

'Nobody asked me to'

But ad executive has own plan to sell Richmond

BY BOB RAYNER
TIMES-DISPATCH STAFF WRITER

Doug Burford loves Richmond. And every now and then, the veteran adman feels the urge to shout it out.

This year, the impulse grew into a full-blown advertising campaign —with logo, tagline, media partner, TV commercials and local celebrities, living and dead. There's even a theme song.

One thing's missing: a client to foot the bill. The ads are indeed a labor of love. They've cost Burford \$40,000 so far. Profit potential seems negligible.

But profit's not the point, Burford will tell you.

Three 60-second ads started running earlier this month on WTVR TV-6, which has joined Burford Co. Advertising in promoting the local campaign.

The ads feature things and people that are unmistakably Richmond — Patrick Henry and Doug Wilder, mounted police and urban river rapids, NASCAR races and Fan District sidewalks.

The scenes are backed by a gospel-tinged tune Burford wrote with Donna Meade Dean, singer and wife of

sausage impresario Jimmy Dean. She and local singer Carlton Blount handle the lead vocals.

The campaign theme: "Richmond is the place to be." "I sort of had this vision," Burford said. "What if you turned the million people who surround this area into ambassadors, walking testimonials?"

"We want to tell people why Richmond is the place to be, so they can tell other people when they go out and meet them."

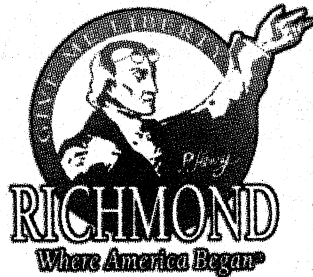
Burford is developing a 260-question quiz to help local folks appreciate Richmond's strengths and history. He hopes it's used in schools and local media.

Channel 6 has been an eager partner in the effort. "When Doug Burford presented the idea to me, I thought it was perfect in terms of the pride people have in Richmond," said Mark Pimentel, WTVR's vice president and general manager.

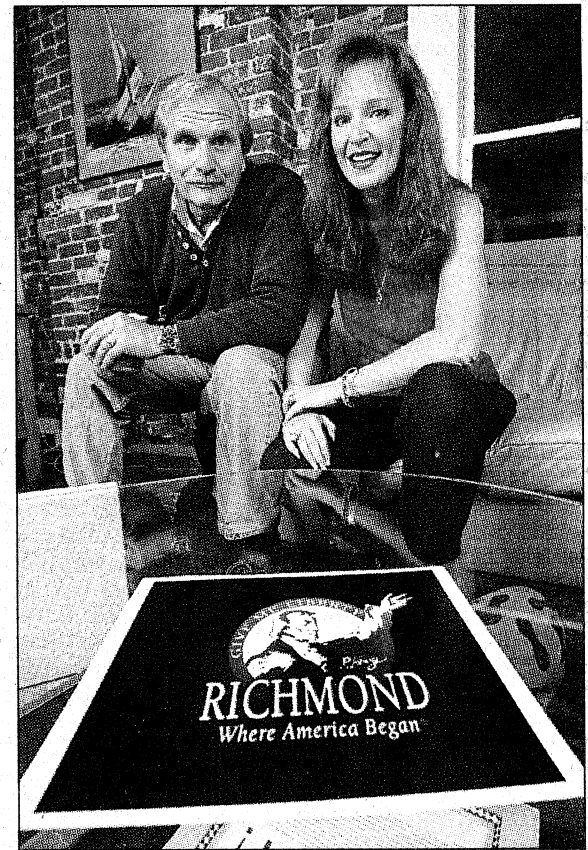
"The thought of people being ambassadors for the city of Richmond is perfect. I know I'm one and I tell people what a lovely place it is. I'm happy living here and I know a lot of other people feel that way, thousands and thousands of people feel that way."

Burford and Pimentel are looking for a corporate

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New Burford logo



BOB BROWN/TIMES-DISPATCH

Doug Burford (left), owner of Burford Advertising, and Donna Meade Dean produced a gospel-tinged tune for ads featuring the things about Richmond that make it "the place to be."



Advertising

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sponsor to join the campaign.

"I think it would generate a tremendous amount of goodwill," Burford said.

The campaign isn't designed to compete with the recently unveiled regional branding effort that proclaims Richmond is "easy to love."

Burford said he approached some of the people involved in that campaign about the possibility of merging the two.

"That didn't work out," he said.

But Burford, whose other clients in-

But the "Richmond, you are as healthy as a horse" ads never made it out of the agency.

This time, Burford came up with a new logo for the city, with Patrick Henry as the star art element.

"I designed a logo for Richmond. Nobody asked me to," said Burford, who is thought to possess a strong independent streak.

The city's current logo just doesn't cut it, Burford said.

"It's a city skyline overlooking a giant pea pod," he said. Others have described the pod as a swoosh that perhaps repre-