

TROPIC

THE MIAMI HERALD

MARCH 18, 1979

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not much crime, four colleges, a symphony and
an industry that kills 115,000 people a year.

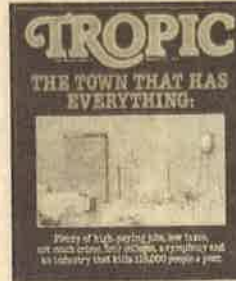
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March 18



Cigarette smoking may be hazardous to your health, but it has done a lot for the economic health of Winston-Salem, N.C., the cigarette capital of the U.S. Here, tobacco commands respect and the Surgeon

General doesn't. Especially after his last report, which said 346,000 people died last year from smoking. Winston-Salem makes one-third of the cigarettes sold, and so bears some responsibility for one-third of those deaths. Which may be why the town has a dirty little secret: people are giving up cigarettes. John Dorschner's article begins on page 10. The cover photograph is by Will McIntyre.



A Landlord's Trail

18 Lionel Bosem is the chairman of the Miami Beach Planning Board. He is also a landlord to the elderly. He was going to give them the good life. But what they've gotten are headaches. In the last two years, 16 of his tenants have sued him. Federal, state and county authorities are now investigating Bosem. He could be the first landlord to face criminal charges for his handling of security deposits.

Images of a Friend

27 "The Warriors" is a bad film which glamorizes the seamy violence of urban gangs. But for Madeleine Blais, the movie was a tender reunion with her closest friend, who has a small role in the film. Both women have adopted rogue professions, journalism and theater, but they are growing older and it's hard to hold onto the old ideals.

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TROPIC

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Sunday Punch

By Lary Bloom, editor

Making an Ash of Myself

In a few weeks, those of you who live in Dade County will have the opportunity to pass a law against me. Not against me, the editor. Or against me, the person. But against me, the cigar smoker. On May 8, you'll decide in a special referendum whether I can smoke while I edit.

Although the ballot will be worded in general terms and will ask voters whether smoking should be banned in most public places, it could have been worded this way: "Can Lary Bloom, who, after he finishes his tomato soup and egg salad sandwich in The Herald's employe cafeteria, go back to his office, prop his feet up on his desk, stare out the window at downtown Miami, pretend he is hard at work, and light up one of those foul-smelling Joya de Nicaraguas he says he likes so much but that everyone else at Tropic complains about?"

It's probably a good thing the referendum won't be worded that way, because it would be inaccurate. I don't eat tomato soup and egg salad sandwiches every day. But I do light up. And in a public place: my office.

I don't want to waste this space discussing the pros and cons of the issue and how I feel about it, except to say that on the afternoon of May 8, as I cast my vote, I'd like to do so with a large grin on my face and a foul-smelling Joya de Nicaragua in my mouth.

All of the concern over public smoking does, however, offer two opportunities. It gives staff writer John Dorschner a chance to discuss the mood of Winston-Salem, the tobacco capital of the U.S., in these days of severe public reaction to the latest Surgeon General report and to the studies which show smoking may be hazardous to even non-smokers' health. And, on what could be the very last days of my public habit, it gives me the chance to talk about some of the best things that have happened in my cigar-smoking life. If I could only think of them. Fact is, people do tend to react negatively, and unfortunate things do happen, when I light up. Here are two examples:

There was that night at The Depot, the

South Miami restaurant which built its reputation on high-priced beef and miniature toy trains which criss-cross under the glass tables. We had just consumed some of that beef, and we were sipping the very last Burgundy from a good bottle when I decided it was time for a smoke. It is at such times, after a filling meal and a good wine, that a cigar is most appreciated. I was puffing away, feeling the effects of the grape, the tobacco and the bold conversation taking place as a result of them, when the woman sitting at the table to the right very impolitely asked me to put an end to my indulgence. She said: "Put out that damned cigar." There was no "Please" or "Would you consider . . ." or "I'm feeling a little stuffed up tonight and your cigar isn't

helping." Just: "Put out that damned cigar."

Which, as I recall, I didn't do. But as I finished the cigar, I tried, I really did, to blow the smoke in the other direction. Just goes to show how considerate a cigar smoker can be.

Then there was the night, several years ago, in an Ohio deli. I remember I was smoking a cheap

cigar, one of those kinds that never burns evenly. Out of the corner of my eye I saw a busboy carrying a bucket of water, which he proceeded to unload in my lap. I was soaked and outraged. "What do you think you're doing?" I asked, indignantly. "I was putting a fire out," he replied. I looked down and saw he was right. Ashes from my cheap cigar had burned a large hole in my trousers. And if the busboy hadn't come along and flushed me with water, things might have gotten out of hand. I had a lot more than trousers to lose. I would have made a total ash of myself.

