

## *Tupperware* *Transcript*

**Tupperware Jubilee Footage:** American businesswomen make an impression on America's economy through home party selling, in millions of homes across the nation each year.

**Narrator:** In the 1950s, women discovered they could make thousands, even millions, from bowls that burped.

**Tupperware Home Party Film, Marge Rogers:** There, did you hear it?

**Narrator:** The Tupperware ladies built an empire by selling their plastic products in living rooms across the country, at Tupperware Parties.

**Jean Conlogue, Stanley Home Products salesperson and Tupperware distributor:** Anyway, I made the parties fun. They really had a good time.

**Lavon Weber, Tupperware salesperson and distributor:** And they liked playing the games... I'd say, "Well, that's it." "Well, one more. Come on, Lavon. One more game."

**Tupperware Home Party Film, Marge Rogers:** Haven't you wished for unspillable containers that wouldn't break? I'm here to show you modern dishes for modern living that will save you time and money...

**Narrator:** Tupperware's creator was a small-town inventor with oversized dreams named Earl Silas Tupper.

**Charles McBurney, Tupperware Staff, PR Director:** The man was a genius. Not with people, though, with the product.

**Narrator:** It took a genius with people, a woman named Brownie Wise, to push Tupper's product onto the world stage.

**Mary Siriani, Tupperware salesperson and distributor:** When she came out, all the hullabaloo and the applause, and this was our Brownie. And everyone wanted to be like a Brownie. I guess Bess Bernstein lost about 25, 30 pounds wanting to look like Brownie.

**Li Walker, Tupperware salesperson and distributor:** My impression was so here was a powerful woman, a woman ahead of her time.

**Sylvia Boyd, Tupperware salesperson and distributor:** Brownie had the ability to just talk to your dreams. Things you didn't even know you wanted. She'd draw these beautiful pictures and you could suddenly see yourself being, you know, something that you hadn't thought about before.

**Anna Tate, Stanley Home Products salesperson and Tupperware distributor:** You have to understand, in the 50s, women didn't get too much recognition. They were teased on all the comedy shows about "Boy, she sure spends my money in a hurry," and you'd hear, these were the jokes of the times then, in the, back in the 50s.

**Montie Thayer, Brownie's Cousin:** You know back then it was a masculine world. Wives done what their husbands told them to do, without arguin'. I guess my generation is the one that broke that up.

**Archival footage, *Once Upon a Honeymoon*:** I wish... I wish the kitchen faucet wouldn't drip all day. I wish that refrigerator door would close, and stay closed.

**Anna Tate, Stanley Home Products salesperson and Tupperware distributor:** Well, I frankly think that everybody believed a woman's place was in the home and in the kitchen and in the bedroom, and that was it. I think that, that, a lot of men did not want their wives to go out and earn money.

**Archival footage, *Once Upon a Honeymoon*:** A brand new sink, a built in oven, a new refrigerator and a phone -- a kitchen phone -- a bright red phone. I gotta go, goodbye, goodbye, goodbye, I'll call you later!

**Narrator:** Women were celebrated for working in defense factories during World War Two, but after the war, they got a clear message: go back to the kitchen.

**Jean Conlogue, Stanley Home Products salesperson and Tupperware distributor:** I got divorced after the war was over. Yes. And, it was tough. And I knew I had to make money.

**Irene Ellis, Tupperware salesperson and distributor:** I came from a very poor family -- I mean very poor. They were farmers and not good ones at that, I guess. And I would hate to think that my life would have been like that forever.

**Narrator:** America had survived the Depression and World War II, and the country was booming. Women who'd done without now wanted a piece of the pie. Tupperware's burping bowls provided just the chance they needed...

**Lavon Weber, Tupperware salesperson and distributor:** I was lookin' for something to do to earn some money, because on a farm, I wanted this blonde coffee table, and that is just not on the list. So I went to that party, and she said, "I made ten dollars here today." There wasn't anything that I could've done, and worked all day at that time in the Panhandle, and have made ten dollars. So I was thinking, "Gosh, if I could just make five dollars, ten parties down the road, I could have that blonde coffee table."

So there I went home with my kit. And mother said, "Now Vonnie, you can do that." Bob said, "It won't amount to nothing, you'll hold a few parties and we'll have all this junk on hand." And he didn't know at that time, that I was having to pay for that junk, and it didn't seem like the right time to tell him, so I just didn't tell him.

**Narrator:** Tupperware offered people with limited education a shot at success. The training was "on the job."

**Mary Siriani, Tupperware salesperson and distributor:** I went, we were in the bedroom, so I said Frank --

**Frank Siriani, Tupperware salesperson and distributor:** That was our own private room, because we lived in a house with everybody, we didn't have our own place yet.

**Mary Siriani, Tupperware salesperson and distributor:** So I said, "I'm gonna sit on the bed. You're gonna set the kit up on the dresser. Then you'll stand in front of this mirror and you'll start your spiel." He says, "OK." So we set it up. Now, I sit on the bed and I'm really gonna listen to this. So Frank gets up and he says "Good evening, ladies," and I burst out laughing.

**Tupperware Home Party Film, Marge Rogers:** Tupperware was designed with an accent on beauty, for people of fine taste and with an accent...

**Irene Ellis, Tupperware salesperson and distributor:** My first party was my next door neighbor. And I must have started setting up the display about one o'clock in the afternoon for a seven o'clock party. I was a nervous wreck.

**Narrator:** Most Tupperware dealers had never imagined themselves as businesswomen. But Brownie Wise encouraged them to remake themselves, much as she'd remade herself years before. In 1938, Brownie was stuck in a bad marriage in snowy Detroit, with an infant son. She was 24 years old.

