

# Cigarette ad exhibit tracks health claims, endorsements

By **DAVE PARKS**  
News staff writer

Laughter and amazement are common responses to the exhibit, "When 'More Doctors Smoke Camels' ... A Century of Health Claims in Cigarettes."

After all, it now seems preposterous for a physician or scientist to endorse a particular brand of cigarette for its health benefits.

But such endorsements were concocted regularly in tobacco advertisements throughout the 20th Century, and there's a sobering ending for the tiny exhibit of 25 print ads stretching down a corridor at the Alabama Museum of the Health Sciences at UAB's Reynold's Historical Library.

The exhibit's finale is an advertisement for a new brand of cigarettes, Omni. Vector Tobacco is marketing the brand with the claim that it is the "first reduced carcinogen cigarette." Retail sales are expected to start this month.

"It's the same baloney," said Dr. Alan Blum, professor of family medicine and director of the Center for the Study of Tobacco and Society at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa. "You can't smoke safely, period."

When told about Blum's comments, a spokeswoman for Omni said, "The company feels it's been very direct, and the ad speaks for itself."

Omni's ad features "An Open Letter to American Smokers" from Bennett LeBow, CEO of Vector Tobacco. The letter concedes that Omni has not been proven to lower the risk of cancer, but it also says:

"As we all know, smoking is addictive and hazardous to your health. However, the medical community has identified specific carcinogens that are a major cause of lung cancer in smokers. In a groundbreaking move, we have greatly reduced many of these. Let me be perfectly clear — there is no such thing as a safe cigarette, and we



SPECIAL/CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF TOBACCO AND SOCIETY

This Lucky Strike ad is part of the exhibit "When 'More Doctors Smoke Camels' ... A Century of Health Claims in Cigarettes."

*"It's all a game. It's like somebody jumping off the 40th floor of a building instead of the 45th floor."*

**Dr. Alan Blum**

Professor of family medicine and director of the Center for the Study of Tobacco and Society at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa

do not encourage anyone to smoke. But, we strongly believe that if you do smoke, Omni is the best alternative."

Blum, who supplied ads in the exhibit from a large collection at his center, said decades of tobacco industry advertising have convinced the public that some types of cigarettes are safer than others.

"It's all a game," he said. "It's like somebody jumping off the 40th floor of a building instead of the 45th floor."

Perhaps the best example is the marketing of filtered cigarettes, which people now believe are safer than non-filtered cigarettes. But most people don't

know that early cigarette filters were made from asbestos, and studies have shown that people who use filtered cigarettes smoke more than people who smoke non-filtered cigarettes, he said.

"It's all a big hoax," Blum said.

Indeed, the old advertisements on display at the University of Alabama at Birmingham are outrageous, in hindsight. For instance, a Lucky Strike ad campaign was based upon a claim that thousands of physicians had endorsed the cigarettes as "less irritating to sensitive or tender throats." The ads, which began in the 1920s, even appeared in medical journals. Similar ads were developed for Camel cigarettes and boasted that "More Doctors Smoke Camels."

*The exhibit runs through Jan. 31 on the third floor of Lister Hill Library for the Health Sciences, 1700 University Blvd.*