These were small annoyances. But now they're trying to pass an ordinance about all of this. They're trying to make it illegal for me to, in certain places, light up after dinner and set myself ablaze. I would have to do it either in a restaurant's smoking section or in the privacy of my house. You'd be losing the chance to see me make a spectacle of myself. Remember that when you vote on May 8.



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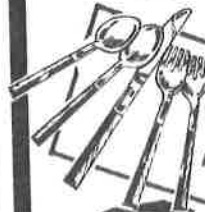
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JOURNEY TO AN ANGRY TOWN

By JOHN DORSCHNER

H

oward Long, full-time farmer and honorary "mayor of Tobaccolville," meant for his grin to show indifference, but it only looked foolish as he revealed the wide gap where his four front teeth had once been. In the back room of a tobacco warehouse, he had just lost 13 cents in a game of seven-card stud, his two pair (queens high) losing to a straight. He still had \$14,000 or so in his pocket. In cash.

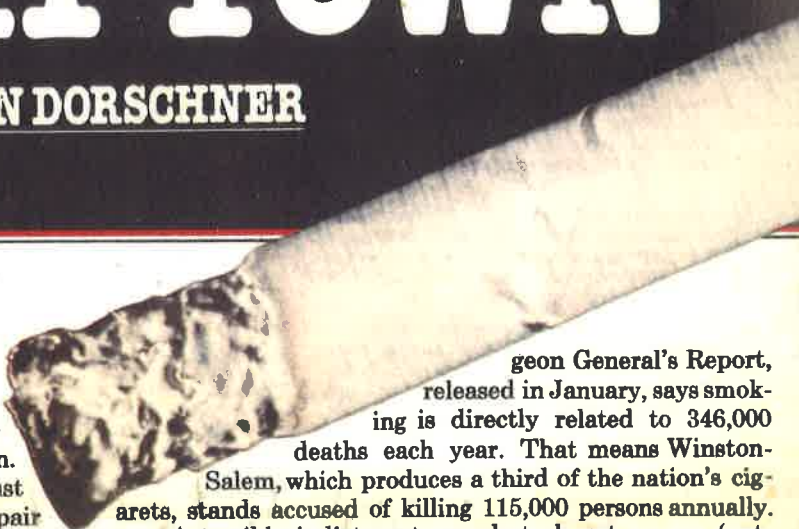
"Califano?" he said, turning back to the subject of politics, mentioning the most hated man in North Carolina, the anti-smoking crusader of HEW. "If he came here to Winston-Salem, he'd last maybe two hours."

"But Wilkes County. . ." The gray-haired fellow who had filled the straight was thinking of the moonshine mountains, the *Thunder Road* area an hour's drive away. "There, he'd last 'bout 15 minutes. Thirty seconds, if they knew he was comin'."

Well, they were partly kidding, but only partly, for these are the tobacco people of Winston-Salem, a place still proud to call itself "The Cigaret Capital of the United States." Home of mammoth R.J. Reynolds, the industry's leader, this city produces more cigarettes than any other in the country — 200 billion a year, bringing in \$4.1 billion in worldwide sales. Winston is the nation's second most popular brand; Salem is the fourth. The statistics are so stupendous that if every American smoked one less cigarette a day, Reynolds would lose \$92 million over the course of a year.

With that kind of money involved, no one complains when the downtown area becomes immersed in the sickly sweet odor of fresh tobacco. Civic leaders call it "the smell of money."

It is also the stench of death. The most recent Sur-




geon General's Report, released in January, says smoking is directly related to 346,000 deaths each year. That means Winston-Salem, which produces a third of the nation's cigarettes, stands accused of killing 115,000 persons annually.

A terrible indictment, yes, but almost no one (outside North Carolina) bothers any longer to hedge about the deadliness of smoking. A recent survey showed that 90 per cent of the public is convinced of its health hazards, and chain-smokers are reduced to the black-humor rationale of Kurt Vonnegut Jr.: "Smoking is the only socially acceptable form of suicide."

Even that acceptability is waning as non-smokers adapt a philosophy of "kill yourself, but don't kill me." Dade County is just one of the innumerable places where militant anti-smokers are forcing referendums that would segregate, or prohibit, smoking everywhere from corporate offices to hotel lobbies, from restaurants to restrooms. Critics (including some non-smokers) say this is carrying government intervention too far, but an increasing number of persons are making their own personal statements by simply removing ashtrays from their homes and offices.

