

# THE U.S. JOURNAL OF DRUG AND ALCOHOL DEPENDENCE

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## What's Up DOC?

### THE SAFE CIGARETTE MYTH



Alan Blum, M.D., is a family physician currently serving as a Morris Fishbein Fellow in Medical Journalism with the Journal of the American Medical Association. In 1977, he founded DOC (Doctor's Ought to Care.)

"SOME CIGARETTES Now 'Tolerable,' Doctor Says," read the headline in The Washington Post on Aug. 10, 1978, over a lengthy article by staff writer Victor Cohn on Gio Gori, Ph.D., of the National Cancer Institute.

Among the statements attributed to Dr. Gori in the article was the following: There has been so much progress in removing toxins that "we can now begin to talk about 'tolerable' levels of smoking from an overall, public health standpoint. I think we will begin to see some beneficial effect in this country" — that is, some abatement in this nation's lung cancer epidemic — "in five or six years."

The problem is, when one researcher is concerned primarily with a single disease — in this case, lung cancer — he is apt to make statements that mislead the public into believing that the risk of getting other diseases is also diminished. What is overlooked almost entirely in the research into a so-called "less hazardous cigarette" is that individuals are more likely to increase their consumption of the low-tar, low-nicotine brands in order to derive the needed kick. This has been well demonstrated by, among others, Schachter in the January, 1978, issue of *Annals of Internal Medicine*.

The Gori report caused quite a flap. Accompanying the published version (in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, Sept. 10, 1978), was an editorial by JAMA editor-in-chief, William R. Barclay, M.D. Dr. Barclay looked at the other side of the coin: "Most

scientists believe that there is no threshold below which mutagens, carcinogens, and similar damaging agents are safe. They hold that a linear relationship exists from no exposure on up and that if enough people are exposed, a few will exhibit damaging effects no matter how small the dose. If this is true, there never can be a safe cigarette."

But Dr. Barclay went even further by telling of the special events leading up to the publication of the article. Although the Gori report had been accepted for publication, no issue date had been assigned, when the story broke in the mass media. Evidently, the tobacco industry, even more on the defensive than usual as a result of strong stands by (former) Secretary of HEW Califano and by the release of a major report by the AMA summarizing 14 years of research on the bad news about cigarettes, went in search of scientific support for its product. "A few days later," wrote Dr. Barclay, "the press was outside Dr. Gori's office seeking a news release on an article accepted by JAMA which was supposed to confirm that today's cigarettes are safe."

In fairness to Gori and co-author Cornelius Lynch, Ph.D., they state in their article that their calculations are based on the assumption that the smoker switching to the so-called low-tar (low-poison) brand "will not change his smoking habits in terms of depth of inhalation, frequency of puffing, and butt length." They also mention that smokers who pay attention only to tar and nicotine levels in their quest for a safer brand may, in certain instances, be "subjecting themselves to daily intakes of other toxic smoke constituents in excess of their estimated critical values."

But Gori's and Lynch's weaning approach to lower and lower poison cigarettes only leads them — and American smokers — into the hands of the tobacco industry. But less troubling than their well-intentioned (albeit misdirected) effort is the media's handling of the incident — spoon-fed by the cigarette companies. The headline on Cohn's article, "Doctor Says," misleads the reader into thinking that Gori is a physician. Nowhere is it noted that he and Lynch neither treat nor advise patients.

# THE U.S. JOURNAL OF DRUG AND ALCOHOL DEPENDENCE

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## What's Up DOC?



Chemicals +  
Cigarettes =  
Consumer Fraud

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"WHAT'S ALL this I hear about your company putting chemicals into your cigarettes? I have enjoyed your cigarettes for a number of years and will probably continue to smoke them for many more. Would you be so kind as to send me a list of ingredients?" This letter was written by a medical secretary to R. J. Reynolds in August 1978, after I'd mentioned to her that the manufacturers of cigarettes have admitted to using more than 1,500 chemical additives in their products.

One month later she received a personal, two-page letter from F. K. Cahill of the Public Relations Department of R. J. Reynolds. "We are unable to divulge the particulars of the processing and flavoring of any RJR brand," Cahill told the concerned consumer. But the spokesperson did allude to three types of chemical additives: humectants such as glycerine and propylene glycol (the latter chemical, according to the dictionary definition, is "a sweet...viscous liquid made from propylene and used as an antifreeze and solvent and in brake fluids"; glycerol is used as a "plasticizer"); Top Flavorings, "the final flavoring solutions added at the end of the processing operations," and casing materials that contain sugar, licorice, cocoa, or chocolate liquor.

Accompanying this revealing reply was a brochure entitled "The Cigarette Controversy," which contains the following introduction:

For many adults, cigarette smoking is one of life's pleasures. Does it cause illness — even death? No one knows. The case against smoking is based almost entirely on inferences from statistics. The "conventional wisdom" about smoking came from

judgments expressed by committees of doctors in England and the U.S. In our country, anti-smoking organizations pressured the government to endorse these judgments. Never before (or since) had a committee "discovered" a single "cause" for so many diseases. . .

