

SATIRICAL HEALTH PROMOTION AD SPOOFS CIGARETTES

BY MARK HENRICKS

HOUSTON, TX—A satirical anti-smoking health promotion advertisement put a Houston doctors group on a crash course with the city's major daily newspapers.

Both the Houston Post and the Houston Chronicle refused to run an ad from the local branch of Doctors Ought to Care, a national health promotion organization. The ad spoofed R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co.'s test marketing of its Dakota brand of cigarettes.

The illustrations included takeoffs of packaging for both Dakota cigarettes and the Marlboro brand sold by Philip Morris Co. Inc. A red and white box was labeled "Barbboro" and "20 Radiation Treatments."

Another illustration mimicked the Dakota packaging and offered "20 Class A Tumors." Large, boldface type at the bottom of the rejected ad read, "Dakota DaCough DaCancer DaCoffin."

The two big Houston newspapers, along with a few smaller ones, refused to run the ad from DOC, citing policies that prohibited spoofs of other ads using trademarks.

"Basically, that's not true," said Jim Smith, DOC's Houston program coordinator. "They do that."

Smith pointed to Vantage cigarette ads featuring Marlboro packs and the message "Sorry, cowboy", that both papers have run.

"...publishers are reluctant to risk offending major advertisers such as tobacco companies by running satirical advertising aimed at cigarettes."

"We think this raises some pretty critical questions about free expression if the tobacco industry is exempted from criticism in the media," Smith said.

Lainie Gordon, Houston Chronicle public relations supervisor, said it's more complicated than that. "We did not run the ad, that is correct," she said. "Generally, the policy is that we don't want advertising that makes fun of other advertising in a direct way."

Gordon acknowledged that the paper does sometimes run ads that poke fun or make disparaging comparisons with other products. She defended the rejection of the DOC ad, however.

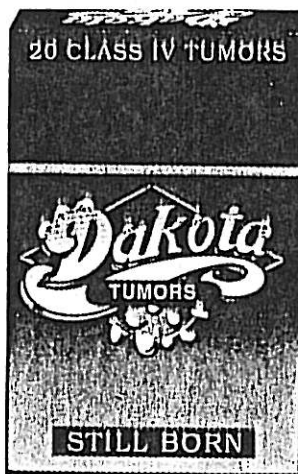
"The issue gets down to, is it a matter of poor taste. That's a call we have to make," she said.

The DOC ad did appear in an

alternative city weekly paper called Public News. It also has run in the newspaper of the Houston community college system.

The Houston Post has been fairly aggressive in condemning smoking on its editorial pages, Smith said, yet still wouldn't accept the satirical ad. The Houston Press, another alternative weekly, also refused the ad.

HOUSTON, HOME OF THE LARGEST MEDICAL CENTER IN THE WORLD, ASKS YOU TO MAKE UP YOUR OWN MIND.



YOU DECIDE.

Dakota DaCough DaCancer DaCoffin

To help us get this costly ad seen again and again contact:
DOC, Doctors Ought to Care, 5510 Greenbriar, Suite 235, Houston TX 77005 (713) 798-7729

Love Doc

bad things of the world," Smith said. "When they become fearful of losing their ad dollars from the tobacco industry, suddenly that editorial stance becomes unimportant."

SERIOUS SATIRE

DOC members feel that a mocking approach is the best way to promote health when, as with smoking, huge

"A lot of different reasons have been given to us by different people," said Smith. He feels, however, that the real reason is that publishers are reluctant to risk offending major advertisers such as tobacco companies by running satirical advertising aimed at cigarettes.

"It's easy to have a good editorial policy to point out and condemn the

commercial advertising budgets push unhealthy practices.

"We don't wag our fingers and say, don't do that," Smith said. "We make fun of the advertising so people will have greater awareness of how cigarettes are being promoted.

"The reason we do satirical advertising is that we feel you have to go after the tobacco industry and the promotion of specific brand names. The tobacco industry doesn't sell cigarettes. They sell images."

He pointed to such venerable cultural images as the Marlboro man, Joe the smooth Camel smoker and the sassy, uninhibited women of Virginia Slims long-running ad campaign.

