

Smoking aloft: an illustrated history

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1920s and 1930s

The emergence of civil aviation was associated with glamour, daring and sophistication. At the same time, smoking was being promoted and popularised. The two industries were often depicted together in cigarette advertisements with an aviation theme. Advertisers often linked women to smoking and flight. Images of aviators and aviatrices such as Amelia Earhart were invoked to sell cigarettes.





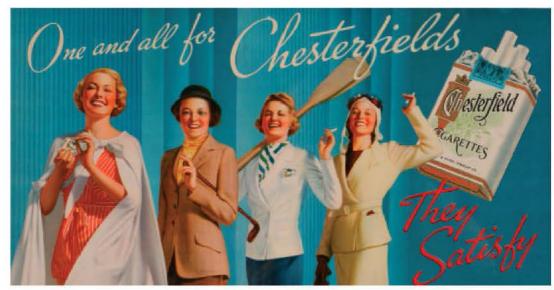








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1940s

Cigarettes were very popular during the second world war. Advertisements and posters from this time often depicted flying and smoking together. Although smoking was not initially permitted on airplanes, cigarette companies provided sample packs to customers.









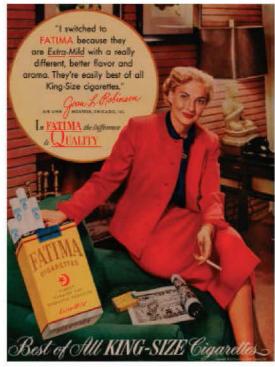
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1950s to 1970s

After the war, images of airlines and smoking were seen together worldwide. By the 1950s, virtually all of the world's airlines permitted smoking and distributed complimentary cigarettes (see Philip Morris-Ozark Airlines sample at right). In spite of the growing recognition of the harmful effects of smoking in the 1960s and 1970s, airlines made little effort to protect non-smoking travellers.













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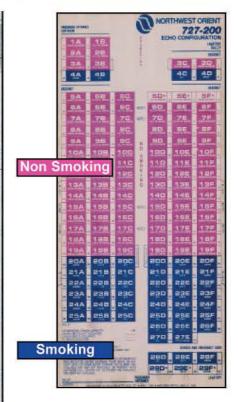
1980s to present

By the 1980s, the failure of adjustable non-smoking sections to diminish cabin air pollution motivated a handful of flight attendants in the USA to lobby Congress for eradication of smoking aloft. The tobacco industry attempted to subvert these efforts by creating such terms as "environmental tobacco smoke", conducting bogus research, and dismissing allegations of harm from secondhand smoke as hysteria. In the late 1980s and 1990s the quest by flight attendants for legal redress for harm suffered from occupational exposure to tobacco smoke resulted in the largest class action settlement in the history of tobacco litigation and the creation of the Flight Attendant Medical Research Institute.









With support from the Flight Attendant Medical Research Institute, The University of Alabama Center for the Study of Tobacco and Society is documenting the history of smoking on commercial aircraft. This pictorial review was based on an exhibit presented at the Twelfth World Conference on Tobacco and Health in Helsinki, August 3-8, 2003. Dr Blum serves as Director of the Center as well as FAMRI William Cahan Distinguished Professor. Lori Jacobi, MA, provided research assistance.