**Jerry Wise, Brownie's Son:** Uh, my mother didn't talk much about her childhood. It may have been because she was too poor, or too backwards, or didn't have enough education.

**Narrator:** She'd grown up in rural Georgia, the product of a broken marriage. Her mother traveled as a union organizer, and left her, for years at a time, with her cousins.

**Montie Thayer, Brownie's cousin:** She never thought that, Brownie Mae never thought that Georgia was a place to brag about bein' from.

**Narrator:** Brownie married a Ford Motor Company employee and moved north.

**Jerry Wise, Brownie's son:** My parents were divorced when I was three years old. My mother took night courses and worked as a secretary. She could type a mile a minute. We did scrape by.

**Narrator:** Brownie's life turned around one day, in 1947...

**Jerry Wise, Brownie's son:** Someone knocked on our door selling Stanley Home Products and my mother said she could do a better demonstration than that woman did on her.

**Narrator:** Stanley Home Products was part of a long tradition of men selling products door to door, demonstrating brushes, vacuums, pots and pans. But Stanley added something new.

**Fuller Party Plan Selling Film, Woman 1:** I've heard a little about this kind of party, but I've often wondered how it works.

**Fuller Party Plan Selling Film, Woman 2:** Well here's the idea. All you have to do is invite about twelve or fifteen of your friends to drop over some afternoon or evening for a party. And I'll help you put it on. Tell them we'll have lots of fun.

**Fuller Party Plan Selling Film, Woman 1:** And then I suppose you take orders from the guests?

**Fuller Party Plan Selling Film, Woman 2:** Yes, but no high-pressure selling. None of your friends will be embarrassed into buying.

**Narrator:** Home party selling appealed to women -- it was a job that took advantage of their networks of friends and relatives.

Brownie Wise was a star in Stanley -- and soon became a manager, motivating others.

**Brownie Wise, Sales Bulletin:** Hi gang. Florence Zewicky has set a new record for the time it takes to build success in Stanley. And what Florence Zewicky is doing, you can do too! Be Wise, Stanley-ize.

**Narrator:** Another star Stanley dealer in the Detroit area was 16 year-old Gary McDonald.

**Gary McDonald, Tupperware staff:** Most of the people in Stanley, of course, were in their 20s or 30s or 40s, so I think I was probably the only teenager in our part of the country, at least.

**Narrator:** It was Gary McDonald who brought Tupperware and Brownie Wise together.

**Gary McDonald, Tupperware staff:** Well, my first exposure to Tupperware was when I saw it in the J.L. Hudson Department store. And I said, "Wow! That is a product which must be demonstrated."

**Narrator:** Gary and Brownie left Stanley and started their own Tupperware home party business.

**Brownie Wise, Sales Bulletin:** To Mary Koranda, for the juicy hostess party she nabbed last week. That was wonderful, Mary. Good luck to you one and all, though confidentially, kids, luck has very little to do with it.

**Gary McDonald, Tupperware staff:** We got calls from Mr. Tupper's sales manager who said, "Just what in the hell are you people doing to sell the amount of Tupperware you're selling?"

**Narrator:** This was a lucky turn in the life of Earl Silas Tupper. He'd grown up dirt poor in Central Massachusetts. He barely graduated from high school, but he was obsessed with becoming a millionaire -- convinced he could be the next Edison, or Ford.

A tree surgeon by day, at night he filled notebooks with his inventions: the fish-powered boat, the no-drip ice cream cone, the sweetie picture belt, and the dagger-shaped comb.

Earl doggedly tried to sell his inventions. He was broke -- and with a young family to support, he needed work. He happened to live in the heart of New England's growing plastics industry.

**Barry Whitcomb, Earl's Brother in Law:** Earl, um, talked himself into a job at the Viscaloid company. He worked there for, oh, approximately a year... and then decided he could go into the plastics business on his own.

**Narrator:** Earl started Tupper Plastics, and made beads, and cigarette cases, and soap dishes. In 1945, he got his hands on some pure polyethylene pellets, a recently invented wartime plastic. DuPont didn't believe raw polyethylene could be molded, but Earl tinkered with his machines for months... and invented the Wonderbowl, and the Tupper Seal.

**Tom Damigella, Sr., Stanley Home Products salesperson and Tupperware distributor:** And he told me the story of how he got the idea of using the seal, mhm? He says, "I can make a seal that would fit it exactly, it would be watertight and airtight. Even though, it's actually, I got the idea from a paint can."

**Frank Siriani, Tupperware salesperson and distributor:** Tupperware was an absolutely most unique product. There wasn't anything like it. You know, it shocked everybody that you could put food in this container and it would keep longer and better than anything else. It was better than wax paper, the wet cloth, even the refrigerator.

**Narrator:** One day in 1951, Brownie called the company to complain that her order was late again. She insisted on speaking to Mr. Tupper himself. He would improve his business, she told him, if he sold Tupperware ONLY at home parties. He wanted to hear more, and invited her to Massachusetts.

**Jean Conlogue, Stanley Home Products salesperson and Tupperware distributor:** And she convinced him that this was the way to go, and that he should pull out his Tupperware out of every other place, and st- go strictly on the party plan. And he did.

**Narrator:** Earl hired Brownie on the spot...

This was an unlikely, but perfect match.

**Jerry Wise, Brownie's son:** Mother was very smooth, very genteel and a perfect lady, and Earl Tupper was a little rough around the edges. A Dale Carnegie course would have fixed him up good.