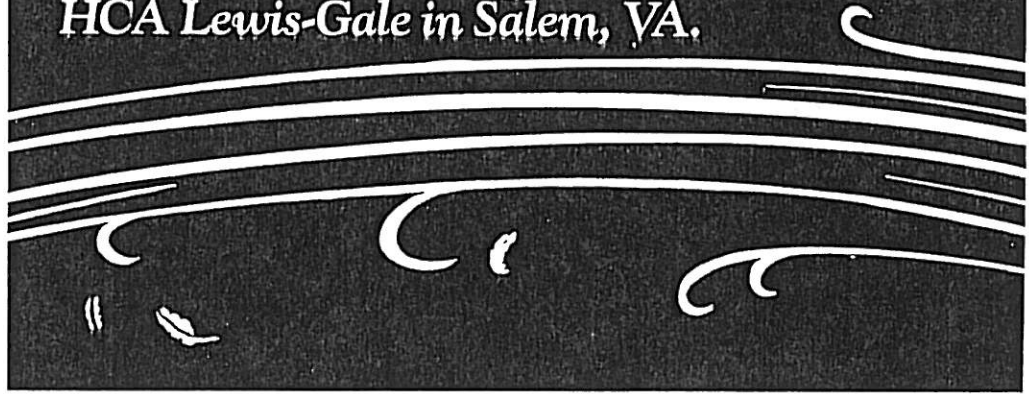
The DOC campaign was targeted specifically to counteract what the doctors saw as the strategy of the Dakota ads. RJR is aiming its new cigarette brand at so-called "virile females," Smith said. These are young women, 18 to 24, with little education and low incomes who are attracted to otherwise mostly male pastimes such as motor sports, he explained.

DOC wanted to strike a telling blow against Dakota that would register with these women. So, the parody illustration of the Dakota pack features the words, "Still Born!" emblazoned across the bottom, dramatizing the dangers smoking by pregnant women poses to unborn fetuses.

Similarly, the "Barbboro" pack depicted says "The Kids Favorites"

120 First-Time Expectant Parents in the First 2 Weeks!

Our First™ is Working Fast at HCA Lewis-Gale in Salem, VA.



across the top of the burlesque illustration. Smith says Marlboro marketing is targeted at young people. And DOC is particularly interested in counteracting smoking by youngsters.

"The bulk of people who start smoking start in their teens," Smith said.

DOC also aimed to specifically counter the Dakota strategy followed

in Houston. The Texas city is one of two test markets for the new brand. Nashville, Tenn., is the other.

In Houston, RJR has used ad copy appealing to Houstonians' pride in their city. The ads comparing the new Dakota brand is compared to Marlboro and readers are told, "You Decide."

The DOC ad reads "Houston, home of the largest medical center in the world, asks you to make up your own mind." Beneath the parody portraits of Dakota and Marlboro packages, it similarly says, "You Decide."

ADVERTISING'S ADVANTAGE

DOC is appreciative, but unsatisfied with criticism of smoking carried out in a media organization's news coverage or opinion sections.

"As a result of the DOC campaign, Marlboro was ousted as sponsor of the ski races and its advertising material is no longer seen on Aspen slopes..."

"Our point is, if you're really going to do anything about the sales of cigarettes in this country, you've got to go after what they're doing," said Smith. "You've got to do paid advertising, not public service announcements that come on at 3 a.m. You've got to counter-advertise and take on what they're pushing on young people."

DOC has successfully pushed satirical campaigns in other communities. In Aspen, Colo., a "Barbboro" campaign ran in the Aspen Times to counteract the exposure Marlboro received in the mountain resort

through its sponsorship of the Marlboro Ski Challenge.

As a result of the DOC campaign, Marlboro was ousted as sponsor of the ski races and its advertising material is no longer seen on Aspen slopes, Smith said. A similar campaign was successful in the ski town of Jackson Hole, Wyo., he said.

The Houston failure is not the first time DOC has had ads turned down. Smith said that during last year's baseball World Series the San Francisco Chronicle rejected an ad calling attention to a Marlboro ad in Candlestick Park.

Despite the odds, the physician's group will keep pushing its small-voiced satirical protest against smoking, said Smith. Eventually, they hope to refocus the nation's health promotion efforts away from illegal drugs such as crack, which they view as a less serious health problem.

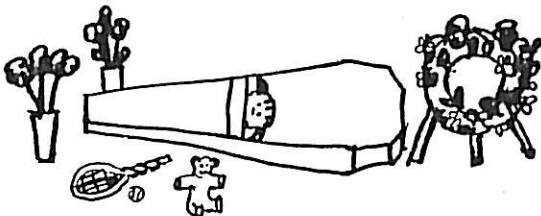
"Illegal drugs killed somewhere between 5,000 and 10,000 people last year," Smith said. "Tobacco killed 390,000." ■

NIXED DOUBLES:

Tobacco companies & Teen age tennis players

Vigil for the Victims of Virginia Slims

Sat., March 31, 1PM
at the entrance to the West Side Tennis Club



KICK THE TOBACCO COMPANIES OUT OF SPORTS

This ad brought to you by DOC, Doctors Ought to Care, creator of the **Emphysema Slims Tennis Tournament**. To help us get this costly ad seen again and again contact DOC, 5510 Greenbriar, Suite 235, Houston TX, (713) 798-7729

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