That's the national mood. It is not North Carolina's, and especially not Winston-Salem's. A trip there, as the Dade debate heats up, is somewhat like traveling to South Africa and listening to its citizens give their lonely defense of apartheid.

The state and the city feel besieged and alienated, at the very least. It is the last area left where a four-pack-a-day Camel smoker thinks his habit proves his manliness, where elected officials give extended excuses if they don't smoke, where bumper stickers proclaim



Maybe
America is coughing
and wheezing and dying, but
why should Winston-Salem suffer?



Above: Rev. Jack Fry, a lonely crusader, has teamed with the local Lung Association to offer two stop-smoking clinics. Far right: Claude "The Preacher" Strickland, owner of a tobacco warehouse, says "Winston-Salem is just a wonderful, overgrown country town." Right: An assembly-line worker at R.J. Reynolds, the company that produces 200 billion cigarettes a year.



Photography by Will McIntire

JOURNEY TO AN ANGRY TOWN

"Enjoy Smoking," "North Carolina Has Pride in Tobacco" and "Califano Is Dangerous to My Health." Where else besides Winston-Salem can a visitor smoke without guilt in a local office of the American Cancer Society? The executive director there is a smoker herself.

Publicly, the leaders of the city simply refuse to believe cigarets are a danger, but privately there is one nasty little secret: Smokers, even in the heart of tobacco country, are quitting, but they are being very quiet about it. Ask them why they quit and there are awkward silences. But ask people here why they never smoked, and there are awkward silences too.

There is no such thing as noninvolvement when it comes to smoking. One does or one doesn't. The editor of *Tropic* smokes two cigars a day; he doesn't smoke cigarets. The writer of this article smokes two-and-a-half packs a day. He is bothered by it, more by the threat of emphysema's semi-death than by lung cancer itself. In the past year, three of his friends have managed to quit. He really hasn't tried; he has excuses, all of them weak.

Wayne A. Corpening, mayor of Winston-Salem, has never smoked. "Too jittery for it. That's the only reason."

Paul W. Spain, economic development director of the city's Chamber of Commerce, stopped smoking 15 years ago on the advice of his doctor, "because of an allergy."

Richard Stockton, president of the Chamber of Commerce, smokes a half-pack a day of Vantages, an R.J. Reynolds' brand.

The Reynolds PR men smoke a lot; they like the low-tar brands.

William D. Hobbs, chairman of R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co., smokes a pack and a half a day.

Joe Doster, publisher of the *Winston-Salem Journal*, quit smoking last fall, but he says crisply that he doesn't want to talk about it. "It's personal."

Certainly, anyone would think twice in Winston-Salem before saying anything bad about tobacco. As soon as a visitor steps off the plane in this city of 145,000, one sees the financial power of cigarets: the airport is named

Smith Reynolds. There are also Reynolds Senior High, Reynolds Memorial Park, Reynolds Auditorium and a whole section of town (including 21 commercial establishments) named after the Reynolda House mansion, which is now open to the public. On the northern edge of the city is Wake Forest University, which was moved to Winston-Salem from a town near Raleigh in the 1950s, a move made possible by millions of dollars from the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation. The university's medical school was named after one of the Reynolds executives, Bowman Gray. Both the corporation and its employes have been so active in civic affairs that the mayor says flatly, "Anything that has been for the good of the city, there's been a Reynolds person involved."

Set among gently rolling hills, the city has a downtown anchored by the towers of the Wachovia Bank and the 22-story Reynolds Building (built in 1929 by the designers who used it as a model for the Empire State Building). The city sprawls with the usual shopping centers, but the countryside is never far away. The atmosphere is still small-town folksiness, so much so that Reynolds' top three executives are listed in the telephone book.

Salaries are relatively high, because the cigaret industry pays about 40 per cent more than the statewide industrial average. Unem-

ployment is only 3.5 per cent, and property taxes are the lowest of any of the state's eight largest cities. Crime is not a problem: Two-thirds of the cars in an unattended downtown parking lot were left unlocked; one of them had a stack of eight-track cartridges on the front seat.

Such small-town virtues are usually accompanied by an intellectual wasteland, but Winston-Salem has four colleges and such an intense involvement in cultural activities that in January, *Smithsonian Magazine* devoted eight pages to the city, with the writer concluding that it was similar to 14th-Century Siena because of the "welcome place of the arts within the daily lives of the citizens." One notable attraction: the Old Salem area, where 55 18th-Century buildings have been restored or reconstructed. As with everything else, the cultural projects have involved Reynolds executives (but not Reynolds family members, who have been out of both corporate and civic affairs since the '40s).