**Anne Fortier Novak, Secretary to Brownie and Earl:** And so she worked late, and Mr. Tupper would work late, and he would come over from his office, and they would work together, which probably created a little bit of gossip in the town. We're talking Small Town, USA here.

**Gary McDonald, Tupperware staff:** She was always Brownie, and Mr. Tupper was always Mr. Tupper.

**Narrator:** Brownie didn't stay in Massachusetts long. Earl split his company in two, with Brownie heading up the sales operation, called Tupperware Home Parties.

**Anne Fortier Novak, secretary to Brownie Wise and Earl Tupper:** Almost immediately, Brownie was talking about moving to Florida. That was her heart's desire, to get Tupper headquarters in Florida.

**Narrator:** Earl Tupper bought a thousand acres of cow pasture and swamp in Kissimmee, Florida. And Brownie transformed it into a fantasy landscape.

**Jon Boyd, Tupperware distributor:** When you first drive up you're going, "Oh, my gosh."

**Sylvia Boyd, Tupperware salesperson and distributor:** The beautiful lake out in front. The first time I ever saw it, I believe the sign was there then, that "Welcome to Tupperware." And it was just, you know, really set your heart a-pounding, because it was very impressive.

**Narrator:** Brownie created a monument to salesmanship, a pilgrimage site for her sales force.

**Li Walker, Tupperware salesperson and distributor:** It was like, uh, a fairy tale. Like you're in a, you know, wonderland or something.

**Narrator:** And she made up new traditions. She baptized Poly Pond with polyethylene pellets, showed her dealers how to place their wishes in two-ounce Tupperware containers, then toss them in the wishing well.

**Lavon Weber, Tupperware salesperson and distributor:** We came from dry land, flat land, farmland, not too far away from the Dustbowl years. This looked wonderful.

**Narrator:** Brownie's staff meetings were brainstorming sessions. Everyone contributed, and Brownie presided from her peacock chair.

**Mary Siriani, Tupperware salesperson and distributor:** Rah rah was Florida. This is motivation time, rah rah, let's really get up there. Let's think of the next promotion, rise and shine, rooty toot toot, who are you going to recruit? All of this stuff. They were the razzamatazz.

**Anne Fortier Novak, secretary to Brownie Wise and Earl Tupper:** I'm sure Mr. Tupper was very much aware of everything that Brownie was doing. I'm sure she would never do anything major without consulting with him. And, you know, with all these business meetings and conferences, and so on, he had to have been aware of what she was doing. And he approved, I'm sure he did.

**Narrator:** For the most part, Earl was all business -- a perfectionist with a short fuse -- but not when it came to Brownie...

**Earl Tupper, Correspondence:** Brownie. I've just opened your package tonight. The one with the two party pictures. You sure look super. Anyone that cute has no right to be so smart. I'm eating the nuts and candy now. Yum yum. Many thanks to you, Brownie, on our first birthday, for the happiest hours this business has known. Sincerely, Earl S. Tupper.

**Brownie Wise, Correspondence:** We get lots of wonderful letters from consumers. Anyone who can create a product outstanding enough to consistently draw forth that sort of unsolicited praise and enthusiasm should be very proud of himself. I hope you are. BW.

**Sylvia Boyd, Tupperware salesperson and distributor:** You know, the era and the business were made for each other. Women didn't have a car to get around anywhere, so we sat home all day and we took care of our kids. So a Tupperware party was the social function, it was the way to get away from the kids for a few hours during the week.

**Tom Damigella, Jr., Tupperware Distributor's Son:** In the city, we lived in an Italian, uh, area. Probably could've walked down the street and had three Tupperware parties that week, and didn't even have to get in your car. Most of them'd be in apartment buildings, or apartment, three-, three-family deckers and stuff like that, walkups.

**Lavon Weber, Tupperware salesperson and distributor:** When I sold as a dealer, yeah, I traveled lots of miles. I was thirteen miles from the closest little town, and then I worked a lot of farm neighborhood, twenty-five miles from the next two towns. And I preferred to hold three parties a day. That's the way I liked to work. And then I could be home a day. And if I didn't get that worked out I was just runnin' like a crazy woman from one place to the other.

**Montie Thayer, Brownie's cousin:** But you know I'd have three and four parties a day. I'd have one at, a breakfast party, a party between breakfast and lunch, sometimes a luncheon

party, afternoon party, sometimes night parties. I went the whole route. [LAUGHTER] I liked it.

**Tom Tate, Tupperware Distributor's Son:** They were selling to themselves. They were selling to people with the same needs, same budget, alright, that they have. So, when they walked in and said, "I haven't thrown away a head of lettuce in six months, because even when my family doesn't eat enough, when I put it in my Crisp-It, it doesn't turn brown, it doesn't go bad -- this little thing keeps up outta the water, it works like a charm, you really should try one it's only a dollar forty-nine."

**Lavon Weber, Tupperware salesperson and distributor:** Your demonstration is so much better when it's spoken with authority. And so when I tried this out and say, "I kept bread for this long, I kept sliced tomatoes from one meal to the next, I had lettuce crisps for several days," then you was more, was more effective.

**Frank Siriani, Tupperware salesperson and distributor:** And we -- we exaggerated a lot too. We did. We got carried away with our own stories. Oh we, we would make it, like you could- you could keep the food in there for months. It wasn't so. Wasn't so. But you know, that's the way we felt.

