

Opinion

Advertising not to blame for tobacco-related illness

Horace Greeley defined the cigarette as "a fire at one end and a fool at the other." A more accurate definition never has been written.



Loren Steffy

Nothing annoys me more than having a nice dinner out ruined from the by-product of that fire-and-fool combination. I'm always tempted to ask the nearby smoker to stop, but I never can. It's a battle of rights. My right to clean air versus the smoker's right to blackened lungs. His smoke is infringing on my rights, and my request for an unpolluted eating environment is infringing on his.

The referee in this situation should be the restaurant, which has a responsibility to see that all customers — smokers and nonsmokers — are able to eat in peace. If they don't, one or both of us may take our appetites elsewhere.

But sometimes the smoker-nonsmoker conflict cannot be moderated so easily.

A bill has been introduced to Congress that, if passed, would ban all forms of tobacco advertising. The bill applies to newspaper and magazine ads, athletic sponsorships, billboards, posters, matchbook covers and store displays. The proposed ban would affect manufacturers, distributors and retailers alike.

Rep. Mike Synar, D-Okla., the principal sponsor of the bill, claims that tobacco use is of great governmental concern because it is responsible for the loss of 350,000 lives annually. Synar also claims that treating these illnesses cost Americans \$22 billion last year.

Synar's figures are powerful, but they don't justify an across-the-board advertising ban. If Synar and the six other bill sponsors are so concerned with tobacco products' threat to life, then their statistics make a stronger argument for a ban on the products themselves than on the advertising.

Proposing anti-tobacco legislation would, of course, be political suicide. The congressmen are saying that although the tobacco industry represents a sizeable threat to life and taxpayers' money, they don't want to prohibit its use or sale. Instead, they suggest we ban tobacco product advertising and hope that if people don't hear about cigarettes, they'll forget about them and live longer, healthier lives.

But smoking is an addiction, and smokers aren't going to kick the habit just because cancer stick ads disappear. Years of surgeon general's warnings about tobacco dangers have done little

to curtail cigarette consumption. The removal of cigarette ads from radio and television, which actually had the blessing of the tobacco industry, also had little effect on sales.

The tobacco industry represents a lot of jobs and money for smokers and nonsmokers. It's not just going to go away. And while many nonsmokers complain about having a nice meal ruined, few are going to actively lobby for anti-tobacco legislation. Most have a passive disgruntlement with smokers ("I just want to enjoy my meal...").

Synar is trying to put the blame for tobacco-related illnesses on the promotion of the products, rather than on the products themselves.

The advertising isn't responsible for the illness or the lack of taxpayer money. The smokers themselves make the decision, with full knowledge of the dangers, to light up. No amount of ad-

vertising, counteradvertising or thereof can alter that decision, smokers allow it to.

While a ban on tobacco sale might cut down on cigarette consumption, it probably would cause the legal cigarette-making and requisite tax dollars to enforce.

The best Synar and company hope for is that local government private establishments will take greater responsibility in keeping peace between smokers and nonsmokers. In this manner individual on both sides can be respected with minimal amount of animosity.

Then, when I enter a restaurant can say, "Nonsmoking, please, smoker behind me can say, 'Cigarette table next to the graveyard.' Both can both rest in peace.

Loren Steffy is a senior journalist and the Opinion Page editor of The Battalion.

Following the PAC depends on name

There's more to starting a political action committee than raising money. After all, a successful PAC must sound upbeat, have a name that inspires people to write checks.

Donald M. Rothberg
News Analysis

A name like the Jimmy Carter Committee for a Greater America.

The former president isn't the draw he once was. His PAC, dormant for some time, doesn't rank as one of the big money committees registered with the Federal Election Commission. It began the year with a bank balance of \$6.74 and it went \$18.47 in the red when the bank hit it with \$25.21 in service charges.

As PAC names go, it also has some problems.

The Carter committee broke a cardinal rule of the PAC business — don't name your PAC after yourself.

PACs are fund-raising committees set up by politicians and political activists to channel contributions to candidates. Potential presidential candidates use them to gain favor with other politicians by giving them money collected by their PACs.

A look at the names of PACs makes it clear there are unwritten naming rules most people follow. One of the rules seems to be don't get too imaginative. As a result there is a deadening similarity among PAC names.

There's the Fund for America's Future, the Fund for Future Committee and the Committee for the Future of America.

One of the newest PACs is a classic example of the naming technique. It's called the Fund for All Americans.

What does that name tell potential donors?

First of all, it doesn't tell them the politician behind the committee. Why instantly turn off all the people who don't like him?

