Play It Again is a section of the journal where we republish quotes, gaffes, and immortal lines from friends and foes of tobacco control. It is compiled by Gene Borio, the webmaster of Tobacco BBS, which is the premier tobacco newsgathering site on the internet. Send contributions (including an original version or photocopy of the sourced item) to him at Tobacco BBS, PO Box 359, Village Station, New York 10014-0359; fax 001 212 260 6825. Send quotes from online stories (including the full article) or scanned documents (in GIF or JPEG format), to gborio@mindspring.com

“The Four Horsemen of the US Antismoking Apocalypse”
Covington & Burling (the Washington, DC, law firm which serves the tobacco industry), in a draft letter to the editor of the South China Morning Post 1989 July 3 (estimated)
Who could these bold knights be? Feel free to ruminate; the answers are below

On 13 October 1999, Philip Morris launched a multi-pronged initiative to portray themselves as reasonable good guys. On its website, it did not exactly admit that smoking was harmful and addictive, though many seem to have taken it that way. The Philip Morris site said:

“There is an overwhelming medical and scientific consensus that cigarette smoking causes lung cancer, heart disease, emphysema and other serious diseases in smokers . . . There is no “safe” cigarette. These are and have been the messages of public health authorities worldwide. Smokers and potential smokers should rely on these messages in making all smoking related decisions . . . Cigarette smoking is addictive, as that term is most commonly used today.”


“Fundamentally, this is an attempt to influence the punitive damages issues . . . Their website is essentially a treatise on why they should not be punished.”

“[Philip Morris’ new website] may just be a PR effort . . . But it has important consequences . . . They are saying nicotine is an addictive product. Now they should agree to FDA regulation . . . What other addictive substance is not regulated by the FDA?”

“The tobacco companies are hard pressed to take the position that the addictive nature of cigarettes was common knowledge in the 1950s since they have steadfastly denied that cigarettes are addictive and, even today, only ‘acknowledge findings’ about addictiveness.”

“Nicely put: Apt insights from the tobacco control community and others

“Journalism best serves the common good when it focuses attention on social problems that its audience can help to solve.”

“If this is not a public health issue, what the heck is a public health issue? How many people have to die before something becomes a public health issue?”

“It’s nice that while Philip Morris is killing about 200 000 people every year that they’re also doing something for the homeless.”

“When I was invited recently to give a talk on tobacco advertising to students at a progressive private school outside Boston, the person extending the invitation said she was also going to invite someone from the tobacco industry to represent ‘the other side’. I was tempted to ask her if she felt equally compelled to have a batterer on hand during a discussion of domestic violence.”
One of the richest sources of turmoil is the US industry’s sudden attempt to insinuate itself to the forefront of youth smoking prevention efforts.

“We realise we are going to have people skeptical of our efforts to reduce youth smoking. . . The only thing we can do is ask that our actions be judged in the long term.”


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“Our goal is to encourage kids not to smoke with a clear message that to abstain from trying tobacco products is a cool thing for a kid to do.”

Ron Milstein, Vice President, General Counsel and Director of Lorillard Tobacco Company’s youth smoking prevention programme. Source: The Lorillard Tobacco Company unveils youth smoking prevention program. “Business Wire” 1999 October 11.

I’m still trying to get this straight: Not smoking is cool for a 17 year old, but the day he turns 18, smoking becomes cool.

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“I really don’t think it’s appropriate to have teenagers looking at cigarette advertising and making judgments about it.”

Brown and Williamson’s Corky Newton, to Florida’s SWAT team teens, who suggested they might review B&W’s ads to advise on their attractiveness to youth. Source: Pinkston R. Teens take on big tobacco. “CBS” 1999 November 14.

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“We look forward to the day when you want to work with us in constructively addressing this issue.”


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And, indeed, there are some who have chosen to believe the industry:

“I encourage others who care about the future of young people, like the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, to devote funding to developing resources that will improve the lives of young people, not to use negative ads attacking youth organisations.”

Richard J Sauer, president and chief executive officer of the National 4-H Council, wants the CTFK to stop criticizing and start funding. Source: Sauer R. COUNTERPOINT: 4-H program seeks to keep young people from smoking. “St Louis Post-Dispatch” 1999 October 2.

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“While I know that it was lawsuits and public outcry and the rest that brought them [Philip Morris] to the decisions they made, I must say that we do applaud their efforts.”

The Rev Edward Branch, president of the Council of Baptist Pastors of Detroit and Vicinity.


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Yet others continue to resist the temptation:

“I think we’d look at any kind of company and say, ‘Is this the image we want to align the 4-H name with long-term?’”

Christy Leeds, acting associate state leader for the Ohio 4-H, which has refused the Philip Morris anti-youth-smoking program. Source: Hicks, D. Critics: Tobacco money taints 4-H image. “Akron Beacon Journal” 1999 September 23.