**Mary Siriani, Tupperware salesperson and distributor:** Some foods, yes.

**Frank Siriani, Tupperware salesperson and distributor:** Oh yeah, but you know...

**Mary Siriani, Tupperware salesperson and distributor:** Macaronis, flour, sugar, those staples, yeah...

**Frank Siriani, Tupperware salesperson and distributor:** Dry goods, yeah. But we would, you know, we would really- we would exaggerate.

**Narrator:** Brownie always said, "If we build the people, they'll build the business." Brownie traveled all over the country, one hundred and fifty thousand miles a year, to visit her growing sales force. She loved them, and they idolized her. She even gave away the clothes she wore as prizes.

**Anna Tate, Stanley Home Products salesperson and Tupperware salesperson:** She would just right on the stage, just almost like she suddenly thought of something, like, "This -- do you like this outfit? Well, I'll tell you what. Whichever one of you does so-and-so, you can have this outfit."

**Charles McBurney, Tupperware staff:** She got every distributor's sales figures every day, every day... I guess all of them promoted to manager got a note, hand written, from Brownie Wise.

**Narrator:** Brownie used everything she could to motivate her growing network of dealers.

**Jean Conlogue, Stanley Home Products salesperson and Tupperware distributor:** To stand up in front of a group and have that wonderful magical sound of applause, oh hey, they'd do anything for that.

**Narrator:** She rolled out the red carpet for the stars of her sales force, and she made sure they were featured front and center each month in *Tupperware Sparks*. A mention was good, but a photo with Brownie was the best.

**Pat Tahaney, Tupperware Staff, PR:** Most people only had their name in the paper when they graduated from high school or when they got married, or when they'd die. And I think that she drew on all aspects of that to- to create a feeling in these people that they were a queen, that they were special, that they were somebody different.

**Narrator:** Brownie sent a small army of Tupperware ladies out across the country, recruiting more dealers.



**Anna Tate, Stanley Home Products salesperson and Tupperware distributor:** At a party, I'd see a lady who seemed to be very enthusiastic, she seemed to like people, she was a bubbly type of person. And I would say to her, "you know, I don't know if you've ever thought about doing any work outside your home, but you would be a terrific Tupperware lady."

**Jean Conlogue, Stanley Home Products salesperson and Tupperware distributor:** When we were recruiting people, we tried to, uh, fill a need for something that they wanted, like "I want new carpet," or "I want a new refrigerator." And then we would map out for them how many parties they would have to hold in order to get whatever it was that they wanted.

**Anna Tate, Stanley Home Products salesperson and Tupperware distributor:** And after the party's over, I'll take a little extra time with you, and I'll show you exactly what I sold. I will show you exactly what the Tupperware cost me, what the hostess gift cost, and you will see when I have it all on a piece of paper, exactly how much money you would have made if you had done what you saw me do.

**Claire Brooks, Tupperware salesperson and manager:** The type of lady that decides to sell Tupperware, I do not think there's a set type. Not by age or race or anything. I think it depends on who introduces them to it. I had a tendency to recruit, when I first started, more young people because I was young, and I had children. So I think you recruit someone like yourself.

**Brownie Wise:** Hello. This is Brownie. Will you do yourself and someone else a big favor? Take a little extra time this week, and call back on some of the people that you've talked to about being a Tupperware dealer.

**Mary Siriani, Tupperware salesperson and distributor:** She would say, now how many dealers have you recruited in a month, Mary?

**Brownie Wise:** Perhaps there is someone in your own family. Or a very close neighbor who needs the money that Tupperware can supply. Sometimes we overlook the prospects closest to home, you know.

**Mary Siriani, Tupperware salesperson and distributor:** She says "Wouldn't it be wonderful," and she squeezed your hand and said, "if it would be eight or ten? Wouldn't that be nice? Oh, and when I come up to, to your rally or whatever, I want you to tell me you did it." So I ran home --

**Frank Siriani, Tupperware salesperson and distributor:** And you did it.

**Mary Siriani, Tupperware salesperson and distributor:** -- and I did it.

**Irene Ellis, Tupperware salesperson and distributor:** When I first started, my husband was so against it, why he belonged to the Lion's Club and they had a "Wives' Evening" or something; anyway, he said, "Now whatever you do you better not be talkin' about Tupperware when you go there." And I said, "OK." So I filled a couple of two-ounce Midgets with water -- colored water -- took 'em with me, put 'em in my purse, and I accidentally turned my purse over and they rolled out. Everybody wanted to know what it was, so that was my chance, and I gave parties.

**Anna Tate, Stanley Home Products salesperson and Tupperware distributor:** I had to talk to the husband at some length to persuade him to let her come in -- just part-time -- just to make a little extra money. And I used to say, "You know, you bring in the bread. You're the breadwinner -- but she can bring in a little cake."

**Narrator:** Earl Tupper personally designed every new piece of Tupperware and sent prototypes to Florida.

**Elsie Mortland, Tupperware Home Kitchen Demonstrator:** As Mr. Tupper would design a product he would send it to me, and it was sent to me, "Personal, to Elsie Mortland, to be opened by Elsie Mortland only."

**Gary McDonald, Tupperware staff:** He really kind of treasured the secrecy of what he was doing and how he was doing it.

**Narrator:** Earl felt his product should be able to sell itself, but the marketing experts were telling him something different. When he hired a fancy Madison Avenue firm to promote his growing company, they told him, "You've got three things going for you. A good marketing plan, a great product, but what's really unique is having a charismatic female executive. You should run with that." Earl resisted putting Brownie above his product.

**Gary McDonald, Tupperware staff:** Earl Tupper was not too sure in the beginning, but by the time Ruder and Finn got through all of the potential of Brownie being the peg for the stories, he was buying into that. And so we made Brownie the queen of the universe, and indeed, as far as our people were concerned, she was.