Secondly, it suggests it's for all Americans. Which gives a hint of the all-inclusive message of its sponsor, Gov. Thomas H. Kean of New Jersey.

A Republican, Kean won a landslide re-election victory in 1985 after a campaign in which he succeeded in winning support from many traditionally Democratic groups, including blacks and labor.

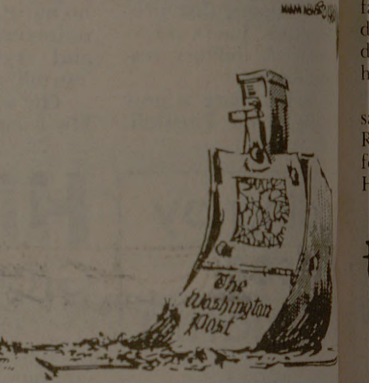
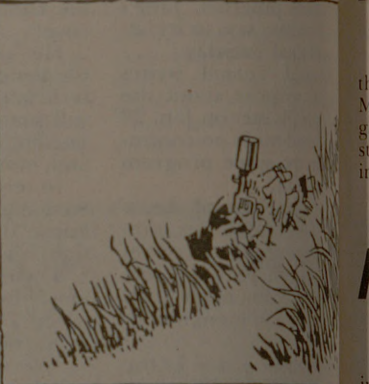
Kean is a leading advocate of the need for Republicans to reach out to such groups. Thus, a Fund for All Americans.

That sounds a lot more inclusive than Republican Majority Fund or Democrats for the '80s.

Experienced interpreters of PAC names might read something else in the name of the Kean committee — national ambition.

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CASEY OF THE CIA



Holocaust doesn't belong just to Germans and Jews

Occasionally, you get a man who is perfectly matched to the office he holds. That will be the case when Kurt Waldheim, allegedly a war criminal and indisputably a liar, officially becomes the president of Austria. It is an empty office for an empty man — a ceremonial post that is supposed to represent Austria. Never has the country been better represented.



Richard Cohen

The temptation, even the duty, is to lambast Austria for what it has done and to wonder about a country that could elect as a head of state a man whose morality, like his clothes, is trimmed to reflect his times. He was a Nazi when it was popular, not a Nazi when it wasn't, and now sort of is and sort of isn't — reflecting the moral ambiguity of the people who elected him.

But something within me cheers the election of Waldheim. As president of Austria, he will travel the world as an object lesson — a reminder that the horrors of the Nazi era were not perpetrated solely by a clique of mad Germans, but by ordinary people doing what they thought were ordinary things. Like some clerk out of Kafka, Waldheim may have done nothing more than sign papers. The point, always, was to have a clean desk. From there, a clean conscience somehow followed.

The tendency in recent years has been to see the Holocaust as something that transpired between Germans and Jews. Germans had their grievances and Jews their peculiar ways. The Holocaust belongs to these two peoples — one as perpetrators, the others as victims. And in this formulation it has almost nothing to do with anyone else. Jonathan Yardley, the astute book critic for the Washington Post, inadvertently put it this way

when reviewing a book about China's Great Cultural Revolution: "Its effect was to plunge China into a decade and a half of terror that is likely to haunt it for generations, much as the Holocaust haunts Germany and the Jews."

Yardley says the sentence does not really reflect what he meant — or what he knows. I use it not because I believe otherwise, but because it attracted no attention from editors or readers, because it seems to be a perfectly reasonable, noncontroversial statement. But it is wrong. As Waldheim's own career makes manifest, the Holocaust was not just the work of the Germans. It was also the work of the Austrians — and Latvians, Lithuanians, Ukrainians, Poles, Hungarians, Rumanians, Russians and other peoples as well. Everywhere Jews or Gypsies, Poles or intellectuals, communists or clerics died, the Germans had their collaborators. The real horror of the Holocaust is that people killed people for no reason.