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“I’m uncomfortable with this. After all we are talking about a tobacco company.”


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Despite these rejections, the industry certainly seems sympathetic to the plight of the naysayers:

“I think it is unfortunate, and we are certainly disappointed in their decision not to accept funding for Life Skills training . . . We hope that they can find alternative funding that allows them to continue.”

Mike Pfeil, a spokesman for Philip Morris USA, on the San Diego Unified School District’s rejection of its “life skills” funding. Source: Autman S, Magee M. Schools snub Big Tobacco money/It would have funded anti-smoking classes. “San Diego Union-Tribune” 1999 September 23.

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Some have looked for deeper motives for this sudden flood of seeming candour, and anti-youth smoking initiatives. And indeed, the industry itself cannot help but admit that it hopes to ameliorate the dire threats it faces.

“It’s vital to our business that kids don’t smoke . . . if we’re perceived as marketing to kids, then it’s likely that people will not want to allow cigarettes to continue as a legal business in this country.”


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And watch how smoothly Philip Morris leverages the attorneys general’s settlement against the Department of Justice’s lawsuit, and even calls on the “health community” as a character witness:

“The [DOJ] lawsuit ignores the significant progress made by the tobacco industry, working with the state attorneys general and the health community. Philip Morris has shown we’re willing to work with responsible individuals and government officials to develop...
solutions for issues surrounding the manufacture, marketing and sale of our product.”

Greg Little, assistant general counsel for Philip Morris. Source: Little G. Suit has no basis in fact. “USA Today” 1999 September 23.

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And yet, we can be forgiven if we feel Philip Morris isn’t really working all that closely with the health community and government officials:

“We urge you to speak with the management of your favourite establishments and ask them if they will be able to continue to accommodate adult customers who smoke after Sept 18, and whether there is anything they can do under the law to provide some sort of accommodation for you and other adults who choose to smoke.”


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Tobacco companies can get tough on retailers over grey market cigarettes:

“The blend used for many gray market cigarettes is materially different from the blend used for the same brand style manufactured for US smokers. . . . If you sell such product to smokers in the US, you violate RJR’s trademark rights and also violate your contractual agreement with RJR.”


But have they ever been as tough over sales to minors? Over the 40 years we all have known that half of smokers begin by the age of 15, has any retailer ever been disciplined by the industry over youth sales?

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The still raging battles between the health community and the industry point up the wisdom of at least one attorney general:

“In some ways it was a mistake to settle the lawsuit because people think the problem is solved. . . . This industry continues to have almost unparalleled power.”


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North America and the UK often seem like “ground zero” in the tobacco wars. The industry, battle tempered by 40 years of war, has developed extremely sophisticated defences. So it can be disheartening to see the same issues, the same techniques—even the same phrases—being exported to the rest of the world.

“It is extremely regrettable to see the Health and Welfare Ministry set such a target [half the number of smokers in Japan by the year 2010]. Tobacco farmers depend on tobacco for their livelihood.”


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“We’ve got 1.2 billion people and they really enjoy their smoke.”


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“We would like to think that Britain has something better to offer China and Tibet than cancer, heart disease, emphysema and addiction.”


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Tobacco ads speak their own powerful and emotional language, attempting to address the special needs of their targets. It is always fascinating to see them in action, and try to track their triumphs and deadfalls.

“An American Original”


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“If aliens are smart enough to travel through space, why do they keep abducting the dumbest people on Earth?”

This Winston ad copy provoked a lawsuit threat from Peter Gersten, the so-called “UFO lawyer” of Phoenix and director of Citizens Against UFO Secrecy (GAUS). Source: Cigarette ad sparks UFO controversy. “Space.com” 1999 September 28.

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“Pleasure to burn”

Camel’s new campaign. Source: Elliott S. Advertising: Camel goes from an audacious campaign to a “classic” one. “Chicago Tribune” 1999 September 1.