# UAB REPORTER

A NEWSPAPER PUBLISHED FOR THE UAB COMMUNITY

DECEMBER 17, 2001

VOL 26 • NO 11

## Ads laud When more doctors smoked Camels

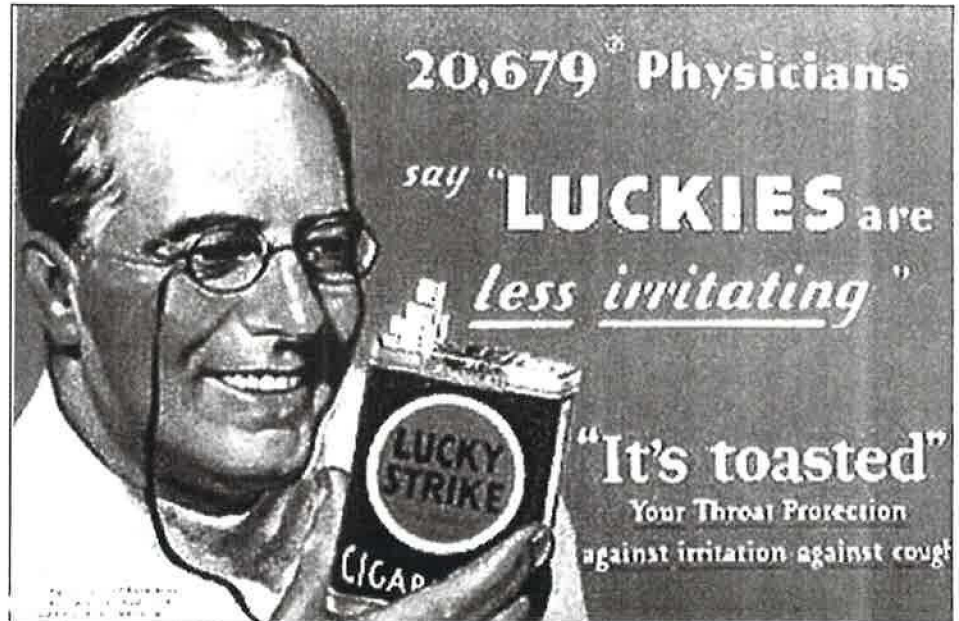
BY BOB SHEPARD  
Media Relations

Once upon a time, more doctors smoked Camels than any other cigarette. At least, that's what the RJ Reynolds tobacco company claimed. From the 1920s through the 1950s, many cigarette manufacturers used images of medical professionals and their implied endorsements to help sell their products. Tobacco companies even advertised in the *New England Journal of Medicine* and other respected medical journals.

The Alabama Museum of the Health Sciences at UAB's Reynolds Historical Library presents a display of cigarette advertising titled *When 'More Doctors Smoke Camels' — A Century of Health Claims in Cigarette Advertisements*. The exhibit was prepared by Professor Alan Blum (Family Medicine), director and founder of the Center for the Study of Tobacco and Society, part of the University of Alabama College of Community Health Sciences, Tuscaloosa.

"Ads from this period often carried wide-ranging medical claims and depicted cigarette-touting physicians in the company of endorsers such as movie stars and sports heroes," Blum said. "Some as paid tribute to medical pioneers in an effort to associate themselves with great advancements in science."

The museum display features 25 ads selected from thousands that Blum has collected. One 1946 ad tells you "24 hours a



The exhibit *When 'More Doctors smoke Camels* is on display in the Alabama Museum of the Health Sciences in Reynolds Historical Library. It is on loan from the National Tobacco Archive of the University of Alabama Center for the Study of Tobacco and Society.

day, your doctor is on duty — a few winks of sleep, a few puffs of a cigarette — and he's back at the job again." Other ads claim cigarettes promote good digestion or beat stress.

The exhibit also includes examples of cigarette advertising aimed directly at physicians. A 1949 ad in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* boasted that scientific studies showed Phillip Morris cigarettes were less irritating and suggested that physicians should recommend them to their patients.

"In the early 1950s, 67 percent of physicians smoked," Blum said, "although they

were among the first group to quit as the scientific evidence of health risks began to mount. But cigarette advertising appeared in medical journals as late as 1983."

