



WHAT WOULD IVAR DO?

An ad man becomes the Joke Cousteau of Elliott Bay.

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oug Brody isn't exactly Seattle's answer to Don Draper (more like the city's answer to the writers of MTV's *Punk'd*), but the Heckler Associates creative director's idea for an Ivar's ad campaign would have the founder of the region's seafood empire chortling from his grave. ¶ A short documentary follows the voyage of a ship crew in Elliott Bay as it hunts for underwater billboards. The signs, the crew's heavily bearded captain explains, were sunk into the briny depths by Ivar Haglund—the late skipper of the Ivar's fish-shack chain—to

advertise chowder to submarine operators in the 1950s. When the video appeared on YouTube in August 2009, more than 15,000 viewers tuned in to see whether the seamen would recover the long-lost ad boards. ¶ And, wouldn't you know, there was the crew,

hoisting a salt-eroded sign. "Ivar's Chowder, 75 cents, worth surfacing for," read the barnacle- and algae-covered board—and the tale floated around the webosphere and earned ink in *The Seattle Times*.

Except, as is now well known, Ivar's finally revealed in November that it was all a hoax. (Note to *The Seattle Times*: Regular submarine travel in the bay, really? People weren't exactly taking Sunday drives in subs in the '50s.) "One idea I had was underwater billboards," says Doug Brody, who is enjoying his 10th year at Heckler, the agency behind the Starbucks mermaid, the Pagliacci pizza tosser, and Rainier Brewery's Running of the Wild Rainiers campaign. "Then we realized, you don't actually have to put billboards down there, we can just say they're down there... and we can just 'find' them."

To achieve the authentic 1950s look of the display, Brody and team called in graphic artists from around that era to paint it. To make the sign look like it had been underwater for six decades, they applied clumps of foam, each layered with black paint to add shadows and definition. The "algae" was green paint. Finally, they rented a salvage boat and crew, hired an actor to play the captain, and feigned discovery.

Too much trouble just to sell a little chowder? Ivar Haglund might have thought of it himself. Back in the '50s he staged a death match between a prizefighter and an octopus (the stunt ignited outrage with the local humane society, but Haglund quickly revealed that the octopus was actually a dead one), distributed fake postage stamps sporting his tagline "keep clam" (for which local authorities threatened to arrest him), and even ran for port commissioner, all in the name of promoting his fried seafood specialties.

Besides, we're not just talking about a *little* chowder. By last November, three months after the fake billboard campaign began, Ivar's had doubled its chowder sales, selling 303,000 cups, and increasing customer visits by at least 5 percent. "It kept growing and gained a lot of steam," says Ivar's marketing director Kirsten Wlaschin. "This promotion worked because Ivar would've done it."

—KAREN QUINN