"There was a time," says one local journalist with an unintentional double meaning, "when if the Reynolds company coughed, the whole town coughed." He recalls the '50s when a cub reporter wrote a "cutesy story" for the *Journal* in which he referred to cigarets as "coffin nails." Somehow, the reference slipped past the copy editors. By the time the public uproar had died down, the

young journalist had "decided the newspaper business wasn't for him."

Today, the *Journal* and *Sentinel* still may not use expressions such as "coffin nails" and "cancer sticks," but they have been thorough in reporting the health hazards of smoking. When the 1979 Surgeon General's Report was released, they stripped it across the top of page one. The editorial page remained silent.

That stance was not as brave as it might seem. Gradually, since the end of World War II, Winston-Salem has stopped being a one-company town. Hanes clothing (now best known for L'eggs) has long been a community leader, and it has been joined by Western Electric, Westinghouse, and Schlitz. With a state "right-to-work law" and an aggressive chamber of commerce, Winston-Salem has become such a businessman's heaven that its latest proposed highway is called Corporation Freeway.

Debbie Daniels is a waitress at a steak-and-salad-bar place near "the Interstate," as I-40 is called. She is 20 years old, loves Reynolds and hates smoking.

When she graduated from a local high school, she (like most of her classmates) thought about going to work for Reynolds. "Good salary, free dental and you're set for life." There is also a complete-care medical plan, which, for a small monthly payroll deduction, provides free treatment at a corporate clinic. Reynolds is nonunion, the only cigaret manufacturer to be so, and it strives hard to keep it that way with salary and benefits.

"It's like a big family," says Debbie. And that's true. There are now second- and third-generation Reynolds employees, and it is said that because there are 12,000 names on the employment office waiting list, you have to have a relative there to get a job. Debbie's grandmother once worked there, but she's been dead for many years. Debbie didn't bother to apply.

But she does enjoy passing on a "hot tip": "A friend of mine in the engineering department, he's actually seen the plans for a marijuana machine. It's all set up so that they'll begin production two days after it's legalized." (This turns out to be the most repeated rumor in Winston-Salem, except most persons say it will take three days, not two. Reynolds executives have denied this story almost as many times as they've said, "The jury's still out about the effects of smoking.")

Does Debbie smoke? "God, no. I did at 15, but my boyfriend said, 'It

Photograph by W.M. McIntyre



"Califano?" says Howard Long, left, the mayor of "Tobaccoville," speaking of the Secretary of HEW. "If he came here to Winston-Salem, he'd last maybe two hours."

What Americans Smoke— And Who Smokes It

Cigaretts' Top 10. The list is according to "brand family," meaning that Winston includes Winston 100s, Winston Lights and so on:

- (1) Marlboro (Philip Morris)
- (2) Winston (Reynolds)
- (3) Kool (Brown & Williamson)
- (4) Salem (Reynolds)
- (5) Pall Mall (American)
- (6) Kent (Lorillard)
- (7) Benson & Hedges (Philip Morris)
- (8) Camel (Reynolds)
- (9) Vantage (Reynolds)
- (10) Merit (Philip Morris)

Vantage and Merit, both low-tar brands, have been showing the fastest sales increases. Pall Mall has been declining in recent years, Kent gaining. Menthols account for roughly 30 per cent of the market; so do low-tars, and their share is growing rapidly. Non-filters are still strong among rural

people and big-city blue-collar workers.

According to surveys compiled by the American Heart Association:

- About 34 per cent of Americans still smoke, 39 per cent of the men, 29 per cent of the women. About 41 per cent were smoking in 1964, when the first Surgeon General's Report came out.
- Non-whites smoke considerably more than whites.
- The more money a man makes, the less he smokes.
- The more money a woman makes, the more she smokes.
- More than half of divorced men and women are smokers.
- The number of teenage girls who smoke at least a pack a day increased 400 per cent between 1969 and 1975.

makes you look like a slut.' So I stopped."

The Reynolds company has been running into difficulties recently, and it's not just because of Joseph Califano. For years, Winston was the number one brand in America; now it's been passed by Marlboro, perhaps because the public has become aware that Winston has more tar (20 mg.) than macho Marlboro (17 mg.).

When Philip Morris launched its highly successful Merit (a low-tar brand with an "Enriched Flavor" process), Reynolds rushed Real into production without the usual test marketing. The company poured \$60 million into advertising the "natural ingredients" of Real, but the brand has flopped badly. Two other notable Reynolds failures: Cavalier and Camel Talls, both non-filter kings. But More, the 120mm super-long, endured while 14 of the other 120s simply died.