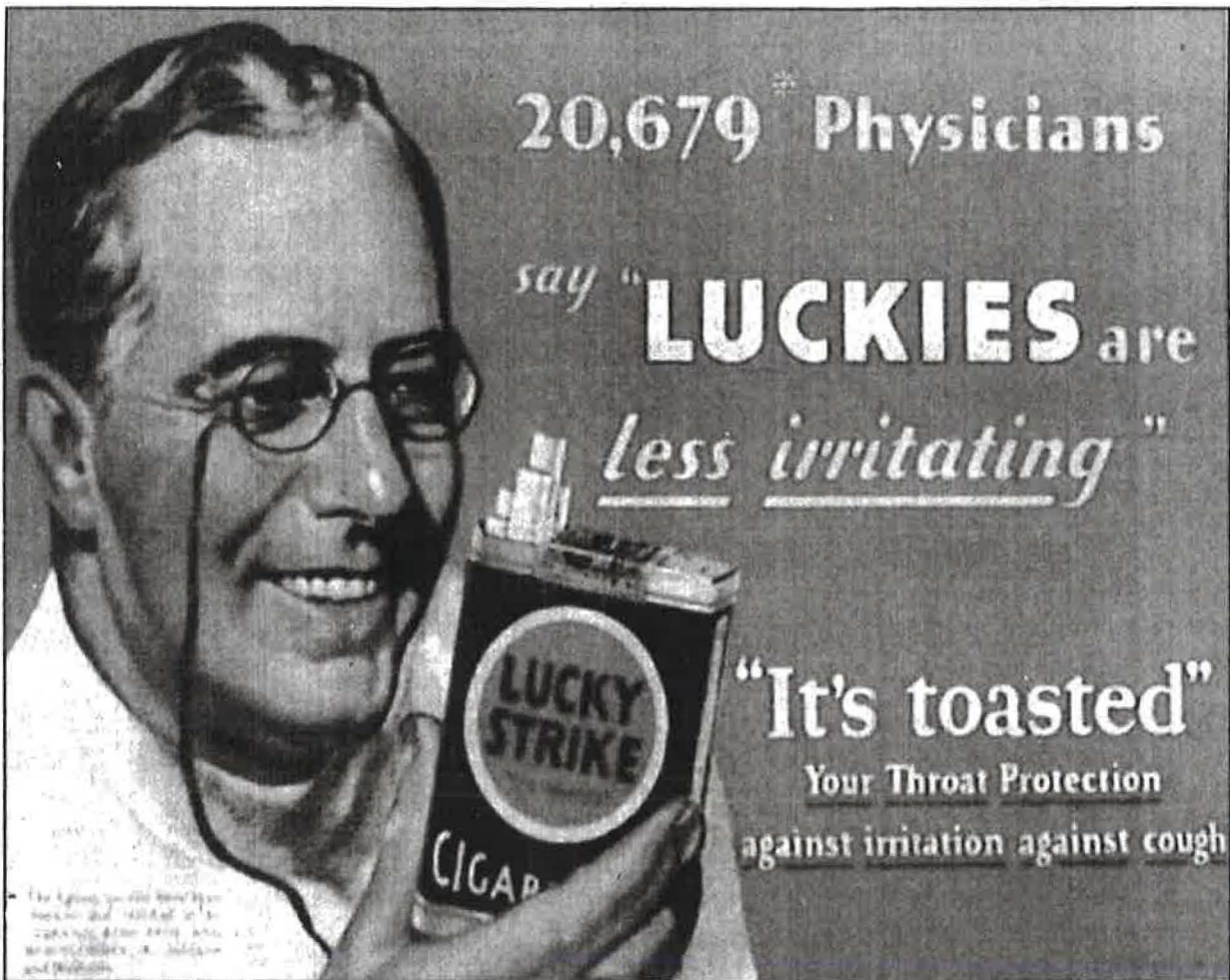
The last ad in the exhibit is for Omni, introduced in 2001 by the Liggett Company and advertised in *People* magazine as having less carcinogens.

"This is just the latest incarnation in a long line of false advertising," noted Blum. "It's pure, unadulterated hokum and just as deceptive as Liggett and Meyers ads from the 1950s that proclaimed, 'Stay safe, smoke Chesterfield' and 'L and M, just what the doctor ordered.'"

The exhibit will run through Jan. 31, 2002, in the gallery between the Reynolds Historical Library and the Ireland Room, on the third floor of the Lister Hill Library for the Health Sciences, 1700 University Blvd. Call 934-4475 for more information.

# The Huntsville Times

Tuesday, January 29, 2002



20,679 Physicians  
say "LUCKIES are  
*less irritating*"

"It's toasted"  
Your Throat Protection  
against irritation against cough

Special to the Times

An ad in the "When More Doctors Smoked Camels" exhibit at UAB's Alabama Museum of Health Sciences.