**Narrator:** In 1954 Brownie brought the Tupperware dealers and managers to headquarters for the first Tupperware Jubilee, a four-day extravaganza designed to build the loyalty of the Tupperware ladies.

**Tupperware Jubilee Footage:** I hadn't realized there were so many people in the Tupperware family. And to think there are more than ten thousand others who could not be here. It's just like a family reunion, and with so many brothers and sisters.

**Narrator:** The staff decided Jubilee should have a theme. The first was the Gold Rush.

**Tupperware Jubilee Footage:** Six hundred shovels on an acre of ground. And do we have fun! Watches, diamond rings, mink coats, television sets! We really strike gold!

**Mary Siriani, Tupperware salesperson and distributor:** I was so excited. I got on that shovel and I dug up that dirt and I hit a box and I pulled the box out of the ground, opened it up, and it was a double boiler, an Echo cookware. And I still have that from all those years.

**Frank Siriani, Tupperware salesperson and distributor:** We still have it.

**Mary Siriani, Tupperware salesperson and distributor:** I just saved that little double boiler with the cover. I thought it was wonderful.

**Narrator:** Even though Tupperware was still a small company, its publicity efforts began to pay off.

**Tupperware Jubilee Footage:** Those photographers, they're from *Life Magazine* and *Business Week*.

**Charles McBurney, Tupperware Staff:** We had the people down from *Business Week* thinking, well, you know, we're going to get maybe a column, or a column and a half in *Business Week*, because this is sort of unusual. And we wound up with the cover. For the first time in the magazine's history, a woman on the cover. And naming her Businesswoman of the Year, well, you know, we were kind of happy.

**Narrator:** It was working -- even better than they had hoped: the product, the plan, and the person.

Brownie had turned the stereotype of the suede shoed, door-to-door salesman into a woman - in heels, no less.

**Jean Conlogue, Stanley Home Products salesperson and Tupperware distributor:** Our managers, when they got promoted, they were told that they were to wear a hat and wear gloves when they went recruiting, on their recruiting calls. And heels. Heels, yes. And hose, because some of them were running around without hose on.

**Claire Brooks, Tupperware salesperson and manager:** It was a very privileged job. And sellin' had been denoted back in the fifties and sixties like a hustle. And Tupperware moved us up to being a lady.

**Lavon Weber, Tupperware salesperson and distributor:** All this was really uptown. And if you ever won a trip with Tupperware, you were just treated like royalty, you know.

**Narrator:** Women who'd worked in factories were now Tupperware ladies, dressed in white gloves and hats. As the company grew, so did the dealers' enthusiasm.

**Tupperware Jubilee, people singing:** I've got that Tupper feeling up in my head, deep in my heart, down in my toes. I've got that Tupper feeling all over me, all over me to stay. Yeah!!

**Narrator:** Jubilees got more elaborate, and Brownie and her staff borrowed without apology from TV game shows...

**Queen For A Day Footage:** Would YOU like to be Queen For A Day!

**Narrator:** ...from beauty pageants... the movies...

**Tupperware Jubilee Footage:** What is this? The cavalry supply train frightens the Indians off and drops gifts for the second category of Tupperware sales people.

**Narrator:** ...children's fairy tales...

**Tupperware Jubilee Footage:** Trumpets herald the caliph's captains as they charm a giant cobra into a hypnotic state, removing another obstacle to the city of riches.

**Narrator:** She'd try anything, and intuitively, she understood what would work.

**Gary McDonald, Tupperware staff:** Earl Tupper never showed up at a Jubilee... He did not want to be in the limelight. He was invited, but, no...

**Kenneth McFarland, Sales Consultant, General Motors, archival footage :** I'll make you a deal: if you sell Tupperware with your left hand and sell America with your right hand you will sell more Tupperware with your left hand than you ever sold with both hands, before.

**Tupperware Jubilee Footage:** Business sessions such as these occupied more than half of Jubilleers' time.

**Frank Siriani, Tupperware salesperson and distributor:** They actually had homework that they had to do and there were tests that they took. At the end of every Jubilee there was a graduation. You got women that are in their 40s -- never graduated high school -- coming across this stage.

**Anna Tate, Stanley Home Products salesperson and Tupperware distributor:** And it must seem corny, but I can tell you we were very proud to walk across that stage. And I can remember the year that I was at a seminar and I was valedictorian, and I had to leave the last line off my speech -- I was about to cry. It was very important. And it was to everybody. I get choked up. [LAUGHTER] But that's just the way it was and it's meant an awful lot to thousands and thousands of women who were able to go out and make a good living for themselves and their family that never dreamed that it would turn out that way.

**Narrator:** The most successful Tupperware ladies were moving up the ranks. In 1951, there were only eight distributors. By 1956, there were more than one hundred distributor couples selling Tupperware in every part of the country. Some even made millions.

**Sylvia Boyd, Tupperware salesperson and distributor:** So when I had six people, and a datebook with four to, um, three to five parties a week in it, I could be promoted from dealer to manager. As a manager I got this added commission, on my team, my unit, and I'd help them and train them, and motivated them and got them to sales rallies. And then from that point, to move up to distributor, that was a longer haul. I really had to be one of the top managers in the country, and that wasn't easy.

**Narrator:** Brownie and her staff believed it was ideal for two people to run a distributorship: one to oversee sales and one to manage the warehouse. Brownie made the distributorship offer to top managers AND their husbands. Saying yes meant the husband gave up his job and joined his wife in Tupperware.

