

Advertising cigarettes with  
a macho pitch to kids

# A model smoke screen

## DERRICK Z. JACKSON

In the 1980s, David Goerlitz hung by ropes off ledges in the Rocky Mountains. He was a model for Winston cigarettes. As he dangled in the pose of a rock climber, directors wanted him to show off every ripple of his muscles. They wanted a face exploding in exhilaration.

"The guys on the set would yell, 'Get those kids smoking! We need more kids smoking, man! We want 5,000 more kids smoking, now!'" Goerlitz said last week by telephone during an anti-smoking tour in Vermont. "They'd say, 'Come on! Remember what it was like playing GI Joe as a kid! Get that look in your eye! Make like you're coming around a rock with an Uzi, looking for the enemy!'"

Goerlitz smoked 3½ packs of cigarettes a day. He noticed that few executives of R.J. Reynolds, maker of Winston, smoked. Goerlitz asked an executive why and said the reply was: "We don't smoke the shit. We just sell it."

He said the executive added, "We reserve the right to smoke for the young, the poor, the black and the stupid."

Goerlitz laughed at the comment then. He was hooked on smokes and smoke money. From 1982 to 1987, RJR paid Goerlitz, he said, \$60,000 to \$100,000 for 20 days' work. He said the theme was the same. Action. Adventure. Adolescence.

"It was Indiana Jones. Kids wanted to be bikers and hunters. Our symbol was machismo. You don't see boys buying Virginia Slims. They don't buy Capri. They buy Marlboro. They buy Bucks."

In 1984, Goerlitz suffered a stroke. His doctors said it was from smoking. But at 34 he felt invulnerable. He kept smoking and told friends he was being tested for multiple sclerosis. He returned to work for Winston.

"Was I as dumb as dirt or what?" Goerlitz said. "But that's how addicted I was."

As late as summer 1988, Goerlitz was willing to work for the tobacco lobby. But also that summer, his brother received a bone marrow transplant at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute. He said the sight of lung cancer patients

depressed him.

On one occasion, Goerlitz said, a nurse was so offended by his role for Winston that she asked him to leave the floor.

"My son told me, 'I wish you had been a plumber,'" Goerlitz said.

In the winter, Goerlitz stopped smoking and turned on R.J. Reynolds. An RJR spokeswoman, Peggy Carter, said any charges that Winston ads are for the young are groundless. (Sales of RJR's Camel brand, however, have zoomed among young smokers.) She said executives do not attend ad shoots and models are not privy to marketing strategy. She challenged Goerlitz's credibility, noting he is paid for his speeches.

Goerlitz said he will make less than \$20,000 this year. Cigarette companies spend \$11 million a day in advertising and promotion. They paid \$16 million a year in total compensation to tobacco CEOs Michael Miles of Philip Morris, Louis Gerstner of RJR Nabisco, Louis Bantle of US Tobacco and William Alley of American Brands. Those CEOs own \$103 million in stock. CEO Laurence Tisch of Loews owns \$1 billion in stock.

Just like coke dealers who stay sharp by not snorting the stuff they sell and like the executive Goerlitz said he encountered, you can hardly find a tobacco CEO who smokes. Joe Cherner, head of Smoke-Free Education Services in New York, asked Tisch at a Loews board meeting if he or any board members smoked. Cherner said Tisch looked around, saw no hands go up and grumbled, "I guess not."

"You don't spend five or six days on mountains and in hotels and not talk about what you're doing," Goerlitz said of R.J. Reynolds' targeting of the youth market. "They kept saying, 'Think back to what you looked like as a child.' They would take 36,000 pictures in order to achieve the four or five that made you look as young and as excited as you possibly could be. I was as passionate as I can be about that job. I feel terrible about it now. But maybe now I can use my passion to save some lives instead of help taking them."

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