Dancer Fitzgerald Sample’s public service campaign against crime took shape with CD Jack Keil’s idea for a mascot, which inspired extraordinary participation from the whole agency.

A call—one of hundreds—comes in to The Advertising Council, Inc., the industry’s distributor of public service requests and productions. This particular one, from the National Council on Crime & Delinquency (NCCD), satisfies the Ad Council’s criteria of appeal and feasibility; it is a message worthy of support, requested by a legitimate organization, and one which advertising is equipped to communicate.

Locking down their membership list, the Ad Council finds that Dancer Fitzgerald Sample is the next agency slated for a placement. DFS Chair Stu Epson gets a call. “Fighting crime?” he might have responded. “Well, sure.”

Epson might also have noted that, as CD Jack Keil believed, “next to energy and inflation, crime is the biggest, growing problem, worrying people everywhere.” Although everyone talks about it, what can one do? In fact, a little talking reveals that what concerns everyone is actually hard to agree on. What is crime, in general? What crimes can people act on; what can they do that the police can’t or shouldn’t?

For the answers, DFS turned to focus groups composed first of NCCD constituents, and later, of other citizen and professional crime-fighter groups all around the country. Keil considered these numerous meetings as accomplishing two foci: what was needed most, and what the agency could do.

DFS’s main discovery may sound banal—crime is very, very scary—but it indicated that enormous tact would be required of their campaign. It added a paradox: DFS had to present a frightening subject, yet draw people out to confront it.

Who, by the way, are these nascent valiant? You, in general. Aren’t you somewhat ignorant of the extent of crime wherever you live, work, and play? Anyway, isn’t crime inevitable and, like every hassle now, bound to grow? Hey, really, isn’t it the police’s problem—not yours?

Heard that before? Well, maybe not. But DFS is going after, most likely, your “unwarranted
their talents at mere material costs (as have other suppliers). DFS staffers were swept with participatory enthusiasm. Often a public service announcement offers a brochure, for people to request, which is handled by a non-agency group. DFSers, howling that "we can't let our dog get ruined," made extra efforts to design and polish the copy in the brochure and ads which would appear in consumer and law-enforcement trade magazines.

Their efforts carried through to the actual campaign, as had a new note in voice-overs. Keil had made fifteen presentations to groups for their approval, and VO'ed the videotape which DFS sent out to further requests. Everyone warmed to his combination of Bogart, Powell, Columbo, and other star detective accents. His voice fit the job, and changing it for an actor's (which isn't required in public service work) might seem misleading, or at least disappointing.

So Keil dutifully intones a trenchant, semi-tough recommendation to "take a bite out of crime" which, on the basis of an informal poll we've taken, you yourself probably have heard. Station managers pick the Crime prevention campaign frequently; its 60, 30,
attitudes and feelings about crime; to generate a greater sense of individual responsibility; and stimulate action," as Keil described the campaign's three objectives.

How? Strategy: educate people to how much they really can do; assert the true effectiveness of doing something; and get them doing it.

A tall order; not only something for everybody to notice—the usual agency challenge—but something a lot of people would not want to register. Furthermore, presenting it without the benefit of saturation or prime media positioning. Yet another difficulty: before any citizen gets to see it, it has to be chosen by editors and TV (and radio) station managers from among the horde of public service spot requests. Keil's dilemma called for "a certain sophistication and appeal" to persuade both allocators and audience. Tough enough?

Mulling the problem on a flight from LA, Keil thought of public service ads in general, and remembered Smokey The Bear. Smokey too had had to confront folks with a harsh reality, but remain appealing and memorable, both cute and authoritative.

Keil thought of other mascots, such as a weasel, for a "takos one to know one" kind of pitch. No go. A rabbit—you know, "help stamp out crime, jump into action..." Instead, Keil arrived in New York with three napkins full of dogs drawn wearing various constabularian attire. A dog; what better way to "take a bite out of crime"—really, a modest nip proportionate to a citizen's role.

This concept spurred DFS ADs to propose a "Sarge" version, a "J. Edgar Dog," and "Wonder Dog." Not quite. Then AD Ray Krivacsi (who produced the TV spots) and CW Sherry Nemmers walked into Keil's office with a raincoated bloodhound. Eureka!

Time to formalize the concept for presentations to the Ad Council, NCCD, and other concerned groups. Here AD John Sullivan stepped in to refine the mascot illustration, and Zander's Animation Parlour contributed
and 10 second spots brighten up the screen, usually more seriously, and attractively, than the programs.

The campaign's quick pick-up encourages DFS about their followup messages. So far the intro has been aired, along with some of Step Two—tips on preventing crime. The next installments will present more tips and advocate progressively more action, such as joining citizens' groups that patrol neighborhoods.

Scott Rossborough, the account manager, commented that DFS's campaign is advocating a major shift in national attitudes. "Formerly," Rossborough said, "anything close to vigilante groups was discouraged. The Vigilantes and

imitators had often been too zealous and unjust. But the reaction to their operations tended too far in the other direction, toward utter non-involvement. We're trying to bring people back from apathy and inaction." Not only our nation's attitudes may be affected. The Australian government is interested, as is the Canadian. Even some countries where dogs aren't revered, but rather eaten, are attracted to Dancer Fitzgerald Samplc's concept. They already accept the message. How 'bout you?"