**Lorna Boyd, Tupperware distributor's daughter:** I remember the stories of my grandparents, uh, disapproving of the move. I know that all of my Dad's friends disapproved of his giving up these, the uh, fireman position, um, for this risky thing nobody had ever heard of before.

**Narrator:** It also meant moving wherever Tupperware needed a distributor.

**Jon Boyd, Tupperware distributor:** Well we were so excited about going to be distributors, it was incredible! "Fort Wayne, Indiana. Where's Fort Wayne, Indiana?" We had no idea.

**Jean Conlogue, Stanley Home Products salesperson and Tupperware distributor:** So when we left for St. Louis, uh, we had my two boys from a previous marriage, Michael and Patrick, and our dog Blondie. We bought a brand new Mercury station wagon. Oh, that was a gorgeous car, wood on the side, leather interior, and we took off for St. Louis.

**Lavon Weber, Tupperware salesperson and distributor:** Moving into Wichita was an experience. I stayed lost most of the time. Bob would have to lead me to my parties sometimes, and then I usually could get back home.

**Sylvia Boyd, Tupperware salesperson and distributor:** Our arrival into Indiana, we always said we must've come in the back way, I'm not sure. I just couldn't believe what I was seeing, and I thought, "My gosh, how are we ever going to sell Tupperware, they all must be a hundred years old in this city." And it was just really... got me scared. After a couple of blocks I started crying. And I thought, "Oh my Mother was right, we should've never done this."

**Narrator:** Brownie understood the problems these young distributor couples faced.

**Brownie Wise, Correspondence:** Success rarely comes overnight. This is when the husband begins to think back to the time when he had that steady job. And her tension increases.

**Sylvia Boyd, Tupperware salesperson and distributor:** And we were all willing to move thousands of miles, our husbands quit their jobs. We just went out on a wing and a prayer.

**Narrator:** Every Monday morning distributors held sales rallies for their managers and dealers. On a local scale they imitated what Brownie did at Jubilee.

**Mary Siriani, Tupperware salesperson and distributor:** We gave all different hints and helps. How to speak on the phone, how to talk to people on the street, how to knock at a door. And all these hints were incorporated at your sales rally. And they were looking for knowledge. How do I get better? How could I sell more? How do I say it to sound better?

**Lorna Boyd, Tupperware distributors' daughter:** At our rallies my father would always dress up as the Tupperware Lady. And it was this kinda yellow gingham dress with a pinafore and a wig with pigtails. And, I don't know, you know, part of, maybe it's some dark thing about how people like to see men dressed up as girls. It runs through Tupperware and the whole idea of the Tupperware Lady, um, was handed down to my generation and my husband picked up that and did that for a while.

**Sylvia Boyd, Tupperware salesperson and distributor:** And his outfit, he had one Carmen Miranda outfit with great big, colored bulbous earrings and these big beads and thongs with butterflies on them -- and all these outfits were outlandish, just outlandish.

**Jon Boyd, Tupperware distributor:** And fun.

**Tom Tate, Tupperware distributor's son:** It was fun -- I mean, it just seemed -- I was glad none of my college friends could see me doing this, but....

**Narrator:** Tupperware, a company built by women, was ultimately run by men. Even Brownie surrounded herself with men.

**Anna Tate, Stanley Home Products salesperson and Tupperware distributor:** In an interview that was done for the *Cosmopolitan* Magazine, the reporter asked her why she didn't have any women on her staff, and she said, "If there's going to be a prima donna on this staff, I'm it and the only one."

**Lorna Boyd, Tupperware distributors' daughter:** Uh, Tupperware was such a woman's company. Um, right from the bottom to just about the top, [laugh] and then suddenly, magically, it wasn't a woman's company anymore. All the executives were male. And, um, it was at the distributor level, I think, where it became the man and the woman working together, and then suddenly the next step was a man's step.

**Tom Damigella, Jr., Tupperware distributors' son:** Yeah, the next step after being a successful distributor is to, for some, they would say, okay, can I get on staff, can I be a regional? That's a- it was a very showy position in the company, there was like only ten or eleven of them.

**Jean Conlogue, Stanley Home Products salesperson and Tupperware distributor:** It was very hard on marriages when the guys were promoted and given the title, and the girls were told that they were going to work with their husbands and then all of a sudden they were pushed out.

**Tom Tate, Tupperware distributor's son:** I think Brownie surrounded herself with guys on the staff because that was the way it was done. Major corporations were run by men. She was not the trailblazer that you would think, inasmuch as it was not an all-girl band here. I mean, she was realistic enough to know that at some level, bankers don't talk to women.

**Narrator:** Brownie lived in the spotlight.



**Charles McBurney, Tupperware staff:** Brownie Wise became Tupperware, and Tupperware became Brownie Wise. They were almost synonymous.

**Jean Conlogue, Stanley Home Products salesperson and Tupperware distributor:** They say you should never believe your own press notices? Well, she began to believe hers. And, uh, it made her feel that she was, uh, irreplaceable.

**Narrator:** Being in the spotlight full-time began to take its toll on Brownie. The company's success put more demands on her. The growing number of sales people all wanted her attention. She was pulled in different directions, and she was exhausted.

**Elsie Mortland, Tupperware Home Kitchen demonstrator:** Yes, I remember she went to the Mayo Clinic. And she was very disappointed that they couldn't find anything wrong with her.

**Anna Tate, Stanley Home Products salesperson and Tupperware distributor:** You see, I really don't believe that I know of any - any friends of hers. I don't remember her having any personal friends. I think her whole life was the business.

