

Opinion

Of pink lungs and burning tobacco leaves

Why do people smoke?

Since the first time cigarette smoke stung my eyes and made my clothes stink, I have wondered how people can enjoy smoking cigarettes.

Paula Vogrin

As a non-smoker, I can't begin to understand the pleasure smokers derive from sucking in the smoke of burning tobacco leaves.

Some of you may be saying don't knock it till you try it. Well, I've tried it, twice, and I'm knocking it.

I was nine years old when I had my first smoke. I had a friend named Eileen whose mother was a chain smoker. She'd light one cigarette with the burning butt of another.

One day while Eileen and I were playing Barbies, Eileen's mother went to the bathroom and left a cigarette half-finished in the ashtray. Eileen and I decided it was time to take that first glamorous puff. I picked up the cigarette, and knowing I looked cool,

inhaled like it was my life's first breath. I ended up on the floor choking and gagging—I didn't look too cool.

That experience scarred me for the next nine years of my life. I avoided cigarettes and cigarette smoke at all costs.

Then, when I was 18, I was out with some friends. We'd had a few drinks, and we thought we'd buy some cigarettes and smoke and be cool (of course). As I was lighting my Virginia Slims Menthol, visions of a nine-year-old me choking and gagging on Eileen's kitchen floor crossed my mind.

"I will not inhale," I thought. I was busy taking very small drags on my menthol, trying my hardest to look like I was enjoying being cool, when I became aware that my entire mouth—the teeth, the tongue, the gums and even the uvula (that thing that hangs down like a stalactite from the back of your throat)—reeked of 1,000 ashtrays.

I drank a beer, I drank some water, I drank a coke, I chewed some gum. Nothing worked. I had a case of funky mouth that would not be cured.

When I woke up the next mornin' could have sworn my mouth was fill with that sandy stuff you find in mal ashtrays.

Thus ended my smoking career.



Forget all that stuff the surgeon general says about smoking being hazardous to your health—if you know the physiological effects of smoking enough to deter you, take a good lo

the next person you see puffing on a cigarette.

Is it humanly possible to look cool, sophisticated or glamorous blowing smoke through your nose and mouth? Aesthetic reasons alone should be enough to convince people not to smoke.

Have you ever seen an appealing ashtray?

Do crushed butts make sidewalks more attractive?

Do the contents of car ashtrays in parking lots make the walk to your car more pleasurable?

Does the aroma of cigarette smoke bring about fond memories of spring rains, freshly cut hay or blooming flowers?

When smoke is wafting around the workplace is it easier for everyone to do their job?

Does billowing cigarette smoke enhance an eating experience at an expensive restaurant? How about at McDonald's?

Does smoking make your breath fresher?

Does smoking keep your teeth white?

Does smoke soothe your eyes?

Does cigarette smoke make your hands and fingers smell better?

Does cigarette smoke make your clothes smell good?

Does breathing in the cigarette of others make you healthier?

Does smoking improve your performance in sports?

Are people more apt to like you smoke?

Do people like to kiss someone just finished a cigarette?

Do cigarette ashes make your look better?

Do cigarette burns enhance the appearance of upholstery?

Do cigarettes help prevent lung cancer?

Do cigarettes reduce your heart disease?

Are smokers less likely to suffer attacks?

No.

Why, then do people smoke? Paula Vogrin is a senior journalist, major and a columnist for The Battalion.

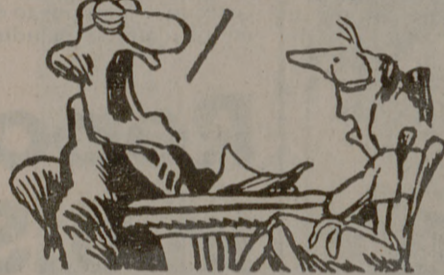
WHAT? YOU WANT A BIRTH CONTROL DEVICE?



ARE YOU HAVING WANTON SEX WITH SOMEONE, MISS?



AREN'T YOU A LITTLE YOUNG FOR THAT, YOU HUSSY?



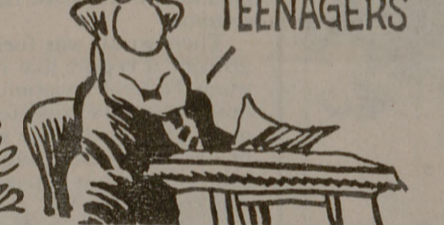
HOW OLD ARE YOU, YOU PERVERT? SIXTEEN? SEVENTEEN? ..



DO YOUR PARENTS KNOW ABOUT THIS? WHAT'S THEIR PHONE NUMBER?



