

“Dry Drunk”—an Exhibition of the Long History of Tobacco

By Cheryl Dudley

Facts and Stats

“A” Average for MAY

According to Idaho Code 39-5701 the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare must inspect each business that sells tobacco to ensure that it does not sell tobacco to minors. For May 2005:

- ❖ 225 Vendors were inspected.*
- ❖ 14 Vendors sold to the inspecting minor.
- ❖ The compliance rate for the month of MAY 2005 was 94%

*Inspections where purchase attempts were made.

Prevent the Sale Website

www.preventthesale.com/idaho

- Learn about the law
- Take the tobacco quiz
- See what the ID's look like
- Play the Game “Would You Sell to This Person?”

Our Fascination with Tobacco

For numerous reasons, tobacco has always been a subject of fascination as well as concern to mankind. Since its introduction into Europe from the New World, this powerful herb has mystified those who “drank” in the smoke.

Because of this on-going fascination and now known serious health risks of tobacco, the New York Public Library has gathered together a rich collection of information about tobacco from literature, history, art and the sciences. Called “Dry Drunk,” this collection portrays man’s long relationship with tobacco, including its uses and abuses. Parts of the collection can be viewed at www.nypl.org.

Learning about the history of tobacco use can help contemporaries understand the complexity of its use throughout the centuries. According to “Dry Drunk,” at the end of the fifteenth century when Columbus arrived in the New World, tobacco, which is a member of the same family as the potato, was in common use among the Native Americans. Before long the plant was widely distributed in Europe, but used mostly as a medical panacea. By the early 17th century, inhaling the smoke of tobacco became a popular leisure activity. By the end of the 17th century, the leisure activity became known as “smoking.”

Pipe smoking was the predominant method for imbibing during the first 300 years or so in Europe, followed by the cigar in the 19th century. The modern day cigarette wasn’t invented until the second half of the 19th century

Getting Drunk on Tobacco

Soon after its introduction into Europe, “getting drunk” from tobacco became commonplace. King James I initiated an intensive campaign to ban tobacco in the 17th century, claiming that there was a direct link between tobacco and syphilis. The debate included some of the most intellectual minds of the century, but after the dust had settled, most supported the moderate use of the herb for recreation and medicine. However, tobacco “drinking” was not fully accepted as a moral activity and especially not an activity for mixed company. As a matter of fact, King James linked the use of tobacco to the “sin of drunkenness.”

One German painting in the “Dry Drunk” collection encapsulates a history of tobacco, beginning with the “wild people” of the New World. Their use of tobacco explained why they were so wild and crazy, but legend claims that tobacco also had medicinal value, including appeasing hunger pangs and clearing the brain. The Germans appreciated this value, and soon combined tobacco with beer. Several paintings depict the stupefying effects of tobacco and its association with alcohol.

Smoking Once Acceptable for Male Children

By the nineteenth century in Europe, it was a gentleman’s duty to master the art of smoking a cigar, including teaching boys to smoke during

“Dry Drunk” continued...

school. An 1838 book entitled “More Hints on Etiquette” by Charles Tilt includes a satirical chapter on cigar smoking. A quote from this chapter says, “no gentleman can pretend to be a gentleman unless he smokes a cigar, and the sooner you master this accomplishment the better. We think little gentlemen would always look very interesting with a pipe in one hand and a lollipop in the other.”

Women who smoked, on the other hand, were considered sexually promiscuous. Since women were also considered the spiritual caretakers of the household, it makes sense that tobacco’s association with sinful activity was inappropriate for women. That did not deter some women, however, and before long paintings of women smoking became main attractions.

The Tip of the Iceberg

Tobacco’s long history contains multitudes of myths, legends, satires, and debates. Man’s relationship with the herb has been convoluted and complicated, but with modern day science and technology, the facts of tobacco use need no longer be surrounded by mystery. We now know that tobacco kills, in spite of its calming, drunk-like effects or its seeming elegance.

A Virginia Slims’ slogan once claimed, “You’ve

Come a Long Way, Baby.” This slogan is true in more ways than one. We’ve come a long way in our understanding of the serious health risks of tobacco, and we have also come a long way in understanding how to prevent the use of tobacco in youth. Since it is youth who become the most easily addicted to tobacco, it is important to not only educate youth, but to physically block their access to tobacco products.

This is where the important job of the tobacco vendors and retailers come into play. It is you who control the access to tobacco, and it is you who has the power to say “no.”

Are You Prepared?

Employees should be seasoned for the task of refusing the sale of tobacco to minors. This preparation is the employer’s responsibility, and should include regular training, practice sessions, and reminders. Helpful tips can be found on the Prevent the Sale web site.

VOLUME 04. NUMBER 5 JUNE 2005



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