Hilarious propaganda, if it weren't so harmful. But what follows is even more phantasmagoric:

If smoking does cause disease, why, after years of intensive research, has it not been shown how this occurs? And why has no ingredient as found in smoke been identified as the causal factor?

Evidently, the tobaccomen don't read the same journals physicians do — or their own studies funded by the industry in cooperation with the AMA.

To women, the brochure offers this reassuring information:

Some studies have shown that the lighter habits of smoking mothers actually have better survival rates than similar weight babies of nonsmokers.

Such a pronouncement differs diametrically from the 1980 Surgeon General's Report on smoking in women, as well as the view of pediatrician Mary Ann Cromer, writing in the July-August, 1978 issue of *Health Values*. "Recent research," she wrote, "demonstrates that smoking women are more vulnerable to certain unique problems such as premature menopause, spontaneous spinal fractures, infertility, stillbirths, spontaneous abortions, and neonatal mortality."

Dr. Cromer told me that her article, entitled "Wellness in Women," had been rejected, in form letter fashion, by Gloria Steinem's *Ms.* magazine. It appears that Miss Steinem, who in the 10 years since the founding of the magazine has never run an article in its health feature on cigarette smoking and has never had an issue without cigarette advertising, would rather hand on to cigarette company money — the single largest contribution to her kitty.

In this column in November, 1978 ("The Buying of an Epidemic"), I indicated that there is a cover-up in the media concerning the extent of the cigarette industry's entrenchment in the printed media. It has now gone beyond that. The publishers, 10 years after the broadcasters were dumped out of bed by the tobacco industry, are now the ones who prostitute themselves.



# THE U.S. JOURNAL

## OF DRUG AND ALCOHOL DEPENDENCE

VOL. 4 — NO. 2/3

### What's Up DOC?



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### Television lights up smouldering issue

ON FEBRUARY 9, "Prime Time Saturday," NBC-TV's imitation of "Sixty Minutes," featured a frightening story on the 2,000 preventable deaths each year caused by fires involving polyurethane furniture. Unfortunately, however, reporter John Dancy and anchor Tom Snyder completely ignored the main underlying issue of the polyurethane controversy: the smouldering cigarette.

Throughout Dancy's piece, he referred to the great number of fires attributed to smouldering cigarettes but implied — or at least did nothing to discourage the viewer from believing — that all cigarettes smoulder naturally. They don't. In fact, the smouldering cigarette is the result of chemical additives used by the cigarette makers.

Unlike commercially manufactured cigarettes, which will continue to burn for their entire length even in a 50 mile per hour wind, neither cigars nor pipes nor hand-rolled cigarettes will keep burning when unattended. Having cigarettes that burn continuously makes for higher sales, and the cigarette industry has made no effort to produce a safer cigarette by removing the burn-promoting additives. Since no federal agency monitors the cigarette manufacturing process, Congress has not touched this life-threatening issue. (Revelation of the exact chemical content of cigarettes would be of interest to consumers of cigarettes for health as well as safety reasons).

Contrary to the reporter's statement that consumer groups have shown little interest in the fire prevention problem, the Northern California Burn Council has truly been an unsung hero in its call for a self-extinguishing cigarette. Thanks to its rapidly spreading campaign, which has been endorsed by more than 45 groups including the International Association of Fire Chiefs, Representative John

resolution on March 3 calling for a self-extinguishing cigarette. Recently, Senator Alan Cranston (D-Cal) submitted Senate bill S-779, the Cigarette Safety Act.

The significance of these bills has scared tobacco industry bigwigs far more than the reformist zeal of Joe Califano or for that matter the spectre of 350,000 needless deaths due to their products this year. Tobacco Institute head Horace Kornegay has become more visible even in the front corridors of Capitol Hill, usually accompanied by one or another tobacco company executives and chemists. They don't seem to tell a consistent tale, however. They point out to one Congressman that they don't add any chemicals to their products and that they can in fact modify the paper to produce a self-extinguishing cigarette. The only problem, so they say, is that that would raise the tar and nicotine content. They tell another Congressman that they do indeed add a few chemicals — but only to the paper, in order to keep an even burn; a self-extinguishing cigarette would be "impractical," they tell him.

What would happen if cigarettes did burn out? For one thing, people wouldn't smoke as many, if only for having to take time to relight them constantly. A secret memorandum distributed among executives of R.J. Reynolds during the 1978 Clean Indoor Air Act (Proposition 5) in California noted that if every smoker were just to smoke one less cigarette per day, the company would lose \$92 million a year!

"If there's ever going to be any way to regulate the tobacco industry," Andrew McGuire, executive director of the Burn Council (and himself a burn victim) told me, "it'll be through the additives."

It seems that the NBC reporter had two not mutually exclusive angles from which to choose in covering the fire story: either prevent fires in the first place by eliminating the smouldering cigarette, or, accept the risk of cigarettes, and blame the bedding and furniture. As it turned out, he chose the latter and misled the public.

Oddly, he missed an opportunity to elaborate on one aspect of the polyurethane problem that affects virtually everyone: the foam seats on airliners. By and large, aircraft fires in the passenger cabin are attributable to the flammability of polyurethane due to a dropped cigarette. A couple of months ago at Miami International Airport, a United Airlines jet, from which the passengers had just deplaned, burst into flames. The fire gutted the passenger section. The cause: a smouldering cigarette.