## Smoking's stained history on show

*Exhibit recaps a century of cigarette ads where even doctors indulged*

By LINDA LONG

Times Birmingham Correspondent

BIRMINGHAM — In a 1940s-era magazine advertisement, a new mother puffs a cigarette as she cradles her tiny baby. Another sales pitch boasts that more doctors smoke Camels than any other cigarette, and in a bit of ironic hindsight, Chesterfields claim to be "after a man's heart."

"When 'More Doctors Smoked Camels,' " an exhibit on display through Friday at the University of Alabama at Birmingham's Alabama Museum of Health Sciences,

looks at a century of cigarette advertising claims.

The exhibit, prepared by Dr. Alan Blum, professor of family medicine and director and founder of the Center for the Study of Tobacco and Society, features 25 ads selected from thousands that Blum has collected. They show white-coat clad doctors and freckle-faced nurses promoting cigarettes as a healthy option for a variety of ailments.

One 1946 ad boasts that "24 hours a day, your doctor is on duty . . . a few winks of sleep and a few puffs of a cigarette and he's back at the job again."

"In the early 1950s, 67 percent of physicians smoked, although they were among the first group to quit as scientific evidence of health

risked started to mount," Blum said.

Still, Blum said cigarette advertising appeared in medical journals as late as 1983.

"The medical profession didn't step up to the plate to take a stand against smoking. Politicians have not been heroes, and the publishing industry has not ostracized tobacco," he said.

As for the advertisers responsible for both early and current day cigarette advertising, Blum calls them "scoundrels and panderers." He bases that assessment in part from what he called the inconsistencies and contractions of the early days to current "100 percent deception."

To underscore his point, Blum

Please see **STAINED** on B9

## *UAB ad exhibit harkens back to days when 'More Doctors Smoked Camels'*

# Stained

*Continued from page B7*

cited side-by-side 1940s sales pitches claiming that Camels stimulate digestion and make meals taste better while Lucky Strikes help smokers lose weight. He called today's current cigarette advertising even worse.

"One ad currently running claims their cigarette is noncarcinogenic. That's 100 percent deceptive," Blum said. "The deception hasn't stopped."

Today, Blum said, advertisers are pushing low-tar cigarettes and 95 percent of people who smoke today are buying low tar.

"The fact is, (low tar cigarettes) have no benefit whatsoever over the old nonfiltered camels. In many ways they're

worse," he said, because people smoke more of them to get the nicotine they crave. "So to advertise low tar is just as deceptive as what we saw in the '40s. It's pure hokum, pure consumer fraud."

In defense of the advertising industry, both now and then, David Driscoll with Huntsville's Durham Advertising said the mass media gave advertisers plenty of help back in the '30s and '40s.

"Nobody knew back then that cigarettes were bad for you, or they didn't want to believe it. Back then, it was cool to smoke," Driscoll said. "Even Ricky and Lucy and Andy Griffith on Mayberry smoked."

Driscoll said after the surgeon general's report linking smoking to cancer in the 1960s, advertisers had to step up their campaigns.

"The electronic media started selling it with sex, like the Marlboro man. Then they came out with the skinny little cigarette to get the women, then they started going after the teens," he said. "Basically, smokers are in a state of denial and anytime they see a positive message with cigarettes it's an excuse for them to say 'Hey, it's OK to smoke.'"

So, does the advertising industry have a responsibility to not take tobacco clients? Driscoll said an ad agency's basic job is to take a product's message and try to reach the market.

"If a tobacco company walked in and handed you a \$30 million account, it would be hard to turn it down," said Driscoll, whose agency isn't currently doing tobacco ads. "But you could say we need to address the fact it can cause cancer and

death. Enjoy Brand X, but be responsible when you smoke. That's a good compromise. It's free enterprise and free speech. If one turns it down somebody else will pick it up. You don't shoot the messenger."

Blum, however, has another suggestion. "If they've got to push cigarettes, let them walk around with a sandwich board. No magazine or newspaper," he said.

Blum has other collections featuring Santa Claus and smoking ads, women and smoking, and sports figures and smoking. For questions or comments or to see Blum's collection, call him in Tuscaloosa at 205-348-2887. For information about the Birmingham exhibit call 205-934-8934.