"I smoked cigarettes for many years, probably from the time I was about 12 years old. I remember up until the time I was doing Rocky, I had a cigarette when I was in the ring. That’s how bad the addiction was. Finally, I said, ‘This is only going to bring an early death.’ There also came a point when I thought that cigarettes looked somewhat silly on adults. Yet I have always been drawn to the idea of an oral fixation, and also feeling somewhat more relaxed with something smoking in my hand.

“I was doing the movie F.I.S.T. and it seemed that the character should appropriately be smoking a cigar. So I started (smoking cigars), in 1977 . . . After that point, I went back to cigarettes once or twice and then I quit totally. Cleaned out my lungs for three years and then went back to smoking cigars intelligently, for lack of a better term, from a connoisseur’s point of view . . .

“Quite often, early on, people were shocked if I was smoking a cigarette. I actually had people come up and bluntly chastise me on the street about smoking a cigarette. A cigar, however, was held in some kind of civil abeyance and people wouldn’t do that. Right away there was less of a stigma.”

Actor Sylvester Stallone, quoted in a cover story in “Cigar Aficionado”. Source: Mott G. Stallone II. “Cigar Aficionado” 1998; Apr: 132–63. In 1983, Stallone agreed to use Brown and William-son tobacco products “in no less than five feature films” for a fee of $500 000 (see Stallone’s letter documenting this agreement, at: <http://www.library.ucsf.edu/tobacco/docs/html/2404.02/2404.02.1.html>).

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“This is like legalized drugs. This is the drug of the ’90s. Time stops.”


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“If I don’t have a cigar on me, I don’t miss a cigar. I stopped smoking cigarettes over 15 years ago. That’s an addiction, a sick addiction. But the weeks can go by and if I don’t have a good cigar, I’m OK.”


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“I’ve been smoking 55 years and my mother, who’s 92, has been puffing for 71. It’s easy for me to deceive myself that it’s all in the genes. I’ve never even tried to quit. I must admit, however, I have imagined looking in the mirror on the [hypothetical] day I got the bad news..."
regarding the ‘big C’ and saying, ‘You weak, stupid sonofabitch. It serves you right.’”

* * *

“Let me see if I understand that correctly. They’re saying that unless legislation is conformed to the liking of the companies, they will keep on targeting children?”

Vice President Al Gore, responding to the tobacco industry’s threats to challenge restrictions on cigarette advertising and marketing unless legislation includes broad liability protections. Source: Carr R. Tobacco industry pushing hard for liability protection. “Congressional Quarterly” 1998; Feb 14: 386.

Deja vu

1997—WATER

WD: Doctor, do you believe there is any ill effect from exposure to nicotine as such?

RD: In what form do you mean? If somebody takes pure nicotine in a drop or two, it would be fatal.

WD: Well, if you drink enough water, you can die but—

RD: A drop of water would not hurt you a whole lot. A drop of nicotine would kill you.

From a deposition in the case of Engle vs RJ Reynolds Tobacco Company et al. The witness was “Tobacco Control” editor Ron Davis, and the questions were posed by William Dodds of the late firm Dechert, Price & Rhoads, which represents Philip Morris in the case. Source: Transcript of deposition for Engle vs RJ Reynolds et al. in the circuit court of the 11th Judicial Circuit in and for Dade County, Florida (Case No. 94–08273 CA 20), witness: Ronald M Davis, vol. 2, 24 November 1997, page 269.

1976—APPLE SAUCE

HW: None of the things which have been found in tobacco smoke are at concentrations which can be considered harmful.

PT: But the components themselves can be considered harmful, can they not?

HW: Anything can be considered harmful. Apple sauce is harmful if you get too much of it.

PT: I don’t think many people are dying from apple sauce.

HW: They’re not eating that much.

PT: People are smoking a lot of cigarettes.

HW: Well, let me say it this way. The people who eat apple sauce die. The people who eat sugar die. The people who smoke cigarettes die. Does the fact that the people who smoke cigarettes die demonstrate that smoking is the cause?

From the celebrated television documentary “Death in the West”, produced in 1976 by Thames Television of the United Kingdom. The interview excerpted above featured reporter Peter Taylor and Dr Helmut Wakeham, Vice President, Science & Technology, Philip Morris USA.

“It’s like Richard Nixon taking credit for releasing the Watergate tapes. This is so transparent and cynical, I think it will backfire in Congress.”


* * *

“In ‘Titanic,’ smoking is sexy and social and sophisticated and genuine and rebellious, and in the end virtually everyone dies—which is the most perfect touch of all.”


* * *

Martin Feldman, tobacco stock analyst for Salomon Smith Barney: “The equity markets have largely concluded that Congress and the (Clinton) administration will fail to seize the opportunity to legislate comprehensive tobacco legislation during 1998. That’s not me talking. That’s what I read from the valuations.”

US Senate Commerce Committee chairman John McCain: “I want to thank the markets for their confidence in me and this committee. (Laughter) Perhaps it is related to my stellar success with campaign-finance reform.”

Exchange during testimony at a hearing of the US Senate Commerce Committee on 19 March 1998. Source: Shapiro W. Tobacco debate should light a fire under Congress. “USA Today” 1998; Mar 20: 4A.

“ ‘It generally is not as effective to aim at the Negro consumer, as such, as it is to aim at his decisive motivations . . . . Quality rates as a cherished attribute. Negroes buy the best Scotch as long as the money lasts, most marketers agree.” (1969)

“The majority of blacks . . . do not respond well to sophisticated or subtle humor in advertising. They related much more to overt, clear-cut story lines.” (1981)

“Blacks appear less concerned about health-related issues . . . (and they) tend to buy less things to improve themselves.” (1982)


* * *

“Not only do these dangerous Amos-and-Andy-type stereotypes demean African-Americans, but the specific targeting of our communities and our youth constitutes a dangerous and ongoing health risk.”

US Congressman John Conyers of Michigan, an African American, commenting on the RJ Reynolds documents concerning the targeting of Blacks in cigarette advertising and marketing.


* * *

“Before black members of Congress work up any more righteous indignation over the sins of Big Tobacco, an unpleasant fact has to be acknowledged: Many black organizations have helped tobacco companies gain credibility with black consumers.

“There is hardly a black organization of any consequence that has not accepted the generous—if tainted—donations of tobacco companies. By taking those gifts, black groups have allowed companies such as RJ Reynolds and Philip Morris to cast themselves as saviors of important black causes, including college scholarships . . .

“(US Congressman John) Conyers and his colleagues have not acknowledged their dirty little secret: For years, donations from tobacco companies have helped to fund Congressional Black Caucus events.”


* * *

“We do recognize that some of the highlighted sections from selected documents may be unfortunate or even offensive, and we repeat what we said earlier that negative stereotypes, regardless of the point in history in which they were written, are inappropriate.”