

THE PHAROS

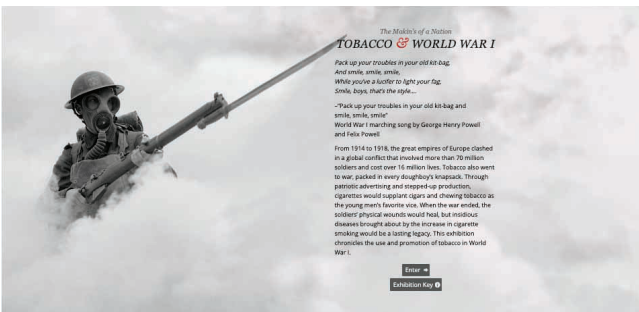
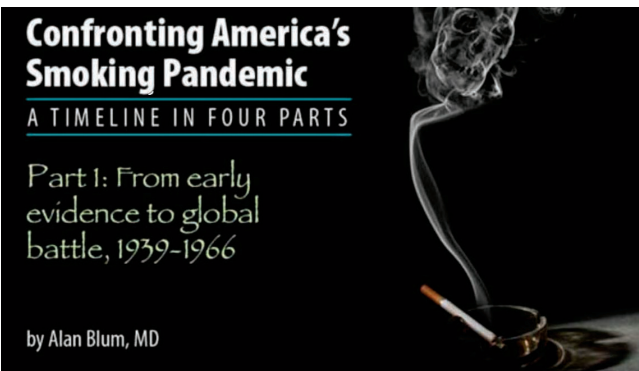
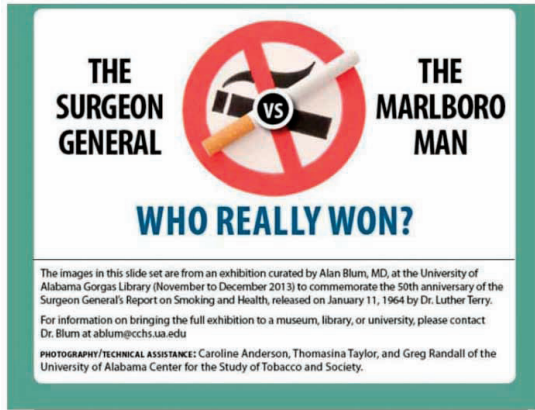
ALPHA OMEGA ALPHA HONOR MEDICAL SOCIETY

SUMMER 2019



Book reviews

David A. Bennahum, MD, and Jack Coulehan, MD, Book Review Editors



Review of the Center for the Study of Tobacco and Society: Multimedia Exhibitions

Online media exhibit, 1988 to present, <https://csts.ua.edu/exhibitions/>.

Center for the Study of Tobacco and Society, College of Community Health Sciences Center, University of Alabama.

Reviewed by Jack Coulehan, MD (AQA, University of Pittsburgh, 1969)

In early 1964, Surgeon General Luther Terry published *Smoking and Health*, the famous report that implicated smoking as the principal cause of lung cancer, chronic bronchitis, and emphysema, and a major risk factor for

coronary heart disease. In 1965, Congress passed a law requiring cigarette packaging to carry the warning, "Caution: Smoking Cigarettes May Be Hazardous to Your Health." By the end of the decade, 78 percent of Americans reported believing that smoking caused cancer, and Congress had banned cigarette advertising from television and radio. The prevalence of cigarette smoking among adults in America gradually declined from more than 40 percent in the 1960s to around 16 percent among men, and 12 percent among women, in 2017.

While the evidence was clear from the beginning, this dramatic change in human behavior required the concerted efforts of hundreds of anti-smoking activists, programs, and governmental measures. Dr. Alan Blum (AQA, Emory University, 1985) was, and is, one of the most prominent physician activists. While still a family practice resident in 1977, Blum founded Doctors Ought to Care, a national nonprofit health promotion organization directed at counteracting adolescent-onset tobacco use and other killer habits. Later, his research identified trends in tobacco industry marketing strategies, including the targeting of women and minorities and the circumvention of advertising restrictions through the sponsorship of sports and the arts.

Blum currently serves as Director of the Center for the Study of Tobacco and Society, established in 1998 at the University of Alabama, where he also holds the Gerald Leon Wallace M.D. Endowed Chair in Family Medicine. The Center comprises the world's largest collection of original documents, artifacts, images and frontline reports on the tobacco industry and the anti-smoking movement.

The Center's website (<https://csts.ua.edu/>) functions much like a hybrid of museum, investigative reporting, documentary film, and popular treatise recounting the rise and decline of cigarette smoking in America. It may not be a traditional book, but it certainly deserves the attention of anyone interested in the recent history of public health in America.

