

# AMHERST

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# The 100th Anniversary Issue



From **Coolidge** to coeducation,  
Freedom Rides to *Freakonomics*,  
WORLD WAR I to **Watergate**, **10**  
**decades of news from our**  
**pages** ■ Where are they now?  
Updates on a **whistleblower**,  
a **pilot**, **2 ASTRONAUTS** and  
an **IVF pioneer** (plus 9 others)

# Where are they now?

Is Timothy McVeigh's prosecutor still arguing cases? Where's the cop who blew the whistle on police corruption? With Joe Camel gone and smokers relegated to sidewalks, what's left for an anti-smoking crusader to crusade against? How **13 alumni** have changed in the years since they were first profiled in the magazine.

BY KATHERINE JAMIESON

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ROB MATTSO

## Of ministers and madams

Pulitzer winner **DEBBY APPLGATE '89** swore she'd never write another book. Did she mean it?

**A**fter spending some 20 years on her first book, *The Most Famous Man in America: The Biography of Henry Ward Beecher*, Debby Applegate swore she'd never write another. "I felt like a 19th-century schoolboy who'd studied too

long by candlelight and strained my eyes," she says. In 2006 *Amherst* magazine excerpted her book about the 19th-century preacher, which won a 2007 Pulitzer Prize. Yet even after that critical acclaim, Applegate balked at the idea of diving into another project.

But archival collections—starting with those in Frost Library at Amherst—"brainwashed me into being an historian," she says, and made her "unfit" for other work.

Searching for a new historical subject, she decided to study New York City in the 1920s. After a year of reading widely, she pulled a bright red book from the open stacks of the Yale University Library. It was a memoir by Polly Adler, a notorious madam. The book, *A House is Not a Home*, captivated Applegate: "Within days, I made the decision to write about her."

Madams leave a different trail of evidence than preachers do, so Applegate's process has shifted from reading old letters to searching for caches of secret documents. Evidence has popped up in unexpected places: a trash collector in Nebraska discovered a suitcase of correspondence between Adler and her ghostwriter, and the last remaining trunk of Adler's memorabilia is guarded by an ex-boyfriend of her final heir. Applegate is planning a trip to Northern California to track down this trunk with the help of a state marshal.

Applegate finds the "Sherlock Holmes" work more fun than the writing. She quotes from Adler's memoir: "If I'd known how hard it would be to write this book, I'd have stayed a madam."





### Still fuming

Joe Camel is gone, but **ALAN BLUM '69** continues to fight.

In 1990, when Dr. Alan Blum '69 was last profiled in the magazine, a 10-story, neon-lit Joe Camel billboard, complete with ersatz cigarette packages, hovered over Times Square; it was the largest advertisement in the world. Though Joe came down in 1994, Blum, an anti-smoking crusader, is firm in his belief that the tobacco industry is as powerful—and nefarious—as ever.

"The taxi cab, subway and bus ads are gone, but the industry hasn't gone away," he says. Tobacco companies now market smokeless nicotine products—like candies and electronic cigarettes—that Blum believes are hardly harmless: they simply sustain nicotine addiction during social situations when it's not acceptable to smoke. Tobacco companies may no longer advertise on TV, but they now use the Internet, as well as the U.S. Postal Service, to reach their consumers. "I get a Marlboro birthday card every year," Blum says.

A family medicine physician who runs the University of Alabama Center for the Study of Tobacco and Society, Blum has been tobacco's witness, chronicler and archivist for more than half a century. His "scholarly activist" approach had him organizing street demonstrations by day and writing articles for medical journals at night.

Since the 1990s, when the Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement forced cigarette companies to stop advertising to kids and to give money to states to defray smoking-related health-care costs, Blum has been watching, with a jaundiced eye, the wane of grassroots activism in the anti-smoking movement. Now that every state has a tobacco control office, he says, fewer physicians and citizens are fighting the fight: they believe government is on the case.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, 46 percent of American adults smoked in 1964, compared to 20 percent today—but because of population growth, the decline in the absolute number of smokers is less dramatic than those percentages make it seem. "It's the biggest health failure of the 20th century," Blum contends.

Blum has compiled the world's most extensive archive of original artifacts and ephemera from the tobacco industry and the anti-smoking movement—a collection he began as a teenager. The Blum Archive includes thousands of items—news stories, company reports, cartoons, advertisements ("As your dentist, I would recommend Vice-roys"). The activist-physician is now seeking a home for his collection, but the cost of preserving and storing it is prohibitive for many libraries. Still, he soldiers on, quoting (from a TV report he once saw) a 92-year-old activist's secret to a long life: "I stay pissed off."

### The most trusted Canadian

**DAVID SUZUKI '58** bemoans the fact that viewers have not taken a more active role in conservation as a result of his popular nature show.

For more than three decades, David Suzuki has hosted Canada's most popular nature program. *The Nature of Things with David Suzuki*, on Canadian Public Television, reaches 1.5 million viewers weekly and has made him a celebrity in Canada and Australia. He's been named one of the "Greatest Canadians" in a cross-Canada contest, and for the third year in a row a *Reader's Digest* poll has found him to be the "Most Trusted Canadian." But Suzuki, whose work as a science educator and environmental activist landed him on the cover of *Amherst* magazine in 1994, bemoans the fact that viewers have not taken a more active role in conservation as a result of his program. "I wanted people to watch me, then turn it off and go do something," he says. "I wanted to empower people with information; instead I empowered me."

In 1990 he started the David Suzuki Foundation to advocate for the environment. "We said that every dollar we raise, we'll spend it, we'll be flat out," he recalls. "There was a real sense of movement." Then a recession halted progress. "The economy always trumps everything else," Suzuki laments. "The industrial countries were saying, 'We can't afford this.'" Today, Suzuki uses a bracing metaphor to describe the state of the debate over climate change: Humanity is in a giant car speeding toward a brick wall at 100 miles an hour. The passengers are arguing about where they want to sit, and all of the scientists who can make a difference are locked in the trunk. "Many of my colleagues are saying it's too late," he says.