As with other cigaret companies, Reynolds is diversifying beyond the health-hazard business. The parent company, now called R.J. Reynolds Industries Inc., has bought a shipping company, an oil company and food corporations (Hawaiian Punch and, recently, Del Monte). But tobacco is still the profit-maker, accounting for 83 per cent of the company's earnings, though it now makes up only 64 per cent of the sales. Each year, smokers pay \$5.9

billion in federal, state and local taxes, but still they accept cigaret company price hikes rather than give up their addiction.

No one has dared suggest in Winston-Salem that no-smoking sections be installed in restaurants, and even in the one place where smoking is forbidden by law (municipal buses), so many persons ignore the rule that Mayor Corpening admits the city doesn't try to enforce it.

The city's schools do mention the dangers of cigarets in their health classes (it's included in lectures on drugs and alcohol), but 11th- and 12th-graders are allowed to smoke in designated areas on the school-grounds.

The local unit of the American Cancer Society, though it claims to get "almost zero" contributions from Reynolds employees, evades the smoking issue as much as possible. "It is a problem to raise funds in this community," says Dr. Howard Homesley, a professor at the medical school and president of the local unit. "You don't bite the hand that feeds you. Isn't that the way the expression goes?"

Homesley, who "smokes an occasional pipe or cigar," agrees with the rest of the city's leaders: "I think

Observations

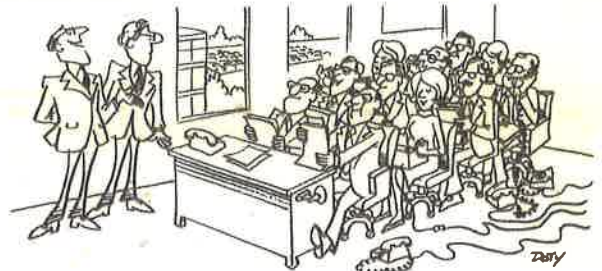


Pool-haul. More and more these days, comfortably crowded mini-vans are becoming part of the rush hour traffic scene in cities across the nation. An excellent way to save energy, company-sponsored van pools are growing by leaps and bounds. Over 200 major U.S. corporations



have instituted van programs, according to the Department of Energy, which adds that the number of individual van pools has doubled every year for the last five years. On a typical business day, DOE estimates, there are 4,000 to 5,000 company-sponsored vans on the nation's highways. The vans keep an average of six private automobiles home in the garage, says DOE, saving no less than 20 million gallons of gasoline a year.

Howling success. Mobil's van pool experience dates back to February, 1977, and the start of a modest two-vehicle program in Houston. Today, 19 vans—with two backups—carry an average of 223 passengers a day. Riders pay between \$19 and \$31 a month, depending on the distance they travel: the longest daily round trip is 80 miles. The employee drivers—all volunteers—are also responsible for vehicle upkeep and record keeping. In return, they ride free, have personal use of the van for a modest fee, and keep all the fares collected above the company's break-even point of eight. Most of the Houston vans operate at or near their 12-passenger maximum. The program has taken more than 100 private cars out of Houston's rush hour traffic—and is saving some 58,000 gallons of gasoline a year.



"They've been van pooling together since 1977."

Wagons ho! Van pooling is ideally suited to cities like Houston, with limited suburban mass transit facilities. But it's also finding acceptance in other areas. Montgomery Ward, a Mobil company, leases a fleet of 12-passenger "Ward-wagons" for its Chicago headquarters employees. The 14 vehicles, which carry some 135-150 passengers a day, are driven by employee volunteers known as "Wagonmasters." Wardwagon fares are about the same as those for public transportation—between \$40 and \$55 a month, depending on distance. But they offer door-to-door service. And given the nature of Chicago's winters, this last benefit alone is incentive enough to climb on the Wardwagon.



Buddy system. An interesting variation on the van pool theme is being used at Mobil's Denver offices. Employees live in every corner of the city's sprawling suburbs, making van pooling somewhat impractical. As an alternative, the company encourages car pooling by paying all or part of the monthly downtown parking fee, depending on the pool's size. We pick up the entire tab—\$58—for pools of four or more employees, and part of it—\$45—for those with three. As a result, nearly two-thirds of Mobil's Denver employees jump into a car pool to get to work.



Mobil

JOURNEY TO AN ANGRY TOWN

Califano is crazy. I don't understand the political motivation." He believes cigarets are being made a "whipping boy" at a time when research indicates many substances, from milk to eggs, may be harmful. Dr. Homesley says the individual should be allowed to choose what he wants, and that's why he's opposed to Joseph Califano's plan to finance school programs to educate students about the dangers of cigarets. "The government's going to spend \$25 million, and I doubt if it's going to do 25 cents worth of good." Not surprisingly, the Winston-Salem unit does not sponsor stop-smoking clinics.

