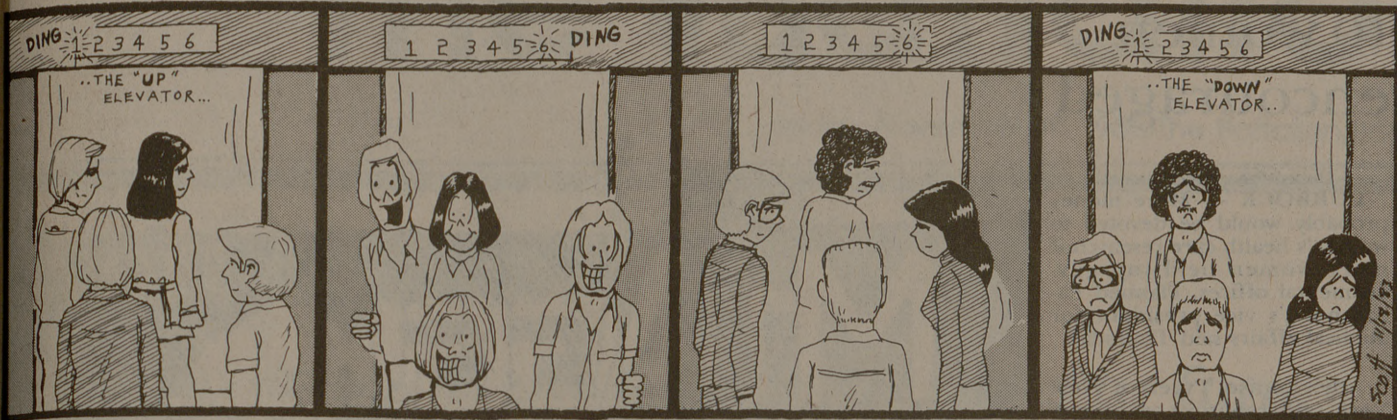


Warped

by Scott McCullar



Surgeon General links smoking, disease closer

United Press International
WASHINGTON — Surgeon General C. Everett Koop warned 170,000 American cigarette smokers in a harsh statement Thursday they will die this year from heart disease caused by their habit.

Eventually, heart disease caused by cigarette smoking could kill 10 percent of the current population, or about 24 million people, Koop said.

"What we are saying in this report, I think, is being said in stronger terms than we have ever said it before, and that is that cigarette smoking is really a significant cause of coronary heart disease in the United States," Koop said.

Koop said research has linked cigarette smoking to about 170,000 heart disease deaths each year, or nearly one-third the total number of annual deaths due to heart disease.

Besides the link between cigarette smoking and heart disease — a category that includes heart attacks and other forms of heart failure — the report also said smoking is a cause of strokes and hardening of the arteries.

The Tobacco Institute disputed the report's findings, saying the evidence is inconclusive.

"Whether cigarette smoking is causally related to heart disease is not scientifically established," the institute said.

Koop's report was issued 19 years after the first surgeon general's report linking smoking and cancer, and four years after a report citing ties between smoking and heart disease.

The report singled out cigarette smoking, noting that research shows pipe and cigar smokers "do not appear to experience substantially greater risks than non-smokers."

Program agreed upon to handle GM 'lemons'

United Press International
WASHINGTON — The Federal Trade Commission abandoned a court battle against General Motors Thursday, and settled for a nationwide arbitration program to deal with the thousands of consumer complaints against GM. Most of the complaints concern faulty engines and transmissions.

As a condition of the settlement, the FTC will drop its 1981 lawsuit against the auto-maker. Instead, special panels will be established to mediate customer gripes on a case-by-case basis and to award money to owners of "lemons."

The FTC's decision to give up the case came over the objections of 30 state attorney generals and the Center for Auto Safety, founded by consumer advocate Ralph Nader.

The FTC estimated more than 10 percent of the 21 million cars produced by GM since 1974 will be involved in settlements. An average of \$500 is expected to be granted to each consumer who was represented by the suit, FTC officials said. GM's total

bill, which will be divided up between 210,000 GM car owners, will be in excess of \$95 million.

Consumers will be at an unfair disadvantage when the panels begin hearing the cases, the opponents of the settlement said.

"It will be like sending a team of Chinese, who have never seen or studied or played the game of football, into a contest with the Dallas Cowboys," FTC Commissioner Michael Pertschuk, who cast a dissenting vote, quoted one disgruntled lawyer as writing.

FTC Commissioner Patricia Bailey said the settlement is not perfect, but it represents an immediate, fair way to compensate the GM owners represented by the commission's suit.

Letters received by the FTC since the commission asked the public to write in comments on the proposed agreement have opposed the program by over a 5-1 margin. Public opinion was solicited after the agreement was proposed in April.

But GM Vice President James Vorhes said the agreement was a

much better deal than prolonged litigation could have ever achieved for owners of the GM vehicles involved.

The agreement covers present and former owners of GM products equipped with THM-200 transmissions, premature camshaft wear on 305- and 350-cubic-inch gasoline engines and 350-CID diesel engines with problems dealing with fuel-injection.

It was believed to be the first time the FTC has turned to case-by-case arbitration instead of direct relief for alleged defects.

The arbitration panels' decisions will be binding on GM but not on individual consumers who can take their individual complaints to court.

GM said it will send letters of notification to the thousands of people who have filed complaints about engines and transmissions. GM officials said they will advertise the program and will create a national toll-free telephone number for consumers to call.

The release of the 378-page report coincided with the seventh annual Great American Smokeout, during which millions of smokers tried to quit smoking for at least one day.

"The report that we're submitting should provide a very strong incentive for everyone to respond to that today — and to the request not to smoke," said Edward Brandt, assistant secretary of health and human services.

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