I ENJOY COUNSELING TEENAGERS



Colorless isn't dull

I'm a black and white man. I've always been that way, and I'm not about to change now.

Lewis Grizzard

I think TV was better back when it was all in black and white.

You know somehow Perry Mason was wearing a blue suit in the courtroom, despite the fact it looked black on the screen.

I even prefer my newspapers to be in mostly black and white. If I wanted to read a comic book, I would have gone out and bought one.

I don't like any newspaper that looks like a third-grader got loose in the paste-up department with a box of crayons.

It also concerns me when I see a color weather map in a newspaper and Florida is yellow and poor Minnesota is blue.

People who live in Minnesota have enough problems just trying not to freeze to death without some newspaper weather map showing how blue everything is where they live compared to all the warm, yellow Floridians.

I like black and white movies a lot better than color movies, too. When movies started showing up in color, that's when movies got out of hand and stopped making a lot of sense.

Nobody ever got naked in a movie until there was color. And nobody made stupid movies you couldn't understand like "Kiss of the Spider Woman."

I said all that to say I agree with Woody Allen, who has complained to Congress that colorizing old black and white movies by computer is a terrible thing that must be stopped.

I don't want to see John Wayne "Sands of Iwo Jima" in any other besides black and white.

That has to do with the fact that World War II, itself, was a good-fashioned black and white war. Go versus Evil. Everybody knew where stood.

Throw a bunch of greens and reds and yellows into "Sands of Iwo Jima" and World War II, and what come out with is John Wayne in "Green Berets," which was in color was a terrible movie; and Vietnam, which also was in color, and was a terrible war.

What are they going to do next old movies? Dub in Bob Newhart in Charlie Chaplin movies? Let the guy take over the ranch in those westerns?

We should stop colorization of films right now before it gets out of hand, and if Congress doesn't do anything about it, you can.

Do what I did. I was watching Cagney in "Yankee Doodle Dandy" other night and some fool had color it.

I calmly walked over to my TV and found a knob marked "one-color button." I pushed that little button then found the knob marked "two" and turned that, too.

You know what happened? "Yankee Doodle Dandy" was back in black and white, as the Lord obviously intended to be.

Your set will probably allow you the same thing, and I think that's the simplest solution to this entire mess.

Let Congress get involved and John Wayne will show up some night show wearing pink.

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Guatemala: the big deception

During the two years I have spent in Guatemala as a Peace Corps volunteer, my opinion of my work, and of the country in which I work, has become muddled and confused.

David W. Spence

Guest Columnist

This, I realize, is as it should be.

The projects I carry out in my village visibly affect change. I do, however, wonder whether that change is always toward the overall betterment of the villagers. Are the firewood savings to be had by installing the mud stove I promote worth the disappearance of the open hearth, the traditional focal point of family interaction?

The uncertainty surrounding my work also surrounds the changes currently taking place in almost every facet of Guatemalan life—from the recent democratization of its government to the corruption and extinction of the twenty-five indigenous languages spoken by highland Indians. Any change brings with it loss and gain, but who decides when loss is outweighed by gain?

While I was on home leave in May, my family presented me with a collection of recent newspaper articles on Guatemala. Perusing them, I found that the ambivalence toward change here that should be cultivated by the press is instead being substituted by a ready-made portrait of the infant democracy, her heroes and villains depicted in black and white.

This is a disservice not only to Guatemala, but also to ourselves as a quasi-informed public.

Eighteen months ago Guatemala formally broke from a string of military regimes which left 30,000 political deaths in its wake and a psychological scar on the populace that will never fade. President Vinicio Cerezo, the first popularly elected leader in more than thirty years, faces the Herculean tasks of bolstering Guatemala's dilapidated economy, of changing her international image from that of a champion of

human rights violations to one of a respectable republic, and of insuring some measure of internal security at home—all this while wrestling with an unfettered military.

The tendency of the U.S. government is to divide the players in this drama into those who have something to offer America, and those who don't. The tendency of the press is to divide them into victims and executioners, and to pit them against each other time and time again on the front page. In a typical story on Guatemala, like the three-page spread run in the *Houston Chronicle* on May 17 and 18, three-quarters of the text consists of a rehashing of yesterday's atrocities, which conveniently colors the remaining quarter devoted to current development. No new perspective is offered. Readers are horrified and papers sold.