The website includes 19 curated exhibitions on various cigarette-related aspects of popular culture, politics, and history. The themes range from "The Surgeon General vs. the Marlboro Man: Who Really Won?" and "Confronting America's Smoking Epidemic," to "Cartoonists Take Up Smoking," and "Merry X-ray and a Happy New Lung." Each exhibition includes a mixture of written commentary, artwork, photographs, and recorded talks and interviews. The material is presented in an attractive, easily navigated format, so the viewer can either simply scan the surface for high points, or delve deeply into topics of particular interest.

On entering "Tobacco in World War I," the viewer is confronted by a colorful menu of six subtopics. One of

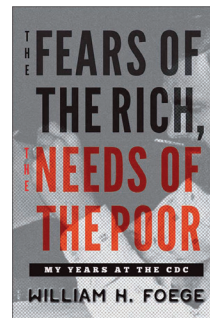
them, “We Want You...to Smoke,” contains magazine ads for Chesterfields, Lucky Strikes, and many other brands that present smoking as a marker of strength and manliness. Ariston, an English brand, assures readers that cigarette smoking “assists in readjusting matters to harmony...helps thought and brings an appreciation of the things that really matter.” The exhibition includes photos of free distribution of cigarettes to soldiers, including one of American Red Cross workers giving cigarettes to wounded soldiers in a hospital. One of the Ariston ads explicitly identifies hospitalization as a “situation” in which smoking is beneficial. Another subtopic, “Songs for Smokes,” presents sheet music and audio performances of two songs of the late 1910s that promote smoking almost as a sign of patriotism. One of these, “The Makin’s of the USA,” has the endearing refrain, “If you are not a slacker, get a sack of good tobacco.”

“The Targeting of African-Americans by the Tobacco Industry” shows ads in *Ebony* and *Jet*, that put a heavy emphasis on menthol cigarettes, because African-Americans were “known” to favor menthol brands. Interestingly, during the 1980s and 1990s. African-American leaders generally failed to speak out against smoking, thereby allying themselves with the American Civil Liberties Union, which disavowed anti-smoking measures as paternalistic. The same was true of minority publishers who “expressed gratitude for the financial contributions of tobacco advertisers that enabled the preservation of the minority press and other cultural institutions.” The tobacco industry also manipulated African-American perceptions by identifying itself with the struggle for civil rights. In 1988 Philip Morris published a full page ad in *Jet* featuring a photograph of Martin Luther King and an excerpt from one of his speeches urging all Americans to “break loose from the shackles of prejudice, half-truths, and downright ignorance,” thus creating a mental (but completely false) link between Dr. King and Philip Morris.

These are examples from some of the pro-cigarette campaigns highlighted in the social history of smoking, but the Center’s exhibitions also document many successful anti-smoking measures and programs during the last five decades. One exhibition features the aggressive anti-smoking initiatives of Mayor Michael Bloomberg and Health Commissioner Tom Frieden in New York City. Another section covers the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act, signed into law by President Barack Obama June 22, 2009, which gave the U.S. Food and Drug Administration authority to regulate the content, marketing, and sale of tobacco products.

The curated exhibitions offered by the Center for the Study of Tobacco and Society are an excellent example of how social history, in this case pertaining to one of our most significant public health problems, can be presented online in an enlightening, educational, and entertaining way.

Dr. Coulehan is a member of *The Pharos* Editorial Board, and one of its Book Review Editors. He is Emeritus Director of the Center for Medical Humanities, Compassionate Care, and Bioethics at Stony Brook University in New York. His E-mail address is john.coulehan@stonybrookmedicine.edu.



The Fears of the Rich, The Needs of the Poor: My Years at the CDC

William H. Foege, MD (AQA, University of Washington, 2014, Alumnus)
Johns Hopkins University Press, 2018, 264 pages

Reviewed by Richard F. Gillum, MD, MS (AQA, Northwestern University, 1969)

Physicians at any stage in their career or any subspecialty have had at least a passing acquaintance with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as the agency that issues immunization guidelines and investigates infectious disease outbreaks. Many should enjoy gaining more familiarity with CDC via a new book by Former CDC director William H. Foege.

Now more than 80 years of age, the Emeritus Professor of International Health at Emory University has produced a delightful read that is part memoir taking the reader from Foege’s origins in small town Washington to his selection as CDC director at the age of 40. It is part public health history taking the reader from the days of William Farr, MD and John Snow, MD to the recent Ebola epidemic in West Africa. It is part epidemiology primer offering pearls gleaned from past epidemics. And, it offers insight into the development and workings of a federal government agency.

The title refers to the wise saying that indicates the resources for global health efforts must come from rich nations like the United States, which will only provide them because of fear of imported contagion in a globalized world. The truth of this is repeatedly confirmed by responses to epidemic diseases from smallpox to Ebola.