In fact, the one man who does offer such clinics in town is the Rev. Jack Fry of the Seventh-Day Adventist First Church. With the help of the Northwestern Lung Association, he's put on two clinics, attracting about 50 applicants. Rev. Fry was able to get publicity in both the local papers and on Channel 12, but he found that some of those in the clinic resented the publicity. A few were Reynolds employees, and others simply didn't want it known they were trying to reject the town's leading product.

Richard Stockton, the youngish president

of the Chamber of Commerce, describes the reaction of his mother-in-law when she visited him. After a few days, she commented, "In other places, people lock themselves in the bathroom to hide their smoking. Here, it's almost as if they lock themselves in to stop smoking."

Harry Underwood, a nonsmoker and director of secondary education for the school system, has noticed the phenomenon as simply a disappearance of smoke. "You know, it's been noticeable at meetings. It used to be billows of smoke in a room, but not now. Maybe it's the idea of not imposing your habit, out of respect for the other person's space. Or maybe they're quitting. More and more people are becoming aware of the hazards."

The most militant anti-smoker in town has noticed that too. He's Harold Mills, executive director of the local Lung Association office. Unlike the Cancer Society, where the local director still puffs away, Mills' office has signs saying, "Thank You for Not Smoking."

"I used to get some dirty phone calls that you wouldn't believe," says Mills, who was once a two-pack-a-day man himself. "But it's funny. It's changed in the last two, three years. Very few complaints. And now people will see me coming and just joke, 'Oh, oh, here's old Mills. We better put out our cigarets.' I think all the health information is just sinking into people's minds. It has to, even in Winston-Salem. . . ."

"There are a lot of people at RJR who don't smoke anymore, and during some of our clinics, some of its employees will say, 'Don't use our names in your press releases,' though I've never

William Hobbs, chairman of R.J. Reynolds, is opposed to spending money to warn schoolchildren about the dangers of smoking. "I think they're overstepping their bounds . . . The money ought to be spent in the area of research . . ."

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heard of anyone suffering at Reynolds because they've stopped smoking."

Mills has been assisting schoolteachers, especially those in the lower grades, by providing films and brochures about why their students should never begin smoking. He says there has never been pressure for either him or the teachers to stop.

"The general consensus — I don't know if I should be quoted on this — is that they (Reynolds executives) don't want their children smoking."

That might be true, but certainly no Reynolds executive is going to admit it. In fact, William Hobbs, chairman of Reynolds Tobacco, says he's adamantly opposed to Washington spending money to warn schoolchildren "in Winston-Salem or anywhere else, because I think they're overstepping their bounds. They're really not speaking to the question. . . . The money ought to be spent in the area of research, to find out what the problems are."

Chairman Hobbs has become a veteran at fielding even the toughest questions, and when he is asked about Reynolds murdering 115,000 a year, he responds as calmly as if he were asked about his age: "Well, if you look at it over the span of years, tobacco has always been under attack. I think some of the old kings would have cut your head off if they caught you smoking. That's going back 400 years. Even when I was a child, tuberculosis was, by and large, blamed on smoking. Then they found a cure for tuberculosis. That kind of



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JOURNEY TO AN ANGRY TOWN

leaves you wondering what it's all about."

Hobbs mentions the \$70 million that the tobacco industry has invested in health research, but he too has become so accustomed to the onslaught against cigarettes that he can mention it almost casually: "My wife read me an article the other night. 'Now, if you want to live a long time and be healthy, here's what you ought to do.' And I said to her, 'Well, don't tell me one thing in it, because I know it says smoking.' And she said, 'Yes, but it's not up on the head of the list like it usually is. It's way down at the bottom.' And the emphasis was on frustration and stresses, overwork, not enough rest and diet. Boy, they really jumped on the diet. And you can't eat red meat, no sugar, no sweets, no eggs — it almost gets down to no nothing."

A journey down tobacco roads. Howard Long has been called the "Mayor of Tobaccoville" for so long that he even gets mail using that title, but the position is only honorary. Tobaccoville, located a few miles north of Winston-Salem, is an unincorporated crossroads consisting of a post office, general store, lawn-mower shop and three antique stores.

In the big city, cultured corporate types can refer to Joseph Califano, the anti-smoking crusader of HEW, in tones



that border only on disgust. For the real feelings, one has to go to the countryside, where the farmers toil at producing the state's \$1-billion-a-year tobacco crop. There, hatred reigns, and the most pleasant thing that the Mayor can say about Califano is that he be forced to submit to a violent act of fornication.