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“Never let the goody two shoes get you down”
African-American targeted Virginia Slims ad.
Source: Virginia Slims translates theme for many cultures; cigarette brand’s $40 mil effort may be historic; uses multpage magazine inserts. “NewsEdge” 1999 September 20.
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“To smoke Lucky cigarettes is to love our Siping”
Over the top cigarette marketing aims to boost the local economy in a Chinese manufacturing city.
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“The latest in lip sticks” . . . “Like you, we travel in packs”
RJR has started to buy ad space over urinals and on the doors of bathroom stalls for its “Salem” brand.
Source: Tobacco brands’ main events are now by invitation only. “NewsEdge” 1999 September 6.
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“Brown & Williamson is in love . . . We’re a giant corporation and you make us feel like a little kitten . . . Thank you . . . lover.”
How calls are answered at B&W’s new toll-free number.
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“We, along with many, many other consumer goods manufacturers, have been involved with the cigarette manufacturers since Noah was a boy . . . While you can make moral judgments about whether we should be or not, we’re in the business of selling watches.”
Seiko group marketing manager David Innes, on the Marlboro promotion furor in the UK.
Source: Boseley S. Free camera if you smoke 1600 Marlboro—from the firm which admits cigarettes are addictive. “The Guardian” 1999 October 16.
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The campaign finance scandal in the United States finally seems to be catching fire with the public. Talk show hosts and others routinely talk about a system of “legalized bribery,” but what is really surprising is that some major business interests—victims of a kind of unspoken extortion, as candidates scramble for the funds necessary to run a campaign—have also begun to speak out.
“Business people are maybe finally beginning to realize that a system that is as broken as this really is bad for business.”
Kraets, Kohlberg, Roberts’ Jerome Kohlberg, who has started an organisation that pushes for campaign finance reform. KKR, it will be recalled, was the investment firm which paid $25 billion for RJR Nabisco in 1989—the biggest leveraged buyout in history at that time—and retained significant holdings until 1995. Source: Engberg E. Big politics, big money. “CBS” 1999 October 28.
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“In many ways, [the current campaign finance system is] a shakedown, and [CEOs] have no choice but to give . . . Especially if they’re a regulated industry, they have no choice but to play the game.”
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“I have been around long enough to know that that [receiving gifts from Philip Morris] doesn’t matter as far as my vote is concerned . . . Would it cause some type of perception problem? I guess it might, if you look at it from a negative perspective.”
* * *
“Once members of Congress were respected gentlemen of the Club. Now they are more like ladies of ill repute, with Mitch McConnell serving as the hard boiled madam of this Capitol Hill bawdy house . . . In other words, if we’ve established what the game is, are we just haggling over the price?”
Maureen Dowd comes down hard for campaign finance reform. Senator McConnell, from the tobacco state of Kentucky, receives hefty donations from tobacco interests, and is the champion of the idea that donations function as free speech.
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I know the suspense is killing you, so here is the “Four Horsemen” quote in full:
“The four individuals you have chosen to rely upon—Ronald Davis, James Repace, Stanton Glantz and Judson Wells—have each acknowledged publicly that their ultimate goal is to wipe out cigarette smoking by the year 2000 . . . In view of the events that we in Hong Kong have witnessed over the past few weeks, the last thing we need is additional provocation . . . Although there may be a place in the United States for statements such as those attributed to Messrs Davis, Repace, Glantz and Wells—the Four Horsemen of the US Antismoking Apocalypse—we would urge that more attention be paid in Hong Kong to the science than to the politics of ETS [environmental tobacco smoke].”
I'm sorry, many of you were undoubtedly hoping to be awarded one of the prizes. I'm sure there are a lot of noses out of joint out there in the tobacco control community—and it's not from ETS! For the losers, keep up the good work, and better luck next time! For the winners—our heartfelt thanks!

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Lawsuits in the United States continue to be a major threat to the industry, especially Florida's Engle class action. This 46 year old memo seems particularly prophetic:

“For the public, an issue touching on the deepest of human fears and instincts is involved—the issue of uncontrollable disease and death . . . Hence, cigarette companies might not readily be forgiven if their approach to this problem stemmed only from eagerness to protect their earnings and if they twisted the research of medical science . . . into a device to save stockholders . . . [It] would be a grave mistake. The stakes are too large; the penalties for losing could be too great.”

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The stakes in these battles are so great that lawsuits now seem to be taking their place as another arm of the US government, one which kicks in to redress grievances Congress and the courts have refused to address. This function, of course, fought bitterly by tobacco's supporters.

“This one jury has the ability and appears to have the desire to completely dismantle the tobacco industry as we know it . . . These are very much uncharted waters . . . No one really knows what will happen with Engle because there has never been a case like this before.”

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“If you are an HMO or a pharmaceutical company or an Exxon or a DuPont and you’ve been manufacturing a dangerous product or you've been deceiving your consumers, this is your worst nightmare come true . . . It’s an unprecedented shift in power.”

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Part of the fascination of the tobacco story is its sheer complexity; often an issue will arise which cannot help but evoke a sudden torrent of conflicting emotions, ideas, conjectures, and even dreams.

“We accept that this [Introgen’s lung cancer vaccine] raises huge ethical issues.”

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Soon the US Supreme Court will decide if the Food and Drug Administration may regulate tobacco as a drug.

“The issue here is who has the power to establish the social policies of the country. Is it the elected officials in Congress or the unelected bureaucrats in the Food and Drug Administration?”

Charles A Blixt, executive vice president and general counsel of RJ Reynolds Tobacco Company. Source: Johnson M. Court to decide on leaf regulation / Can the FDA treat tobacco as a drug? “Richmond Times-Dispatch” 1999 October 3.