Is the tobacco industry too impenetrable for investigative reporters? Or is NBC reluctant for some other reason to scrutinize the real cause of the polyurethane problem?

One final note: On March 2, NBC televised the Viceroy Rich Lights Bay Classic golf tournament; like its showing of the Marlboro Cup horse race last fall, such an action violates the Public Health Cigarette Smoking Act of 1969, which expressly forbids the promotion of

MARCH-APRIL 1

# THE U.S. JOURNAL OF DRUG AND ALCOHOL DEPENDENCE

## —What's Up DOC?

VOL. 4 — NO. 4

A "High-The-Un-Role Model"



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**"PEER PRESSURE."** I'm told the expression didn't even exist 30 years ago. Today it is invoked, in hand-wringing fashion, to "explain" the seemingly insoluble dilemma of teenage self-destructiveness.

It's not that the phenomenon didn't exist until recent times; rather, the heavy concentration by advertisers on the youth market suggest to me that, unlike previous generations, peer pressure can be brought by Madison Avenue.

Recently, I spoke before a group of high-school football coaches and asked, "What magazines are your athletes reading (the ones that can read)?" The invariable answer was "*Sports Illustrated* and *Playboy*." 14-year old boys are not reading *Boy's Life*. They are attracted to magazines that just coincidentally contain upwards of 75% cigarette and alcohol advertising.

As for teenage girls, they aren't reading *Jack 'n' Jill*, but rather magazines like *Mademoiselle* with ads that exhort them in "Wear a Max" (max 120's cigarettes). You don't even have to smoke them — just wear them for their looks. The same magazine promotes itself with the slogan, "Good health, good looks, good living."

Not all magazines have to contain cigarette advertising to be seductive. Girls are also reading publications like "*Superteen*," which may contain upwards of 30 pages of advertising a month, nearly all of which is for make-up such as Maybeline Kissing Sticks (lipstick products that "Aren't as innocent as they seem"). It's no coincidence that Cheryl Teigs, long the symbol of Virginia Slims, is now also the model for several cosmetic products advertised to young teenagers. *Teen Beat*, another popular magazine built around the virtual idolatry of rock stars, sells itself to advertisers with the message, "...a million young teen girls each month...girls who are forming buying habits NOW at the tender ages of 12, 13, 14, & 15. Catch them while they're young — before it's too late!"

And still we wonder where it all begins; promiscuity, teenage pregnancy,

the answer that's staring us in the face from every billboard and magazine, we award research grants to "experts" and fund rehabilitative efforts to the hilt.

At first glance, if people even care to take notice, it would appear that television plays the major role in molding teenagers. But the power of the printed page shouldn't go underestimated. After all, the reader has "independently" decided to purchase the magazine and would hardly admit to having been ripped-off.

Through whatever media, teenage girls in our society are given a message above all not to be themselves, not to be satisfied with the way they look, not to do other than what the models do. An analysis of teenage magazines has convinced me that we are unlikely to escape from the "me generation." Not a single value of some kind of service to others is espoused; the norm, it appears, is to work in hamburger stands at half the minimum wage in order to be able to buy rock records or dope (the advertising for the latter is handled quite well by the "*Saturday Night Live*," *Rolling Stone*, and rock music industry mentality).

Many high school students I've spoken to have never even heard of the term "volunteer work." "Are you kiddin'?" one teenager exclaimed. "Me work in a neighborhood clean-up project?! I'd be laughed at. In our school, it's every kid for himself."

Some of the conventional charities encourage teenage involvement, but their concept of volunteerism seems to mean licking envelopes or going on walkathons to raise money for "research."

No wonder kids don't have much of an incentive to get involved in working for others: they see a society that tries hard to sell them alcohol and tobacco on the one hand or uses them as pawns to raise money to find "cures" for alcohol and tobacco-related diseases on the other.

I think the creativity of adolescents needs to be better tapped. Accordingly, in various talks around the country, I have recommended that we extend the peer counseling techniques (now in vogue in schools as a way of discouraging adverse lifestyles among teenagers) to community-wide counter-advertising programs designed and run by adolescents themselves.

To my delight, a group of sixth graders from Crossroads Park Elementary in West Des Moines, Iowa, took me up on this suggestion and have passed along their ideas for the kind of advertising they'd like to see put up in their community:

Marlboro Make Your Marbles Fall Out! (Helen Kernodle)

DORAL II. How could a cigarette with only this little tar...be this this dangerous! (unsigned)

Don't smoke MORE. It will make you poor. (David Larsen)

Carlton is the Lowest. So why smoke 'em? (Amy Ruggiero)

Turn Out the Golden Lights. (Cathy Larsen)

Pall Mall will bring you to a stall (Ian Yates)

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# THE U.S. JOURNAL

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### What's Up DOC?

Breakthrough on Public TV

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I FIRST SMELLED something fishy about public TV in 1977 when a local program on Miami's public outlet, WPBT, ran a feature story on DOC's efforts to combat the killer habits among teenagers. The reporter, who had done a brilliant story on how easily 12-year-olds can purchase cigarettes over the counter at pharmacies and convenience stores (in spite of a law forbidding their sale to anyone under 18), wanted to juxtapose cigarette billboards that faced schoolyards with some of the bus-bench counter-advertising we ran (U.S. Journal, April, 1978).

