

# Ad executive isn't slowing down

After 40-plus years in the business, Burford still feels passionate

BY LOUIS LLOVIO  
Times-Dispatch Staff Writer

Sitting in his large Main Street office, family pictures adorning the walls, Doug Burford looks like a content businessman ready to close up shop and head out to the nearest golf course.

But nothing could be further from the truth.

"I don't see myself slowing down," the 66-year-old Richmond ad man said. "I still get enthusiastic about new campaigns, and I love coming to work every day."

Burford owns Burford Co. Advertising.

"Doug's first love is advertising," said J. Theodore "Ted" Linhart, chairman and CEO of the Dominion Auto Group, which owns nine Richmond-area franchises.

"He does it with great gusto and flair."

The ad firm has been doing business on East Main Street in downtown Richmond since 1988. Its client list includes auto dealers, charities and attorneys.

Two generations of Burfords work at the agency, including his wife, Nancy, overseeing the finances; daughters Ashley Burke in charge of production and Ardis Fishburne in account services; and son Jason editing and directing commercials.

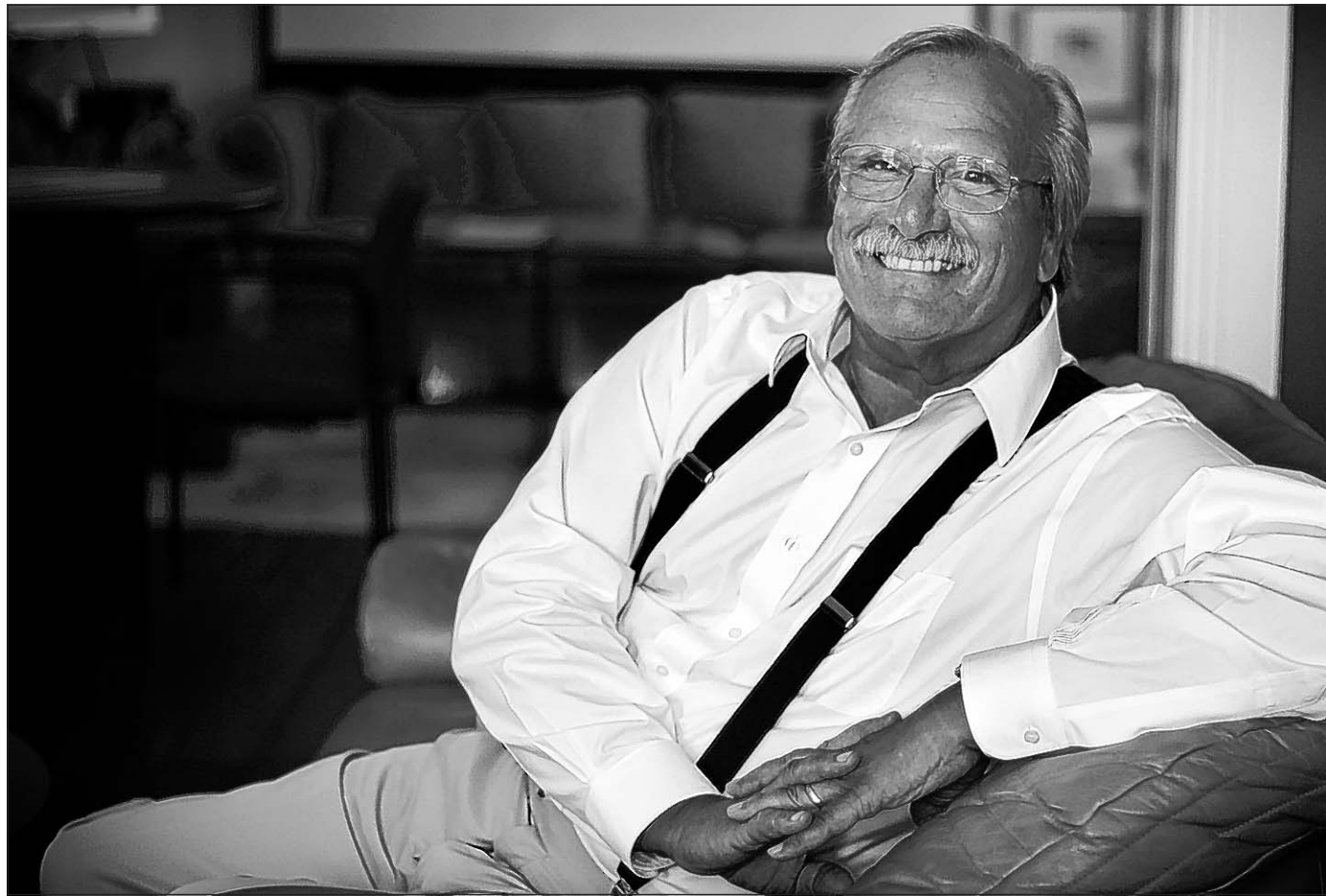
Linhart has employed Burford for about five years.

