

# The Lighter Side

## Passive smoking and canine cancer

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In September 1989 an article in the *Washington Post* reported on a study showing that dogs whose owners smoked had a 50% greater risk of getting lung cancer (see figure). At the time this article appeared, I was working at the Office on Smoking and Health (OSH), part of the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Those of us at OSH were quite excited about this new research finding. We recognised that 45 million Americans continued to smoke despite the hazards to their own health, and despite the harm they were inflicting upon their family, co-workers, and other people exposed to their secondhand smoke. But as the

animal rights movement has taught us, many people revere the health and life of animals above that of humans. Recalling Dr Alan Blum's editorial<sup>1</sup> entitled "If smoking killed baby seals...", we thought we had a new, potentially powerful tobacco control message at hand. Scores of smokers who had resisted all other appeals to stop smoking might finally do

### MARMADUKE By Anderson



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### Smokers With Dogs, Take Note

Dogs whose owners smoke are at a 50 percent greater risk of getting lung cancer, an environmental health professor at Colorado State University's College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences reports. His study compared 51 cases of canine lung cancer with another group of 83 dogs who had other forms of cancer. Nearly half of the dogs in the first group were owned by smokers, suggesting that the cancer might be related to second-hand smoke in the home. "Dogs don't smoke," the researcher noted, "and lung cancer is extremely rare in dogs" . . . .

From news services and staff reports

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**Newport** *Alive with pleasure!*

After all, if smoking isn't a pleasure, why bother?

**SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING: Smoking By Pregnant Women May Result in Fetal Injury, Premature Birth, And Low Birth Weight.**

**VIRGINIA SLIMS**

"If all you're looking for in a companion is obedience and good grooming, it's time you got a new leash on life."

**YOU'VE COME A LONG WAY, BABY.**

**SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING: Smoking By Pregnant Women May Result in Fetal Injury, Premature Birth, And Low Birth Weight.**

so if they learned about the pain and misery of pets forced to breathe smokey air.

We developed plans for a national public information campaign on the health effects of passive smoking on pets. As we prepared to launch the programme, cartoonists joined us in our campaign (see figure). Animal rights groups, veterinary organisations, pet shop owners, animal hospitals, and others concerned about animal welfare readied their troops to help us get out the message.

Alas, the tobacco industry countered our plans effectively. They acknowledged a "statistical association" between canine cancer and passive smoking but argued that the correlation was not causal. Dogs with a genetic predisposition to acquiring lung cancer, they said, may have an independent genetic predisposition to be owned by smokers. The industry claimed that the dogs' lung cancer may have been caused by household birds; they cited the medical literature<sup>2,3</sup> and suggested that dog owners who smoke may be more likely to own pet birds. They noted that the study on canine lung cancer, eventually published in the *American Journal of Epidemiology*,<sup>4</sup> did not include bird ownership in the confounding factors evaluated. The industry did concede that some dogs might be "annoyed" by their owners' smoking; however, they asserted that common courtesy could solve that problem, recommending that owners ask their pets if they mind before lighting up.

Then the industry began to dole out huge sums of money and large quantities of free dog food\* to the groups with which we were seeking an alliance, thereby buying their silence. When they started putting dogs in their advertisements (see figures), we put on hold our plans for a national educational campaign.

All hope is not lost, however. Rumor has it that a class action lawsuit will be filed against the industry on behalf of dogs exposed to environmental tobacco smoke (ETS). The suit will be modelled after the *Broin v Philip Morris* case, which began as a class action on behalf of flight attendants exposed to ETS during their employment.<sup>5</sup> - ED

\* RJR-Nabisco manufactures MILK-BONE dog and puppy biscuits, dog treats, and rawhide strips.

- 1 Blum A. If smoking killed baby seals...*NY State J Med* 1985; 85: 282-5.
- 2 Kohlmeier L, Arminger G, Bartolomeycik S, Bellach B, Rehm J, Thamm M. Pet birds as an independent risk factor for lung cancer: case-control study. *BMJ* 1992; 305: 986-9.
- 3 Gardiner AJS, Forey BA, Lee PN. Avian exposure and bronchogenic carcinoma. *BMJ* 1992; 305: 989-92.
- 4 Reif JS, Dunn K, Ogilvie GK, Harris CK. Passive smoking and canine lung cancer risk. *Am J Epidemiol* 1992; 135: 234-9.
- 5 Daynard RA. Recent developments in tobacco litigation: 1991. *Tobacco Control* 1992; 1: 37-45.

(For libel purposes, I must acknowledge the obvious — this article is written tongue-in-cheek and is not meant to be taken as truthful. - ED)

## How One Man Learned the Bible

John Lee, who was a prisoner of the Japanese for four years during World War II, sometimes astounds his golfing buddies at Lakewood Recreation Center between Cross Plains and Rising Star. He often quotes the Bible, reciting lengthy verses as though reading from the Holy Writ.

John is not an outwardly religious man. It is, therefore, surprising to hear him utter lengthy verses with no difficulty of recall. If they didn't know that he is a retired soil conservationist, they might believe him to be a preacher or a theologian.

A friend said to him recently, "John, you know the Bible well. Do you read it often?"

"No", he replied, "I don't read the Bible much, what I know about it comes from my wartime experiences".

He elaborated, explaining that prisoners of war had no cigarettes and he was cursed with an insatiable desire to smoke. A crude type of tobacco (called wog) was available to prisoners of war but there was no paper with which to roll a cigarette. John still possessed the New Testament, given to him at the Reception Center when he was inducted into the army. Its pages were thin and about the right size to make a cigarette. One by one he tore the sheets from that little book and smoked many times.

"I felt remorse about what I was doing," he says, "and as each page was removed I tried to memorize the words on both sides of the sheet before rolling a cigarette."

By Jack Scott

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