't really seem to matter how long ago the experience happened, because most of the competent people now seem to agree that the human memory never forgets anything that it has once accepted.

RUSSELL: This is sort of psychic phenomena, or something?

CULLIGAN: Uh, yes, it's actually a part of the general science of human perception. I mean why people perceive things and then why people, of course, remember things, or why people will have things triggered from their memories to the top of the mind. It's a part of the general human science, I would say.

RUSSELL: It's very interesting. Can you demonstrate some of this for us?

CULLIGAN: Well, I could certainly demonstrate the point fairly simply, but rather than to give you 15 or 20 minutes of [studied evasion?] about what it is, why don't you just let me play for you a couple of the sounds of the not so recent past and then you examine your own reactions to them.

RUSSELL: All right.

[Four sound clips follow. First, the sound of a train whistle. Second, a voice saying, "Old soldiers never die, they just fade away. Third, a voice singing, "Some of These Days." Fourth, a voice saying, "The hand that held the dagger has struck it into the back of its neighbor."]

RUSSELL: Well, Joe, there's no mistaking those sounds. The first one was a train, the second one was General MacArthur, the third Sophie Tucker, and the fourth President Roosevelt. And just sitting here thinking about imagery transfer, the one that conjures up the biggest picture in my mind is seeing General McArthur standing before the joint session of Congress giving that beautiful farewell speech of his, and I remember the day vividly, almost, and I remember the reaction to his speech and you could just, I could just see him standing there.

CULLIGAN: Yes, well, Don, it's proved time and time again that a few sounds can actually cause a person to reconstruct a whole day in their life and one of the really curious things is the fact that there seems to be a lot of evidence that the smaller the portion of the initial experience the more total the recall, simply because of something the scientists call closure.

RUSSELL: How does that work?

CULLIGAN: Well again by demonstration just let me give you a little illustration for example if I went.

[Knocking, 5 times]

RUSSELL: I just want to... [Knocks two more times] complete it! I'd have to.

CULLIGAN: That is exactly right because the human mind is a fairly orderly thing and whenever you hear a part of a whole, that is not completed, there is immediately set up a sense of frustration and that you unconsciously complete this particular experience. And it's a wonderfully effective thing in advertising. There's another point about it, too, and that is that the human mind will actually correct a mistake involuntarily. Let me illustrate that. If I were to say to you right now, "Four score and eight years ago..."

RUSSELL: Oh, I'd have to say you were wrong, it's seven years ago.

CULLIGAN: Well, that is right, and then and you can see this application to advertising, of course.

RUSSELL: It certainly is an attention-getter. It seems to me that, and I guess the Monitor staff is correct, because I want to tell you that they're already preparing a new radio game based on imagery transfer.

CULLIGAN: Well, I couldn't be more pleased. I think that this gives us an opportunity in the programming field to tap a great resource of nostalgia, great memories, great experiences of the past, which people can really relive if we help them through imagery transfer and I'm delighted to hear about your attempts in this in this area.

RUSSELL: Well, thank you, Joe, for being with us today and explaining imagery transfer to us.

CULLIGAN: Fine. Nice to be here.

[Transcript ends]

For more information about this transcript, audio recording, or other materials in Special Collections at the University of Maine, contact:

Fogler Special Collections

5729 Raymond H. Fogler Library

Orono, ME 04469-5729

207.581.1686

[um.library.spc @ maine.edu](mailto:um.library.spc@maine.edu)