When I suggested he also include mention of how the cigarette industry was getting its ads into schools via special school reading programs involving newspapers like the *Miami Herald* (U.S. Journal, December, 1979), he seemed uncomfortable. No way could he mention the *Herald* in such a context, he said. "There are some things you don't understand about public TV," he continued. "The *Herald* is one of our biggest corporate sponsors."

This incident was brought to mind a few weeks ago during the attempt by the Saudi Arabian government and its subsidiary, Mobil Oil, to prevent the televising of a program it believed portrayed the country in a barbaric light. The confrontation between proponents of the showing of "Death of a Princess" and the bullies at Mobil who tried to censor it (and succeeded in South Carolina, Houston, and Los Angeles) no doubt created a courageous image of Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) executives who went ahead with the telecast in the face of opposition from its leading (\$5,000,000 a year) sponsor.

Yet how did Mobil ever think it could dare to prevent the showing of a

program? How, for that matter, did it ever get to be a disproportionate backer of PBS (upwards of 15% of the total budget)? The answers are not hard to figure out.

Public TV is no more "public" (that is, not beholden to anyone but the public) than are newspapers or commercial TV stations. The audience is skewed to the upper middle class, and 75% of all children who watch PBS look at just one program, "Sesame Street."

The semi-public, semi-private funding structure, goes to support a very narrow segment of the population. And one thing the middle class intelligentsia (better known in advertising circles as the "opinion-makers") won't do is bite the hand that feeds its intellectual satisfaction and "quality" programming. Is it not coincidental that the leading sponsors of public TV are the same corporations taking the most heat from Congress and the news media?

The strategy of Mobil and PBS is diabolically clever: Let 'em think corporate underwriting isn't in any way, shape, or form advertising, then give 'em Shakespeare, give 'em dramas, let 'em eat Cooke (Alistair) and "Masterpiece Theater."

It should surprise no one, then, that in the very week in which the "Princess" controversy was raging, the following headline would appear in *Advertising Age*: "Public TV Eyes Cigs, Liquor as Sponsors."

"Public TV sales specialist eager to tap more corporate advertising PR budgets are eyeing two of commercial TV's untouchables — cigarette and liquor companies," noted the article, which went on to point out that Public Broadcasting Service executives are urging a policy change to be able to accept such income:

"PBS senior VP Neil Mahrer said last week he can't predict how the stations will react to the cigarette/liquor proposal, but he said the plan is getting '100% support' inside the public TV system." However, the article cautioned that

Federal Communications Commission approval would be needed to bless all aspects of the deal.

At first glance, it would seem inconceivable for Congress or the FCC to approve the comeback of cigarette and liquor advertisers. In the former case, didn't Congress ban such promotion? Not exactly. What most of us have forgotten is that it was the cigarette companies themselves, alarmed at the success of the mandatory counter-ads that ran between 1967-69, who asked Congress to permit them immunity from anti-trust laws by allowing the industry to remove its ads. Now that counter-ads have also been off the air for all practical purposes in the past decade, because the Fairness Doctrine no longer applies, the cigarette companies are end-

# THE U.S. JOURNAL OF DRUG AND ALCOHOL DEPENDENCE

running the laws by sponsoring sporting events, music festivals, and other activities that are given heavy television coverage. They are now no doubt licking their chops for a full return to legitimacy and respectability through the sponsorship of public television.

As we excitedly await the more visible image of R.J. Reynolds Industries, Philip Morris, Inc., Brown & Williamson Tobacco Corp., Loews Corp., American Brands, and Liggett Group, consider another image most of them have been cultivating, as reported in the *Catholic Commentator*, Baton Rouge, on May 7:

"R.J. Reynolds is the number one 'Porno Pushing Advertiser' in the country, according to a recent survey of pornographic magazine advertising.

"The survey, undertaken by the National Federation for Decency, showed that Reynolds placed 70 pages of advertising in pornographic publications during the first quarter of 1980. That was nearly double the amount bought by the second worst offender, Joseph E. Seagram & Sons.

The survey showed that the alcohol and tobacco industries supply 50% of the advertising of these pornographic magazines.

Now maybe they'll rename PBS "pubic TV."

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## What's Up DOC?

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## A Richard Pryor Primer

"In the wee hours of the morning in the smog of the drugs and the booze, a scene will go out of control..."

—William Brashler, writer, guessing the fate of Richard Pryor ("Berserk Angel," *Playboy*, December, 1979)

"I screwed up, man, I screwed up..."

—Richard Pryor on fire as he ran from his home on June 9 (*Atlanta Constitution*, June 11)

"Some people close to Pryor said that the explosion had, in fact, been preceded by another rough year...More and more those close to him feared he was turning his attention to two old friends, cocaine and alcohol."

—*Rolling Stone*, June 24

"Last year, Pryor acknowledged in a television interview with Barbara Walters that he 'loves' drugs. 'I do, I really do. But I can't do them a lot because it messes up my life and every time I get in trouble.'"