"This is war. It's the North against the South. I really feel that. They kill tobacco, and they'll kill the South. That's what they want."

It is early on a wintry afternoon when Claude B. Strickland Jr., sometimes called the Preacher, drives me out to meet the Mayor. Claude is owner of Cook's Tobacco Warehouse in Winston-Salem, a behind-the-scenes politico for the industry and a college-educated fellow who has learned to drop into a down-home accent anytime he's around farmers. "Winston-Salem is just a wonderful overgrown country town," he says with pride. "Best place in the world."

We meet the Mayor in a diner, out on U.S. 52. He looks almost like an executive — turtleneck, modish moustache and graying sideburns — until he opens his mouth, revealing his missing front teeth and his country-boy accent which looks unintelligible in print: "Rahtcheuh" means "right here"; "aht yanduh" is "out yonder." He is 60 years old; he looks 45.

At the diner, he is sitting with his cousin, W.H. Butler Jr. ("My friends call me "W.H."), and W.H. talks first: "Been farmin' all my life. Just don't know no better. Farmin' tobacco. It was all right for the Indians to do, and my forefathers, and my daddy. So why isn't it all right for me?"

"... There was this fellow lived down the road. And he was 92, smoked all his life, never sick a day till he accidentally drove a nail through his foot. Died of gangrene.

"I'd like to see Califano stop talkin' 'bout tobacco and start talkin' 'bout liquor. You can't even turn on TV without seein' all those people guzzlin' beer. It breaks up homes, hurts the liver and kills people on the highways." Then, a dig at Carter: "And I heard peanuts are bad for your heart."

That comment brings applause from the waitress clearing away the dishes, and the Mayor nods. He himself smokes three packs of Winston a day and chews when he's in the fields. "Awhile back, I was in the hospital. Pneumonia. Thought it might be the smoking. But they x-rayed me and everything — heart, lungs, liver — turned out all right."

W.H. adds that he himself used to smoke four packs, "but that damn Califano, he even talked me into quitting." Claude and the Mayor object to that: they say he'd quit before Califano's crusade. W.H., grumbling, admits it's true, but he doesn't explain why he really quit.

As the Mayor, Claude and I set out for a drive in

No one would dare suggest a stop-smoking ordinance in Winston-Salem. Even on the city's buses, the one place where smoking is forbidden by law, so many people violate the law that Mayor Wayne Corpening admits the city doesn't try to enforce it.

Claude's station wagon, the Mayor says he leases about 25 acres of tobacco land and raises about 50,000 pounds a year, but then he keeps pointing out property after property that he says he leases; at last he admits his original estimates were a little low because he's worried about the "revenue people." He calls himself "just a po' ol' country boy" and he lives in a modest bungalow with a front yard filled with farm equipment. It's only later that he shows that he is carrying \$14,000 or so in cash.

Indeed, tobacco is a highly profitable crop. It returns about \$1,200 per acre, compared to \$160 for peanuts, and \$92 for soybeans. "Ain't no other crop can touch tobacco," says the Mayor. "Nothin' else would even pay the taxes." It's hard for him to even imagine North Carolina without tobacco.

The countryside is rolling hills, tiny farms (15 to 50 acres), patches of woods, cemeteries and Church of God buildings stuck in the middle of nowhere. Everywhere is the sandy, red-clay soil, that mysterious natural ingredient that makes for "the sweetest tobacco in the worl'." Land goes for

Continued on page 32



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JOURNEY TO AN ANGRY TOWN

about \$1,500 an acre, and the Mayor, like most of the bigger tobacco farmers, leases rather than buys.

The leasing gets complicated. Since the 1930s, the U.S. Department of Agriculture has controlled the tobacco crop. Its weapon is what is usually, and mistakenly, called "the tobacco subsidy." In fact, it's a price stabilization program, offering loans to

farmers if the price falls below the support level. Farmers have to pay back the money, with interest. Last year (when prices were high), the program ended up enriching the federal government by \$800,000, thanks to the interest.

Without the program, cigaret manufacturers could drive down the price of flue-cured tobacco, but with the benefits come the regulations. The USDA carefully allots both the tobacco acreage and the poundage, and a fellow like the Mayor spends his winters going from farm to farm, trying to buy the allotments. The system is so enormously complex that every transaction requires one, maybe more, trips to the Agriculture office. "Made 25 trips there last month alone," says the Mayor.

He nods to the left. "And there's the house of our ball player. I think he even made it to the major leagues."

Claude points to the right. "Those niggers in that house there?"