**Jerry Wise, Brownie's son:** She had a typewriter on her bed. And she'd wake up in the middle of the night and scribble down ideas about the business. Oh yeah, most people had no idea what full time meant to Brownie Wise.

**Narrator:** In 1957, Brownie's dealer force was so successful, they were selling more than Earl's factories could produce. When Brownie demanded that Earl keep up, he was more than a little annoyed. Small disagreements between them escalated quickly.

**Earl Tupper, Correspondence:** Dear Mrs. Wise. Sales management means sales management, and not just sales. The manufacturer isn't in the business for the benefit of the Sales Department. Very Truly Yours, Earl S. Tupper, President.

**Brownie Wise, Correspondence:** Your comment that the sales were wild, uncontrolled consumer demand seemed inappropriate. Most manufacturers would welcome wild consumer demand.

**Narrator:** At the 1957 Jubilee, Tupperware's rank and file were oblivious to the storm clouds gathering over the company.

**Tupperware Jubilee Footage, Narrator:** Yes, this is Jubilee 1957, the Tupperware Homecoming Jubilee, called by many the most unusual sales convention in the world.

**Earl Tupper, Correspondence:** Dear Brownie. I believe a lot of our business problems could be solved if you would just keep me informed. You don't have any business secrets from me.

**Tupperware Jubilee Footage, Narrator:** Have you ever seen a million dollars worth of sales know-how? Here it is: Brownie Wise with some of the nation's foremost sales authorities.

**Brownie Wise, Correspondence:** Don't you realize that I would do nothing but write letters and memos if I had to put everything into writing? It used to be when I had something to discuss with you, I could pick up the telephone. I can't do that anymore, apparently. You have not chosen to talk to me.

**Tupperware Jubilee Footage, Narrator:** One of the speakers is Paul McAdam, who uses Brownie's book, *Best Wishes*, as part of his talk.

**Narrator:** Earl was annoyed that Brownie hadn't asked his permission to give out copies of her book, a collection of her motivational talks.

**Brownie Wise, Correspondence:** Did you have in mind that I was planning to get rich on this book? If so, and it sounds that way, I'm surprised at you. Yes, I bought 6,000 books for THP without any OK. I also built the pavilion, designed and contracted for the lakes and the garden wall, etc. etc. without any OK. Let's see some OK's I got on other projects, shall we?

**Narrator:** Tupperware projected its sales would reach a hundred million dollars. Several bigger businesses approached Earl wanting to buy the company, which he owned outright. He considered cashing out.

**Charles McBurney, Tupperware staff:** He wanted to sell the company. And he felt he couldn't sell it with a woman the head of it, and certainly a woman with such great power over the whole system, over the whole organization.

**Narrator:** After almost seven years together, the relationship between Earl and Brownie neared the breaking point. Just before Christmas 1957, he raised questions about her expenses for jubilees, prizes, clothing, and landscaping.

**Anna Tate, Stanley Home Products salesperson and Tupperware distributor:** I think she made a mistake in her figures that last year, and this was one of the things. She would not take her books up to Rhode Island.

**Narrator:** Earl ordered Brownie to bring the books, immediately, to New England. She refused, claiming she was ill.

**Earl Tupper, Correspondence:** Personal. Dear Brownie. From your recent conduct, you seem to resist coming up here. There can be no justification for refusal or unreasonable delay, since I'm President of the Corporation. Sincerely, Earl S. Tupper. P.S. Let's go for a Happy New Year!

**Brownie Wise, Correspondence:** In what way have I not carried out your wishes? Believe me, if I haven't, it's because I haven't been able to find out what your wishes are. Because I have certainly never been secretive with you about what's going on.

**Narrator:** On January 28, 1958, Earl finally got on a plane and flew to Florida.



**Montie Thayer, Brownie's cousin:** I didn't know that she was fired. She told me that she fell and hurt herself, and that she wasn't able to work anymore.

**Charles McBurney, Tupperware staff:** She told me what had happened. "Tupper said I'm fired. You know, there goes my life. I'm through with life."

**Gary McDonald, Tupperware staff:** He did not want to give her anything. And I was very vocal and said, "Well, that's just not right." And that's when he came up with the \$35,000.

**Charles McBurney, Tupperware staff:** She didn't have a contract. No employment contract.

**Frank Siriani, Tupperware salesperson and distributor:** And the clothes that she wore. She never owned those clothes. That's what we, we were told. She didn't even own, she didn't own nothing!

**Li Walker, Tupperware salesperson and distributor:** She kind of, just sort of like, disappeared. And then people ask questions, but then nobody really gives you an answer, you know.

**Sylvia Boyd, Tupperware salesperson and distributor:** It was, I thought, too sudden for her to have quit or retired. So I assumed something had gone awry. She was the queen, you know. And all of a sudden, the queen was gone.

**Narrator:** That summer, Tupperware put on its first Jubilee without Brownie. This one had a pirate theme.

**Tupperware Jubilee Footage, Narrator:** Official uniform is eye patches, bandanas, and cutlasses. And new things in Tupperware are shown by Gary McDonald. Here's the new brush comb! [APPLAUSE]

**Narrator:** Three months before Jubilee, Brownie had started a new home party company, Cinderella Cosmetics.

**Tony Ponticelli, Tupperware Staff:** We had our cream of Tupperware at this particular Jubilee. We were worrying whether or not she would romance them over into Cinderella.

**Gary McDonald, Tupperware staff:** They had a double-page ad in the Kissimmee Newspaper, announcing the launch of Cinderella Cosmetics with Brownie Wise, uh, the famous Brownie Wise, as the president of the company.