"This pattern of use of free base is similar to that found with intravenous heroin and cocaine and has an associated high potential for dependency and overdose."

—Ronald K. Siegel, Ph.D., *New England Journal of Medicine* February 15, 1979

"Every time I get in trouble it's because I end up drinking too much or snorting too much or smoking too much."

—Richard Pryor (quoted in *Playboy*)

"Since they were introduced in South Florida about eight months ago, head shops have done a big business in free base kits that cost about \$15 and contain ether and buffered ammonia. 'We've sold thousands,' says a head shop salesman. 'We're doing about \$500 a day now in that particular item...'

"What neither drug nor drug paraphernalia dealers talk about are the scary side effects. 'When you smoke cocaine, it has a reinforcing effect, but it does so in a way that makes you keep wanting more and more all the time,' says Dr. Charles Wetli, assistant Dade County medical examiner. 'It can lead to mental aberrations and paranoia. Cocaine just starts to exclude everything else in your life.'

—Michael Putney, columnist, *Miami Herald*, June 26

"It may sound in poor taste, but I think Pryor will understand if I say that I can hardly wait to hear him talk about flammable clothing and the perils of butane (and, perhaps, cocaine) when he takes it back to the stage."

Abe Peck, reporter, *Chicago Sun-Times*, June 26

"Like the late Lenny Bruce, he is more than a comedian, he is a phenomenon..."

"You have to wonder if the same attributes that make him a good comedian — the ability to make fun of the tragic — are destroying Richard Pryor's life — and crumbling any kind of image he could provide for the youngsters who idolize him."

"Richard, brother, you're my main man. But come on, brother, get yourself together. Please."

—Don DeLillo



# THE U.S. JOURNAL

## OF DRUG AND ALCOHOL DEPENDENCE

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### What's Up DOC?

#### The Addiction Business

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"THEY WERE probably former Nazi concentration camp guards. I was put into a room no bigger than a phone booth and strapped to an apparatus that administered an electric shock. They did all they could to make me feel awful — and they succeeded."

A scenario of espionage? Torture? Mad scientists? Hardly. Kenneth Tynan, the British theatrical genius who died last month of emphysema at age 53, was describing the smoking cessation program he forced himself to attend in an effort to prolong his life.

Stop-smoking "clinics" have become the rage. And it seems the more elaborate the better. One of the most "shocking" and possibly effective — has been that of the Schick Institute, developed in the late '60's as an offshoot of an alcoholism treatment program.

The Institute and its \$6,000,000 research effort came about after the former chairman of the Schick Safety Razor Company had participated in a 10-day alcohol counter-conditioning program at the Shadel Hospital in Seattle. The program acts on the theory that smoking, over-eating, and excessive drinking are learned habits gone out of control and must be unlearned in order to restore "free will."

I am skeptical of profit-oriented smoking cessation programs and will discuss them in depth in upcoming columns. But I have been impressed with the testimony and changed attitudes toward cigarette smoking by those who have completed the Schick method.

Here's how a 36-year-old editor of an alcohol and drug dependence journal, analyzes his experience with Schick:

"I had smoked two packs a day of Rothmans for the last fifteen years; I'd started at age 13.

Why Rothmans? Easy: they were the best. When I moved to the

United States from Canada, I used to literally travel many miles to get Rothmans — and pay a big premium for them, too.

My reason for stopping smoking was the imminent birth of a child. I chose Schick because I'd heard good things from people who had tried it. Also the method seemed simple enough. It takes one hour a day for five days. Cost: \$500.

Each enrollee has his personal instructor. Mine was a nice, competent fellow and a good therapist. He seemed to have had little experience, though, and it was the kind of job anyone could be trained to do.

The method revolves around aversive conditioning with electric shocks to the exposed forearm ("impulse therapy," according to Schick).

They start you smoking rapidly under adverse conditions: a tiny, filthy booth filled with butts and cigarette ads on the walls. They give you several brands, including the brand of your choice. When it came to my Rothmans, I thought I'd be okay. But I wasn't. Under this vile environment, even they were awful. As repulsion builds, even one's own brand is terrible.

In retrospect, I don't think the electric stimulation component had much to do with my success in quitting. As for the overall experience, the active smoking was extremely important. However, the visual aspect was also important. And the smell was even more compelling in terms of my stopping and in terms of a lasting memory when I'm looking for reinforcement.

I took my camera in to the booth on the final day, and there in that pile of foul-smelling debris was my last pack of cigarettes. I blew up the photograph, and it's on my office wall right now. If I ever have a need or inclination to smoke, I look up at it.

I don't feel it is the methodology of any certain cessation program that makes you stop, but within you the desire to stop makes it easier. In fact, if you join a program because of pressure from a nagging spouse, for example, it probably wouldn't work.

Key factor number one, then, is personal motivation to stop smoking. A second significant aspect is the \$500 fee. Once you've announced your "cure" (and I made big news of it), you know you don't want to look like an ass in front of your family and friends by being caught with a cigarette in your mouth.

In light of what you have written on advertising, I should add that I am now far more conscious of all cigarette advertising than while I was a smoker. Funny, I hadn't thought about that until you asked me, but I am very much more aware (and amazed) of how much there is.