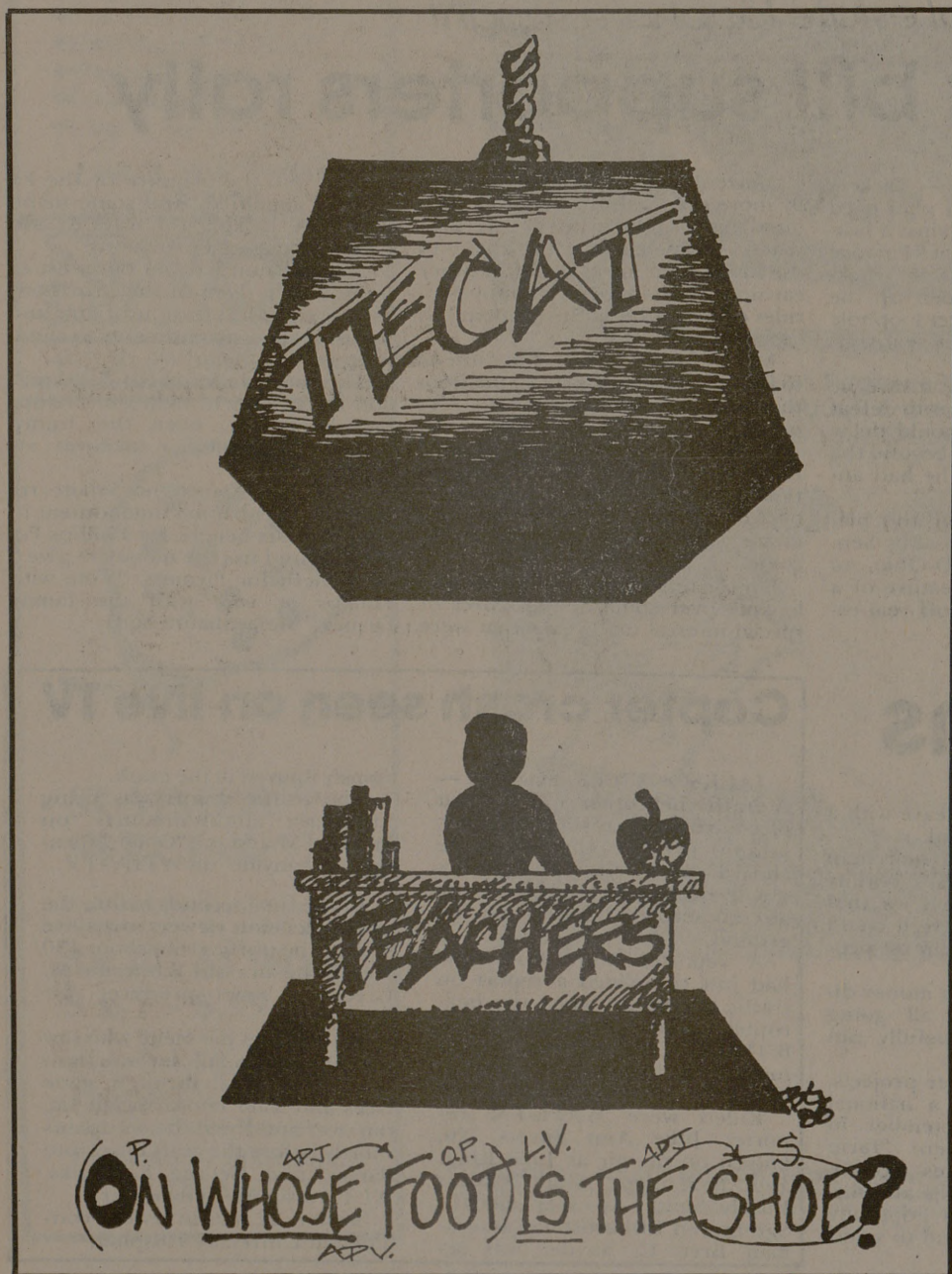
We all have a difficult time facing up to the Holocaust. Not only are the facts unspeakable, but they say something unspeakable about human beings: In the middle of the 20th century, in the most advanced nations on earth, millions were murdered by millions not because they were a threat, but because they were different. It is no wonder that Margaret Thatcher, no ignoramus when it comes to European history, broke down recently after visiting Yad Vashem, the museum-memorial to the Holocaust in Jerusalem.

The facts are just too awful to confront. So by and large the world does not. President Reagan certainly did not when, in visiting Bitburg, he ducked the real meaning of the Holocaust. He pretended Nazism was something foisted on the German nation, that it was imposed totally by a small group of fanatics. He limited responsibility for the crime to the Nazi leadership and exonerated everyone else. And when protests erupted, they came mostly from Jewish organizations — as if the Re-

gan's simplistic version of history sulted only them. The rest of the saw things largely the same way again, this was something that concerned Jews.

So here, thanks to Austria, is corrective. Here is Kurt Waldheim, true perpetrator of the Holocaust, German, but an Austrian; not a beast, but an ordinary (oh so common) man. Here is the humanist with past, the internationalist at his provincial, the intellectual who books for the lynch mob. He is elected to represent Austria, Austrians, as is their wont, are best. In ways we are reluctant to represents many of us all.

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