

September 17, 1999

Dear Warren,

At long last, enclosed is the packet of materials related to the decision by the president and board of trustees of Rice University to enter into a contractual agreement with the George Strait concert tour in 1998 and 1999 for the use of Rice Stadium, with the full knowledge that the event would include extensive advertising by a cigarette manufacturer, a spitting tobacco company, a brewery, and a distillery.

As we have discussed, I am sending this information to you because of your previous expressed concern as a Rice alumnus about the university's investment in tobacco stocks. As with that situation, the response by the leader of the university has been disappointing. The Rice Stadium issue is especially troubling, coming as it does at a time in which the state of Texas has entered into the largest single financial settlement in its history, involving payments by tobacco companies as the result of a lawsuit seeking damages for health costs caused by tobacco-related diseases.

From a personal standpoint, these major tobacco promotions on the Rice campus, sanctioned by the very leaders of the university, are disturbing in light of my participation in the course on cancer over the past 12 years and other speaking invitations I have received from the premedical society and the department of physical education. Ironically, too, Rice's new library director, encouraged by a professor in the Department of History, has made repeated attempts in the past year to convince me to donate my 2500-archive box tobacco collection to the university.

One dark undercurrent I sense in the matter of tobacco promotions (akin to the comment from the university a few years ago that tobacco stock holdings kept tuition down), based on my discussions with the president's spokesperson, may be a brazen elitism on the part of the university leadership, viz., the Strait concert wasn't really aimed at Rice students but rather at diehard country music fans in the public at large. And that's part of the problem with trying to bring greater attention to the serious, largely preventable pandemic of tobaccogenic diseases: the issue has devolved into one of political correctness. So it is that the university would defend its permission to host tobacco sponsorships by pointing to the ban on smoking in the student center—and indeed most places on campus.

The bottom line, sadly, is money. Based on my understanding of gate receipts, the Strait concert (the third top-grossing entertainment event in the US in that week in April, 1999), yielded more than \$200,000 for the university.

And since I am apparently the only individual who has raised questions about the ethics of a university's decision to host and profit from the tobacco- and alcohol-sponsored event, the president has had no inclination to respond directly. The responses by his spokesperson were, by his own admission, embarrassing exercises in casuistry. (Note the enclosed article that discusses the decision by Montana State University last year to give up the College Rodeo Finals rather than permit the distribution of tobacco products.)

As background information, I have included notes of my attendance at the 1998 and 1999 Strait concerts at Rice Stadium. These detailed observations leave no doubt as to the meticulously planned tobacco and alcohol promotions, involving dozens of employees, and reaching virtually all of the 45,000-strong captive audience, including several thousand children. Enclosed are copies of the tobacco and alcohol advertisements in the programs distributed at the concerts in 1998 and 1999, as well as the advance advertisements in the Houston Chronicle (a co-sponsor), several of which feature SKOAL and GPC Cigarette logos along with the Surgeon General's health warning. Interestingly, the Houston Press, which runs numerous tobacco ads, did not carry a single ad for the Strait concerts. Also included are examples of GPC ads for the concert series that ran at the same time in national publications such as Woman's Day and The National Enquirer.

I have added copies of give-away items such as the autographed photo of the SKOAL "Babe," and various sweepstakes forms that the tobacco companies use to obtain names for their mailing lists. A political flier urging opposition to tobacco taxes is also enclosed. Among other items are examples of letters from students and faculty at Rice acknowledging my contribution to the course on cancer and other efforts; articles on the rising concern about young people and cancer; your letter to the Alumni Office about tobacco investments; and a poster advertising a "Relay for Life" event "To Fight Cancer," held at Rice Stadium one week prior to the tobacco-sponsored Strait concert.

None of the free tobacco samples I obtained have been enclosed, but contrary to the insistence of the Rice spokesman, I can assure you that thousands of free packs of cigarettes and containers of spitting tobacco were distributed at this event on the Rice University campus. I have enclosed 20 copies of eight photographs taken at the 1999 event that give an understated look at what went on. I have another 100 slides and photos from each of the past two years. Perhaps we should give consideration to my giving a slide show of the Strait concerts at Rice sometime between Oct 15 and 18 when I return to Houston to give a couple of lectures....

I hope something can come of all this, at the very least that the student body, faculty, and alumni can be made aware of the fact the Rice University has

consistently ignored its responsibility to reject an association with the use and promotion of tobacco.

Sincerely,

Alan