Almost never are the subtleties of Guatemala's struggle told, subtleties that would bur the pre-packaged image of the country painstakingly prepared by journalists and politicians. That Guatemala's last elected government was toppled in 1954 by a CIA-orchestrated coup fostered by U.S. business interests could be damaging if mentioned. That the Guatemalan army's anti-insurgency campaign of the early 1980's, though ruthless in its tactics, was enormously successful is inconsequential. That the strikes, protests and attempted coups which periodically paralyze Guatemala are, in President Cerezo's own words, the necessary "music of democracy," would only confuse readers.

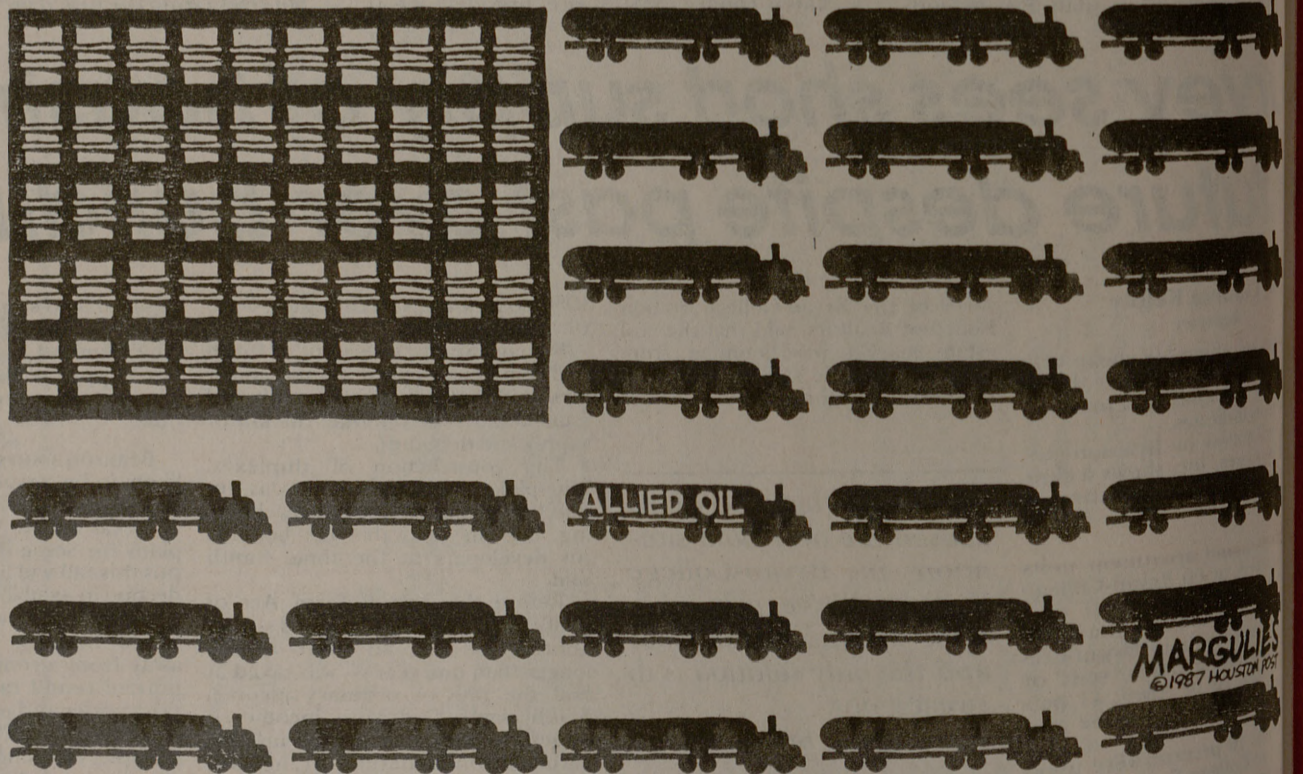
The image that Americans are offered of Guatemala, and, I suspect, of other countries like her, is not, in its clarity and conciseness, true to the reality it purports to depict. In truth, things are maddeningly confused, but somewhere in the process of presenting the facts, those facts are over-organized.

However, the fault does not lie solely with the press or with politicians. After all, journalists are purveying their facile journalism to a buying public, and politicians are spouting their spiels to a voting audience. If we see world events

in tonal absolutes, it is because we choose to. Certainties are more easily grasped and manipulated than ambiguities.

Were we not intimately involved countries like Guatemala, this complacent stance might be acceptable. But we are involved. Allowing our government to meddle in the politics of diminutive countries, we thus obligate ourselves to understand those countries as well as possible. That obligation, a present largely ignored, demands that we look beyond stereotypes and false certainties and into the intricacies of ambiguities which embrace the truth.

David W. Spence is a Peace Corps volunteer and a guest columnist for The Battalion.



Showing the flag in the Persian Gulf