Am I a bit smug now that I'm a former smoker? No, I am extremely smug. Heavy on the smug — but no smug."

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## OF DRUG AND ALCOHOL DEPENDENCE

L. 4, NO. 7

### What's Up DOC?

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### "Taking candy to a baby"

*ADVERTISING AGE*, an international weekly that monitors the pulse of Madison Avenue, is my most important medical journal. I have learned as much about human behavior from *Ad Age* — and how to go about motivating patients and even entire communities — as I have from the brilliant research papers published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

Each August, *Ad Age's* Educational Division sponsors a week-long series of seminars that brings together advertising professionals from throughout the world for the purpose of stimulating their creativity. Last month I was one of 600 participants — and the only physician — in the 1980 *Ad Age* week.

The essence of the week was captured one afternoon at lunch when I found myself seated next to the creative director for the Winston and Salem cigarette advertising campaigns on one side and an attorney for Philip Morris on the other. I'd never felt more like a Martian than during that conversation.

Without going into much detail about my medical role or my views on cigarette advertising (I didn't learn the exact nature of their occupations until the end of our discussion), I posed a hypothetical question to the creative director.

"Suppose I were Ray Kroc (founder of McDonald's and a benefactor of alcoholism rehabilitation programs) and offered you \$25 million a year to design and mount a campaign to encourage healthy lifestyles among teenagers such as the curtailment of alcohol abuse..."

"I wouldn't take it," she said.

"You'd refuse the money? Why?"

"Advertising cannot change habits. If you tried to discourage drinking, you'd sell more alcohol. Sales increased under Prohibition."

"But doesn't advertising (such as with athletes selling beer) play a role in initiating the teenager to a product?"

"No, you're talking about peer pressure and parental habits, not

advertising."

"But why wouldn't you try? What would you have to lose?"

"Look, you're a family doctor, so I wouldn't expect you'd operate on my brain even if I asked you to. You're not talking about advertising. You're talking about something else — like public relations. You need to get kids in the schools."

"Does R.J. Reynolds go into schools and pass out pamphlets on the dangers of not smoking?"

"I doubt it, but why do you ask that?"

"Because you're relegating me to the schools, but the cigarette companies and their well-financed messages are everywhere, including, for that matter, right outside the schools."

"If a billboard is located there, it's a mistake. And we don't use young people in our ads."

"Are you saying that if you did use images that could be perceived as youthful, then cigarette advertising might be an initiating influence on kids?"

No comment.

I could hardly believe that one of the most powerful people in the advertising business could deny the power of advertising. Somehow it was difficult to imagine her breaking the bad news to the folks at the Winston and Salem divisions of R.J. Reynolds: "Look, R.J., everybody really knows what a bumper cigarettes are, so let's face it — we just can't change habits through advertising."

She also had no recollection whatsoever of the fact that the cigarette companies took their own advertisements off of television and radio because of the success of counter-advertising in cutting cigarette consumption from 1967 to 1970.

Later in the day at a lecture she gave on advertising trends in the '80's, she discussed cigarette ad campaigns in this way: "We know people don't read cigarette ad copy, so we look for a strong visual." One might conclude that the cigarette advertiser doesn't care to have the consumer or potential consumer read the fine print — the Surgeon General's warning — even when it is in letters two inches high on a forty-foot wide billboard.

Let's you be left demoralized, I relate the answer of another creative director, well known in the advertising world, to whom I posed the Ray-Kroc question the following morning.

"Would I accept it? That's great! I'd love it. I'd get every athlete in the country — I'd get Magic Johnson, I'd get Larry Byrd, I'd get Nolan Ryan. And you know something? They'd do it for free! We'd get more offers of free space than we could keep up with. Would it work? Of course it would work, especially with smoking. I'll tell you something interesting about cigarette advertising, practically unique: the correlation between advertising and sales is one to one. You cut your advertising by 50% and you cut sales by 50%."

Apparently, the great guarded secret of Madison Avenue, insofar as preventing unhealthy lifestyles is concerned, is that it can't be done.

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# THE U.S. JOURNAL OF DRUG AND ALCOHOL DEPENDENCE

4 — NO. 9

## What's Up DOC?

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### "Virginia's Sins"

THE BOMBING of a Paris synagogue earlier this month, the machine gunning of a Jewish school, and similar cowardly acts reminded me of the virulent anti-Semitic propaganda films produced in occupied France, excerpts of which can be seen in Max Ophüls' haunting documentary, "The Sorrow and the Pity." What kind of men and women could possibly have acted in those films?

A similar thought, albeit under less horrific circumstances, came to mind when I saw Mobil's commercials during the run of "Edward the King." The dancers and pantomime players in those convoluted fables enacted the big lie that environmentalists who would suggest any restraint of the wise old owls in the oil-drilling profession are little more than a bunch of wild monkeys.

In the same vein, we are often scandalized to learn that a famous movie star turns out to have broken into show business as a porno queen. Even more disturbing is the fact that there are thousands of aspiring actors and actresses who would almost kill to appear in a hemorrhoid or feminine deodorant spray commercial.