**Narrator:** In the ad, Brownie invited the Tupperware dealers to come learn about her new business, Cinderella.

Gary McDonald and Hamer Wilson, Brownie's former chief lieutenants, were now in charge. No one knew what would happen next.

**Pat Tahaney, Tupperware staff:** And I believe that leadership prevailed. Hamer made a very wise decision. He said, "you know, rather than try to hide this or bury it, why don't we just face it head on. And, in fact, I'll tell you what," and he turned to me and he said, "Pat, why don't you go down to the Sentinel and see if you can buy about two thousand copies of this paper? And he said, we'll just pass them out." And he made it very clear that anybody in that audience, and I can hear that speech even today, that anybody in the audience, anybody out there that would like to get up and go out the door and go with Brownie Wise's new organization, please feel free to do it. And not a soul, not a soul stood up and walked out that door.

**Tony Ponticelli, Tupperware staff:** And, uh, I think that was her downfall. She was an idol on a pedestal. From that day on, she fell off of that pedestal.

**Lavon Weber, Tupperware salesperson and distributor:** I think they were smart enough to know that Tupperware was where their bread and butter was. And I think at that time, Tupperware was doing so well, that you didn't really want to rock the boat.

**Elsie Mortland, Tupperware Home Kitchen demonstrator:** And I said, "Brownie, I don't think I could do it because I wouldn't have the belief or the feeling for these products that I have for Tupperware." I said, "As far as I'm concerned, I'm stuck with Tupperware." "Well," she says, "Well, I'm sorry then that means, means that our relationship has ended." And I said, "Well, I'm sorry too."

**Narrator:** Brownie lost more than her job. She also lost her sales force, the people who adored her. The Tupperware ladies Brownie had trained were able to carry on, without her. Cinderella Cosmetics folded after just one year.

**Charles McBurney, Tupperware staff:** After even some time, Brownie really never felt the exhilaration of the business, and never really displayed it again. Pity.

**Jean Conlogue, Stanley Home Products salesperson and Tupperware distributor:** Never saw her again. Which is also sad, because I really liked her.

**Anna Tate, Stanley Home Products salesperson and Tupperware distributor:** But I thought she had retired wealthy. I really did. Wasn't all that wasn't all true.

**Anne Fortier Novak, secretary to Brownie Wise and Earl Tupper:** When my husband and I went on a vacation trip to Florida, we went to see Tupperware Home Parties Headquarters for the first time, and of course, I inquired about Brownie, I expected to see at least pictures of her around. But no one seemed to know who Brownie was, or the fact that she might have been important. They appeared to have erased her right out of their files.

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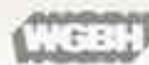
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**Pat Tahaney, Tupperware staff:** At the time she was really purged from the company, so all the photographs of Brownie, anything to do with Jubilees, anything that she was in, certainly any-, anything to do with Brownie Wise was, uh, totally removed from the offices.

**Jean Conlogue, Stanley Home Products salesperson and Tupperware distributor:** Well, I think that they didn't want the legend of Brownie Wise to continue.

**Narrator:** The staff even dug a pit behind headquarters where they buried the remaining 600 copies of Brownie's book, *Best Wishes*.

In 1958, less than a year after firing Brownie, Earl Tupper sold his company to Justin Dart, of Rexall Chemicals, for \$16 million. Earl also divorced his wife, gave up his U.S. citizenship, and bought himself an island in Central America.

**Montie Thayer, Brownie's cousin:** Brownie never talked about Tupperware. She didn't even seem to want it around. She didn't use any of the pieces that I thought would be very useful for her. Or anything. I think leavin' Tupperware the way that she did had an effect on her life. It, uh, caused her to more or less withdraw.

**Tupperware Film, Narrator:** Now let's go to a little town in New Jersey, where things are really poppin'. Yes, there's a party going on at Mrs. Betty Martin's house. It's a Tupperware party, and it's really fun.

**Narrator:** As Earl and Brownie retired from the world, the Tupperware ladies took Tupperware across the globe, hosting parties in Europe, South America, Asia, and Africa. Tupperware became the biggest and most successful international party plan company of its time. Earl Tupper died in 1983. The patent on his burping seal expired the next year and his design idea was widely copied. Brownie lived modestly and died in 1992, just a few miles from Tupperware headquarters. The marketing techniques Brownie perfected were copied by every successful home party company.

**Lorna Boyd, Tupperware distributors' daughter:** I think a lot of what Tupperware was about for me is enjoying and participating in the success of women.

**Anna Tate, Stanley Home Products salesperson and Tupperware distributor:** I was the one that was able to help my mother when she didn't have any more money. I was the one that was able to do things for my sisters that they couldn't afford to do.

**Mary Siriani, Tupperware salesperson and distributor:** If you are traveling through the country at that time and your car broke down, don't call a garage, you call, look under the Yellow Pages for Tupperware. Someone'll come right out. They'll bring you to their home. They'll take your car. They'll lend you a car. They'll feed you. They'll give you money... Just amazing.

**Frank Siriani, Tupperware salesperson and distributor:** Whatever's got to be done.

**Mary Siriani, Tupperware salesperson and distributor:** That's the feeling of the beginning of the company.

**Frank Siriani, Tupperware salesperson and distributor:** That's what it was like then. Really was. And, you know, we, we were just Tupperware, you know a Tupperware family. That's, that's what you had to call it. Really was. Super.

**Slate:** Tupperware is now sold in more than 100 countries. Every 2.5 seconds, a Tupperware party is held somewhere in the world.