He said Burford is actively involved in the creative side of campaigns.

"You don't often see that with agencies," he said. Dominion hired Burford after having its account reviewed by 18 other agencies in the mid-Atlantic.

One of the reasons Linhart chose Burford Advertising was because of that involvement and the proximity to his offices.

Both paid off last week when several moves at his dealerships demanded an immediate response. Dominion's Chevrolet and Cadillac franchises near the Southpark Mall in Colonial Heights are closing next year as part of a restructuring by Gen-



DEAN HOFFMEYER/TIMES-DISPATCH

Doug Burford graduated from what is now Virginia Commonwealth University and founded Burford Co. Advertising in 1968.

## Burford Co. Advertising

**What is it?** Advertising agency

**Employees:** seven, including the owner

**Owner:** Doug Burford

**Location:** 125 E. Main St., Richmond

**Contact:** (804) 780-0354 or [www.burfordadvertising.com](http://www.burfordadvertising.com)

eral Motors Corp.

Linhart said he called Burford on Monday and told him that they needed to meet right away.

"I went straight over, and Doug had his creative director and media buyer sitting there waiting for me," he said. "And there was Doug with his pad writing down all his ideas."

Filming for a new series of commercials begins tomorrow.

While Burford admits playing a major role on the agency's campaigns, he says, he's not afraid to defer to his creative di-

rector, Keat Powell.

"On this Dominion deal, I wrote out what I thought was a great idea, and then Keat comes in and his is better," he said.

Powell, who was hired after graduating from Virginia Commonwealth University, said working so closely with Burford has its ups and downs.

"Honestly, on some days, it's like a tug of war, because we're both very passionate about what we do," Powell said. "We occasionally have our generational differences. But the insight he's able to offer from his 40-plus years in the business is invaluable, and I think that's reflected in our creative product."



**Indeed, Burford has** been in the advertising game for more than 40 years.

In 1966, after graduating from what is now VCU and working for a religious publishing firm, he began his ad career as a copywriter at a new agency,

Martin & Woltz.

His first assignment was to work on a campaign for the Bank of Virginia. The campaign offered free checking to people 65 and older.

His idea: "If you voted for or against Calvin Coolidge, you are entitled to a free checking account."

"I always wanted to be an artist, a writer, a designer and producer, so I decided to do all of those things and went into advertising," he said.

Martin & Woltz became The Martin Agency, and in 1968, Burford started Burford Advertising.

Now, as the firm continues its work, Burford wants to share his passion for advertising and his belief in its power with another generation.

This year, he published "Agency reveals all," a book that talks about his 40 years in the business.

"I enjoy working with small businesses and worthy causes and still being able to make a living," he said. "What other busi-

ness lets you do this?"

Burford said he wrote the book because he wanted to share the power of advertising with younger people.

For the past 17 years, for instance, the agency has managed the campaign for Henrico County-based Christian Children's Fund, an organization that helps children in underdeveloped parts of the world. That work, he said, is some of the most meaningful he's done.

"God gave me the ability to help others through advertising," he said. "I thought I should write a book, a book that will never be a bestseller but may help a few people discover that advertising is one of the few professions where you can not only sell things, but you can do things that save the planet and people on it."

All proceeds from the book will go toward the VCU School of Mass Communications Scholarship Fund.

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