

Making cigarettes is becoming a drag

It ain't easy dealin' nicotine.

Those lovable dispensers of death, cigarette manufacturers, have been having an awfully rough time of it lately.

The surgeon general just lambasted the industry for its advertising, the nationwide restaurant chains of Arby's and McDonald's announced that they would become smoke-free and the Department of Defense has made moves in the same direction. All things considered, the past few weeks have been bad ones for the makers of cigarettes.

But by far, the news that deserves the most attention is the investigation two weeks ago on ABC-TV's *Day One*, which revealed that cigarette manufacturers have been deliberately tinkering with the amount of nicotine in their product. They have both removed and added nicotine in the tobacco to their cigarettes, manipulating the addictive drug so that each individual cigarette carries an identical dose — a dose that just happens to be the right quantity to get a smoker hooked.

Of course, to the cynical observer, this revelation about cigarettes may seem like the mere confirmation of suspicions that were born a long time ago. Soft drink and coffee manufacturers have been toying with caffeine in a similar manner for years; why should cigarette makers be any different?

But there's more to be gained from this discovery than the mere chance to see such suspicions verified. The realization that the tobacco industry can produce a less-addictive cigarette — or a more addictive one, for that matter — opens the door for the Food and Drug Administration to step in and regulate nicotine for the drug it really is.

The FDA's reasoning, up to this point, has been that nicotine was an intractable part of the tobacco leaf. Nicotine was seen as an unfortunate extra that came along with the greater joy of smoking, not as the sole reason for the habit's existence. Therefore, the FDA has not regulated it.

Now that it is clear that cigarette manufacturers can and do manipulate the nicotine present in each cigarette, the FDA may eventually require that each cigarette have less nicotine, perhaps even lowering that quantity regularly, gradually weaning the country off its addiction. (Let's hope that doesn't make smokers light up more, just to make up for the missing nicotine in each cigarette.)

The country might also see a differentiation of product based on nicotine, like what happened with caffeine in the soft-drink industry. Who will be the Jolt cola of cigarettes? Who will be the 7-Up?

It has not yet been shown whether a completely nicotine-free cigarette can be made. Even if it's possible, it's hard to imagine why anyone would use such a product, if not to satisfy an addiction.

Of course, that's what they said about non-alcoholic beer.



LETTERS

Don't be fooled

Beware of false advertising! There was a man at a booth in the EMU on March 4 who asked if I'd sign up to have a tree planted in my name. As I picked up the form, he said, "It won't cost you nothin'." There was even a bonus of a free T-shirt.

All of this for just signing one piece of paper? I doubted that, so I examined the paper more closely. The man obviously disliked this close scrutiny and tried to hurry me into signing it without reading it. I ignored him and found that I actually held a MasterCard application. Then I saw: "Annual fee — \$20 (waived first year)" in small print.

So I guess the man's grammatical error was correct after all: filling out the form wouldn't cost me nothing. In fact, it'd cost me \$20 more than nothing, starting in 1995. I could plant 20 trees on my own for less than that! So go on and hug a tree, but don't sign anything you haven't read first.

Lori Rosales
English

inaccurate and unresearched attacks on the *Commentator's* content, she accuses the *Commentator* (as a whole) of staring at people of color as they pass the office. While working in a 113-square-foot office, placed near the end of a dead-end hallway in a hidden region of the EMU, any living being passing our open door is an unusual, if not welcome, sight. In all fairness, though, we are equal-opportunity stargers and a letter will arrive soon from some angry Norwegians who made the mistake of walking past our office.

In an attempt to placate Nikki Okimoto, the *Oregon Commentator* will avoid jokes about fast food, land purchases and current events. In effect, we will use no humor at all and we will attempt to agree with everyone in the world. And we pledge to stop our infernal staring.

Owen Brennan Rounds
Ed Carson
Scott Camp
Board of Directors
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No defense

I read adjunct professor Richard Clark's March 7 rebuttal, in the *Register-Guard*, to the bad press he has received concerning his practice of selling his packets to his aspiring journalism school students.

I have no disagreement with Clark's claim that he had a right to profit from his work. But, in my view, his profit was excessive and his argument that published works by professors are more expensive is spurious.

As an attorney, Clark should have smelled a conflict of interest. He should have gotten a disinterested third party involved from day one in the process.

Although students were not required to buy his packet, they knew that success in his preparatory grammar class is, in most cases, essential for passing the Language Skills Diagnostic Test. And that passing the LSDT is required for admission into the School of Journalism. With that in mind, most students will buy anything that they think will aid

them in passing the test.

Clark said he was not aware of any law prohibiting the sale of his packets directly to his students; that's probably true.

But as any competent attorney will tell you, ignorance of the law is no defense.

Leslie Weinstein
Journalism

Cruel

The letter by Matt Fox (*ODE*, March 2) was cruelly insensitive to infertile people of any orientation, as well as to adopted children everywhere. It seems to me silly, and terribly arrogant, to think that people who are incapable or undesirable of contributing to the overpopulation of this tiny planet should hold themselves back from letting any relationship develop beyond a simple friendship.

Desire for sex and desire for children are entirely separate. No one has ever masturbated with the intent of sprouting children from his or her hand. It is absurdly ignorant to think that two people who are in love and biologically capable of producing children will therefore refrain from sex and have no desire to raise children. It is similarly foolish to think that everyone capable of having children wants to have them or will refrain from having sex that is not intended to produce a child.

Recreational sex is simply a matter of rubbing certain nerve endings on, in or with something. If what one is rubbing against is part of another person, the sex can be labeled homosexual or heterosexual, but there is really no need. People will naturally want to have sex with the person they love and will find a way to make it work. The most problematic sexual behavior is vaginal intercourse, for the very reason that pregnancy is a likely result.

Confusion about this is no excuse for tolerating or encouraging a climate in which some people may not even be affectionate.

Manuel Suarez
Eugene

No bad jokes

In Nikki Okimoto's letter to the editor (*ODE*, March 1), she misrepresents the content and the intent of the *Oregon Commentator* to meet her vision of racism. By representing her personal understandings as fact, by repeating unsubstantiated rumor and by simply making facts up, she makes an incoherent and untrue attack on the members of the *Commentator*, their personal beliefs, lives and the purpose of the journal.

Okimoto finds satire of unauthentic multicultural food served under heat lamps to be a direct attack on an entire culture. Apparently, writing amusing material about the so-called Mexican food at TacoTime somehow insulted all Hispanics, most of whom have never heard of — nor have any interest in — eating a Mexi-Fry. We can only sigh in relief that we abandoned our original French Fry satire.

After forming some entirely

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