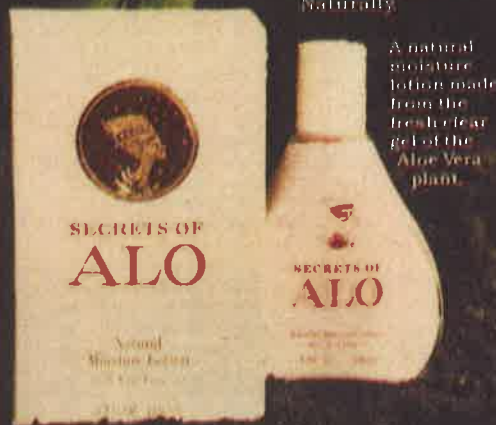


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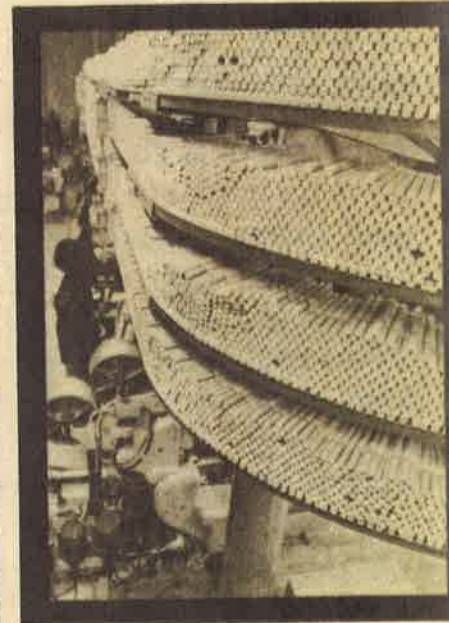
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"White niggers," says the Mayor.

"You know," says Claude, "Howard's so ugly that e'en his dog done left him. You ever get that dog back, Howard?"

"Yep. Killed him. Couldn't trust him anymore. Gittin' mean and dangerous."

Folks no longer hunt coons in the area, but they still keep their dogs, and as we drive up to a farmhouse, a lesson is given in how one makes a visit in North Carolina.

"Now, they got huskies here," says Claude. "They'll eat your ass up. If the dogs are out, don't put your foot on the ground."

We stay in the car for five minutes, right in front of the house, until we're certain that the dogs are inside.

Later, driving around Winston-Salem, Claude keeps mentioning the name Babcock, and I ask him, "Who's this Babcock?"

"Married a Reynolds."

"Yes, but what did he do?"

"Married a Reynolds."

I wait a few minutes, and when his name comes up again, I try, "Yes, but after he got married —"

"Married a Reynolds." In Winston-Salem, that's all that is needed to define a man.

Claude lives in a stately two-story house with an awesome expanse of lawn, but when he sees the gas gauge is low, he insists on driving out of the way to a discount gas station.

"Wonder if the guy can break a hundred?" Claude says.

"Maybe he's got some thousands," says the Mayor. "I could use some thousands. 'Cept now they have to be registered."

It seems like a routine to impress a re-

days dealing, he has to travel with a heap of cash.

Tobacco farming, Claude says, is like any other kind of farming: tough to make a living. A one-row tobacco harvester costs about \$25,000 these days, and a box barn for curing tobacco can run \$12,000 to \$15,000.

The Mayor picks up on the theme and starts ranting on again about Califano, who

has an easy desk job while the farmers sweat in the field. During the harvest season, the Mayor goes "48 hours without taking my shoes off." His son has gone to live in town, doesn't want anything to do with tobacco.

"But for me, it's the only life I know. Guess it's in my blood." And \$14,000 in his wallet.

JOHN DORSCHNER is a Tropic staff writer.

Winston-Salem produces more cigarets than any other city in the country — 200 billion a year, bringing in \$4.1 billion in worldwide sales.

porter, but when the attendant fills the tank, Claude thrusts a hundred-dollar bill at him. He can't change it.

"Howard," he says to the Mayor, "you'll have to change it."

We're standing by the rear of the car, and Howard fishes into both front pockets and tosses money on the bumper. Crumpled wads, a hundred on top of each. He rifles through them. They're all hundreds. He pulls out a beat-up old wallet. More hundreds, still in their bands: \$1,000 per packet. A few ones. Then, at the back, are some fives, tens and 20s. The Mayor takes the \$100 and makes change.

"Mayor," I ask, "don't you believe in banks?"

"Not much," he says.

As we drive away, Claude explains that the Mayor is an unusually affluent farmer. But the money is misleading. Most farmers don't trust checks; they want cash for their tobacco allotments, farm machinery or whatever. When the mayor spends his winter

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