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The industry continues to use sport and entertainment figures to legitimise their products.

“I am thrilled to welcome Billie Jean King to our board of directors. She is a legendary athlete and exceptional leader who has excelled both on and off the tennis court. We look forward to the unique perspective that she will bring to Philip Morris.”


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“The industry continues to use sport and entertainment figures to legitimise their products.”

Richard C. Blixt, executive vice president and general counsel of RJ Reynolds Tobacco Company. Source: Johnson M. Court to decide on leaf regulation / Can the FDA treat tobacco as a drug? “Richmond Times-Dispatch” 1999 October 3.

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**End of file**

“...They’re probably just a couple of bored office workers turning their morning break into smoke, but I can’t help seeing my parents years ago, waiting outdoors for the doctor’s news, sneaking back into their bodies for one more cigarette, resigning their unheard conversation."


“...After my husband’s last operation, he mimicked the smoker’s gestures while lying asleep on his hospital bed... He acted like he was holding a cigarette and tapped with his finger to make ashes fall. Those gestures showed us that my husband was truly drugged.”


“...Thus, the apparent relaxant effect of smoking only reflects the reversal of the tension and irritability that develop during nicotine depletion. Dependent smokers need nicotine to remain feeling normal. The message that tobacco use does not alleviate stress but actually increases it needs to be far more widely known."


“I have probably handled more benzopyrene than all of the anti-tobacco people put together... Then you’d go through a whole step of reactions, and every compound I made was tumorigenic (tumour producing) in an animal in some way or another, and I’ve still got all of my fingers and I’m still here.”


“We think it’s good when tobacco companies address issues that are of significance to public health.”


Koppel: “If I say to you Steve Parrish, right now, tell me is nicotine addictive, you will have no trouble saying yes, is that correct?”

Parrish: I will have no trouble saying what—exactly what is on our Web site, that under the definition that’s commonly used today, it absolutely is... }

Koppel: “All right, you were good nine years ago. You’re even better today.”


“...Happily we haven’t yet heard of any Egyptian law firms claiming compensation for the heirs of deceased pharaohs.”

Nicholas Brookes, chairman and CEO of B&W, reflects on recent findings of nicotine byproducts in mummies, and posits—before the evidence is in, we might add—an Egypt/America tobacco trade. Source: Adams H. B&W chief: tobacco has bright future. “The Courier-Journal” 1999 September 2.

“...Lawyers thought they were protecting the industry, but in my opinion the lawyers were the downfall of the industry... they’re the ones who got us where we are now.”

Ex-RJR chief Edward A Horrigan, who, as CEO of Liggett, was one of 1994’s “I believe that nicotine is not addictive' execs, looks back. Source: Tursi F, White S, McQuilkin S. Lost empire: chapter 11, part 2: protecting the Kingdom. “Winston-Salem Journal” 1999 November 15.

“One could choose a third way, and remain, as the modern theologians says, ‘in the ambiguity’—acting forcefully, but conscious always that one’s knowledge was insufficient and one’s heart slightly corrupt. The best political men I knew seemed to have chosen this way.”


Interviewer: “Do you have any problems with smoking?”

Williams: “I smoke, but I can quit.”


“We must act now to close this insidious loophole, and until we do, every computer with internet access will be like an unattended cigarette vending machine.”

“We attribute [the fire] to smoking in the nest.”

Clifton, New Jersey, deputy fire chief Thomas Lyons, on the fire started by an animal that brought a lit cigarette to its nest. Source: Bautista J. Cigarette in animal's nest causes Clifton plant blaze. “The Bergen (NJ) Record” 1999 November 3.

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The need for campaign finance reform in the US is increasingly urgent. Even talk show hosts casually joke about the government's system of open bribery. Naturally, the tobacco industry is consistently among the top donors to politicians. The following quotes are provided because this system obviously works, and such donations to officials will be an increasingly important issue for governments worldwide. Let us start with an interesting proposed solution to the crisis.

“The problem isn’t the anonymity of contributors. If contributors were anonymous to the parties and to elected officials, that would be a little healthier. But they’re only anonymous to the public.”

Thomas Mann, director of governmental studies at the Brookings Institution, on the new Republican majority issues committee, which is seeking $25 million in donations of $500 000 to $3 million and is promising donors anonymity. Source: Greve F. GOP initiative offers anonymity for big donations. “Philadelphia Inquirer” 1999 August 7.

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“I can’t point to one single thing that happened or didn’t happen because Philip Morris and some of the others advocated for or against.”


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“I do not see members of Congress casting a vote because their arms are being twisted by lobbyists, or because of lobbying expenditures.”


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“Thank you for your kindness and generosity. . . .Please do not hesitate to call on me if I may be of any assistance to you.”