

**From:** Blum, Alan  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 4, 2016 3:39 PM  
**To:** themail@newyorker.com  
**Subject:** In the spirit of Thomas Whiteside...

David Remnick  
Editor, *The New Yorker*

Dear Mr. Remnick,

Since as a longstanding subscriber to *The New Yorker* I receive a weekly email from you, I hope you will be interested in a letter from a loyal reader with a suggestion for an editor's note.

The late Thomas Whiteside, most well known for his expose in *The New Yorker* of the use of the herbicide Agent Orange in the Viet Nam War, also wrote two scathing articles for the magazine in 1963 and 1970 (plus a third in *The New Republic*) about the tobacco industry and cigarette advertising that were published as a book, *Selling Death*.

By this time *The New Yorker* had stopped accepting cigarette advertising. But nearly half a century later *The New Yorker's* publisher Conde Nast is still running cigarette ads in several of its magazines, notably *Vanity Fair*, *Wired*, and *Glamour*. That's certainly its prerogative, as it is of the tobacco companies under the First Amendment to advertise cigarettes, a legal, albeit lethal, product.

However, Conde Nast is also a Publishing Partner of Stand Up To Cancer (SU2C), the cancer cure research fund-raising organization whose fifth national telethon is September 9. The publication by Conde Nast of advertisements for SU2C, including in *The New Yorker*, that call for the public to support research to find a cure for cancer, strikes me as the epitome of hypocrisy. I believe that Thomas Whiteside would have called out Conde Nast. I think you should do so now.

Even while it no longer published cigarette ads *per se*, throughout the 1980s, 1990s, and well into the 2000s *The New Yorker* published countless 2-page image-burnishing advertisements by Philip Morris USA (subsumed, since 2003, under its newly named parent, Altria) touting its support for the arts and various charitable causes from food banks and minority-hiring programs to efforts to end illiteracy and domestic violence. More recently, Altria was a co-sponsor of *The New Yorker's* Aspen Ideas Festival, and the Altria logo was featured in advertisements in the magazine. All of these ads were aimed at opinion leaders among *The New Yorker's* readership. Altria/Philip Morris is the manufacturer of the world's top-selling brand of cigarettes, Marlboro.

I have heard your interview with Terry Gross on "Fresh Air," in which you praise Sy Newhouse for the free hand he has given you at the helm of *The New Yorker*. I also admire Mr. Newhouse for his commitment to the print medium and for his contributions to education (my son is a graduate of the Newhouse School at Syracuse).

But it should be a no-brainer to point out the egregious contradiction of a publisher promoting a foundation that seeks to find cures for cancer while still promoting the leading preventable cause of cancer, cigarettes, which are responsible for upwards of a third of all cancer deaths.

As a regular op-ed contributor to *The Birmingham News*, I first wrote about your publisher's (and others') hypocrisy in a column in 2014, which was picked up by *The Cancer Letter* (attachment) and other outlets including Fair Warning (an investigative journalism group) and the Knight Science Journalism Tracker. I wrote about it again a few weeks ago:

[http://www.al.com/opinion/index.ssf/2014/09/stand\\_up\\_to\\_cancer\\_not\\_standin.html](http://www.al.com/opinion/index.ssf/2014/09/stand_up_to_cancer_not_standin.html)

[http://www.al.com/opinion/index.ssf/2016/08/cancer\\_moonshot\\_weve\\_already\\_1.html](http://www.al.com/opinion/index.ssf/2016/08/cancer_moonshot_weve_already_1.html)

But such local columns are trees falling in the forest, and here we are nearly half a century after Thomas Whiteside's condemnation of the cigarette makers in *The New Yorker*. I hope you will raise concerns about Conde Nast's wanting to appear to be an ardent foe of cancer while still accepting a considerable amount of money to advertise cigarettes--and will also forward my letter to Mr. Newhouse for his consideration.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Alan Blum, MD

*Professor and Gerald Leon Wallace, MD, Endowed Chair in Family Medicine  
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