To the everlasting credit of Chicagoans, they succeeded — in just one day's worth of irate telephone calls a few weeks ago — in removing from all city buses a Bonjour Action Jeans ad campaign that focused on a young female's unzipped pants and bare pelvic area beneath. But to me the really obscene ads that disgrace almost every subway car and bus in town are those for cigarettes. Do these models realize what they're doing? Do their parents point with pride at their sons and daughters on the billboards? Would they want their kid sisters to try the product they're promoting? Would they appear in an ad for napalm or handguns?

History has given us the answer: Frank Sinatra, Gregory Peck, Bob Hope, Arthur Godfrey, or Rosalyn Russell would never again smilingly endorse Chesterfields as they did in the 1940's and '50's. For one thing, Russell died of lung cancer and Godfrey almost did. As for Peck, who promoted L & M (with a filter that was "just what

the doctor ordered") had her larynx removed last year. But we live only in the present, and our memories are short. The nameless models in the ads today may even be a better selling strategy, because they can fade away and be replaced without anyone wondering what became of them.

In fact, I have met and spoken to one such model, who soon after appearing in a cigarette advertisement in 1975 deeply regretted having posed at all. "I was chosen to be in a Chesterfield ad that ran in several national magazines, including *Playboy*," she told me. She also provided me with a copy of the ad. "Two other girls and I were shown emerging from a body of water with the words *They Satisfy* emblazoned across our wet t-shirts."

The caption read, "They satisfy — in small, medium, and large. Get in on our Chesterfield nostalgia T-shirt offer. Only \$2.50!" "I was 25 at the time," she said, "but I looked 20. Supposedly, there's a code whereby cigarette ad agencies aren't permitted to hire models younger than 25. So naturally, almost everyone they pick looks much younger."

"Of course, none of the models I met smoked. If they had, they'd look older, especially their skin, teeth, and facial expression."

The ad was something she was ashamed of. Accordingly, as a way of evening up some of the damage, she has since served on the Tobacco and Cancer Task Force of a local division of the American Cancer Society.

Still the epitome of the "All-American Girl" of the '70's (as headlined on the cover of *TIME*) remains the Philip Morris Virginia Slim's model, Cheryl Tiegs. Tiegs, who has been pushing Olympus cameras and Maybelline cosmetics of late, has just signed with Sears to sell Cheryl Tiegs designer jeans and shirts. This is not the first clothing that Tiegs has pushed. While hawking cancer sticks for Philip Morris in 1978, she promoted "the Ginny jump jacket and sports shorts from Virginia Slims," available for just \$22 and two pack bottoms. It was probably the only fitness ad ever to have a warning on it.

To add insult to injury, this fall over the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) Tiegs will co-host (with actor Peter Graves) "The National Health Quiz," produced by the dullards who developed "Here's to Your Health," a typically cute, elitist PBS approach to medical subjects. According to the promotional literature of KERA-TV, Dallas, the quiz will enable viewers to "evaluate their health risk factors for the four leading causes of death: heart disease, cancer, stroke, and auto accidents. In the heart disease category, viewers will be able to determine how much such factors as blood pressure, cholesterol level, family history of heart disease, cigarette smoking, weight and exercise habits combine to increase or decrease their risk of death within ten years due to heart disease." Tell 'em all about what you've been doing to curb heart disease among American women, Cheryl! Then ask the taxpayers for more money, PBS!

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# THE U.S. JOURNAL OF DRUG AND ALCOHOL DEPENDENCE

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## What's Up Doc?

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### 'Sweet stench of success'

You've got to hand it to the tobacco companies; lobbyists second to none in Congress and in nearly all state legislatures; master strategists behind the recent defeat of clean indoor air ordinances in California and Dade County, Florida; among the first American manufacturers and advertisers permitted in China; principal sponsors of major league baseball, the Newport Jazz Festival, Beverly Sills' touring opera company, and exhibitions at the Whitney Museum in New York; the leading national advertiser on billboards and transit systems and in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Newsweek*, *TV Guide*, and most major newspapers and magazines; and the first to offer aid to impoverished Cuban refugees, albeit in the form of free cigarettes.

They certainly know how to get their man — and women and children. Consider the latest thought that R.J. Reynolds projects on billboards and on full-color four-page fold-outs in *TIME*, *Penthouse*, *Playboy* and other publications: "CAMEL. Where a man belongs." Reynolds' Winston brand has a similar come-on, complete with sultry women: "For the man who wants it all." (also in Spanish in Latin neighborhoods and with black models throughout inner cities)

Philip Morris' Marlboro cowboy has been saying the same thing for years — ever since the Leo Burnett ad agency changed it from a ladies' cigarette, with the slogan "Mild as May" — but merely with easy-to-

alleged manliness of smoking is a breakthrough. For others of us, it is an omen. One would like to think that in 1980 — fully 30 years after the first proven link between cigarette smoking and a host of emasculating diseases — publishers would balk at abetting a disproven puberty rite thinly disguised as an advertisement.

Then again, the prohibition of cigarette advertising might only turn cigarettes into even more of a forbidden fruit. Accordingly, reducing the social acceptability of cigarette smoking by ridiculing specific cigarette companies (pushers) and their ad campaigns — not the smoker — could hold the key to reversing this and other drug abuse epidemics.

In 1977, taking our cue from advertising parodies in *MAD* magazine, DOC pioneered in the practice of 24-hour-a-day, in-the-streets prevention through the purchase of counter-advertising space. Against all advice from conventional advertising agencies and experts, we spent \$2,500 over several months to display dozens of bus bench advertisements to call attention to the rip-off of cigarette advertising. "Country Fresh Arsenic," "Full-Bodied Cyanide," and "10 Year Supply Only \$7,000" were some of the early slogans.

We graduated to the more directly hard-hitting, "Discover Arctic Lungs — Guaranteed to Make You Cool as a Corpse," and, on our poster series, "You've Coughed Up Long Enough, Baby... Emphysema Slims" and the take-off on the tough guy who says he smokes for taste, "I smoke for smell."

Calling attention to the low level of appeal of the ads by spoofing the specific brand name advertising with which young people are quite familiar creates a climate of ridicule of the pusher, rather than a finger-wagging, "demon-weed" campaign. What kid likes to be laughed at?

DOC is mapping plans for medical associations, hospitals, community organizations, youth groups, concerned corporations, and even celebrities to purchase advertisements, complete with positive role models, such slogans as, "Be a real man: Smoke cigarettes" and "Are you man enough to keep buying cigarettes?" The reverse psychology of such a dare would in itself probably be a successful turn-off to kids but would enrage adults, many of whom would doubtless call for their removal.

But were newspapers to refuse to run such ads, serious questions could then be raised over the fine line of difference between the currently acceptable manly appeal in the Marlboro, Winston, and Camel ads people have heretofore been so complacent about. Since, I submit, a major purpose of advertising is to foster complacency among those who don't consume the produce advertised, blatantly calling attention to the way in which cigarette ads are meant to lure their prey could overcome the Emperor's-new-clothes attitude of the average American who proudly boasts, "I never look at advertising."

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## What's Up Doc?

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JUST WHEN you think there's no honor among thieves comes word from the front page of *Advertising Age* that R.J. Reynolds has sued Loew's Lorillard division because the latter company's Triumph brand carried the headline, "National Smoker Study Winner." Horrified Reynolds described the campaign as "advertising that misleads the public." Meanwhile, Philip Morris cleverly ran election-week ads: "Merit: Runaway Winner" "Merit Scores Decisive Victory" and "Merit Takes Top Honors" in headlines larger than on the day President Kennedy was shot.

The ironies of the two clean indoor air campaigns are astounding. Californians Against Regulatory Excess (CARE, get it?), a multi-million dollar corporation financed solely by tobacco company funds, blitzed the media in the final month of the campaign with the line, "Join the Californians who have read the fine print — Vote NO on 10." Obviously, they weren't thinking about the fine print warning, the manufacturers have been camouflaging on their ads for years. And their fearsome fight against "regulatory excess" came at the same time as Brown & Williamson coined a new slogan for its KOOL ads, "There oughta be a law against blah cigarettes."

In Miami, the industry was even less subtle. It hired a Connecticut organization to set up Floridians Against Increased Regulation (FAIR).

poured in \$598,538 (only \$185 was contributed by Floridians) to combat a \$3,156 grassroots, bumpersticker effort by GASP (Group Against Smokers Pollution), ran slogans such as "Murder. Robbery. Rape... Smoking?" and "A regulation that can take more police off the streets" (an appeal that pandered to fear of crime since the influx of immigrants), and even paid "consulting fees" to the two top officials of the Police Benevolent Association, which soon after came out against the proposed ordinance (the firemen remained silent, by the way).

But the real difference, GASP President Charles Freefield told me, was the black vote, which went almost entirely against the narrowly defeated ordinance. "Would you believe," he said, "that the head of the local Urban League was trying to make this thing out like it was the first step toward restoring segregation of blacks?"

"Cigarettes have turned out to be the smallpox of the 1980's," said William Foege, M.D., director of the Centers for Disease Control, commenting recently on the need to launch a stronger worldwide attack on lethal lifestyles.

Peter G. Sparber has been hired by the Tobacco Institute to coordinate another series of those repugnant but inadvertently hilarious newspaper ads touting the rights of smokers. So? Sparber, it seems, was most recently vice president of public relations for Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Delaware, a former director of communications for the New Jersey Hospital Association, and a member of the Board of Trustees of the Delaware Division of the American Cancer Society.

Thanks to the prodding of a single medical student, Ron Davis of the University of Chicago, the 14,000 member Illinois State Medical Society approved a resolution urging the publishers of the Chicago Tribune and Chicago Sun-Times to discontinue all cigarette advertising in the interest of public health.

I wouldn't hold my breath if I were them. Last year the two papers accepted a total of \$12,551,251 in cigarette advertising, up \$2 million from the previous year — a figure that represents approximately a fourth of total advertising revenue. Meanwhile, the *Sun-Times* is working hard for a Pulitzer with a lengthy series on chemical waste dumps entitled, "Our Toxic Time Bombs." Another toxic time bomb, cigarette smoking, is promoted in full-page ads alongside many of the articles in the series.