

Nicotine fit

Cigarette smokers feed corporate greed

Pork sales went down last week in Bangkok, coinciding with the release of "Babe," the movie about the talking pig. This lapse in pork consumption is a whimsical commentary about the fickleness of human nature. We are subtly influenced by many things we don't even realize have power over us.

Cigarette companies have known this for a long time. Some ads are aimed at showing cigarettes as a necessary part of women's liberation. "You've come a long way, Baby!" You now have the right to shorten your life span and increase your chances of lung cancer and emphysema. Why thank you, Mr. Reynolds! This is aimed at all young, free and single women like the model who is shown lighting up.

Most of the smokers I know from UNL aren't heavy smokers. They don't constantly have cigarettes in their hands, and they usually don't smell like smoke or have yellow teeth. Some could even be in one of those ads.

We had some guests who were heavy smokers recently. They had been smoking in the car. When they walked in, the house immediately took on that nicotine smoke smell that gives me a headache if I have to deal with it for more than an hour or so.

My husband and I have made a household rule — NO SMOKING IN THE HOUSE!!! We posted a sign on the door and warned people that they'd have to smoke outside.

And they did — every half hour or so, they'd run out to the porch to suck down some smoke in the bitter wind. Then they'd come inside to warm up and visit some more.

The "NO SMOKING INSIDE" rule can be an effective way to help someone quit smoking. My dad was an avid smoker until I was born one November. During her pregnancy, Mom made him smoke outside. This



Kristi Kohl

"I wonder how a little stick of rolled paper with a weed in it can have so much power over a person's life."

was fine in the summer. But in November, with the wind-chill factor well below zero and a beautiful baby daughter waiting inside for him — well, he quit. For good.

My mother's policy may seem harsh, but her instincts were correct. Infants exposed to secondhand smoke (even during pregnancy) are three times more likely to die from SIDS. This is a significant risk factor for crib death, and secondhand smoke also increases the chances of ear infections.

Tucker, our 2-year-old son, had recurrent ear infections. He now has tubes in his ears. This is one reason we keep the "NO SMOKING!" rule in effect. The other reason is simple. I like the way our house smells and the walls look now. Nicotine yellows the walls and stinks up the house.

The morning our guests left was hectic for me. I was running late, and I had forgotten my backpack. So I rushed back home. When I went back inside, one guest was scram-

bling around with the paper.

"I was just looking through the classifieds," he told me. I looked at the headlines — sure enough, "Classified Ads." I took just a second to wonder why he was reading them upside down.

I told him that I forgot my backpack, noticing that his smoke smell seemed stronger. His wife was scurrying around in the back. I heard the toilet flush, and then she came out, smelling like smoke and looking worried. "Did you get stuck or something?" she asked. I explained again that I had left my backpack at home.

Why didn't I confront them? There are a couple reasons. First of all, I was in a hurry. Also, I don't like to get into big arguments. I really don't like to berate adults as if they were 2 years old (that's the only experience I've got, and it's what I'm best at.) And I am very uncomfortable when people get caught doing something they know is wrong.

I wonder how a little stick of rolled paper with a weed in it can have so much power over a person's life. My grandmother has a neighbor with an advanced case of emphysema. She coughs constantly — yet when she is able to breathe, she breathes in the cigarettes that caused her emphysema in the first place.

If you smoke, take the time to think about cigarettes. Why do you smoke? Do you enjoy the actual cigarette — its smell, flavor and taste? Or do you enjoy the mental associations that have been built up around it? It's a free country, and I have no desire to be "Big Brother" or "Big Sister" or "Big Mama," whatever the case may be. Just resist the fickleness of human nature — don't become a casualty of the monetary crusade of the tobacco companies.

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Neighborhood party brings out revenge

The place I live in isn't the best.

My house is cramped and derelict. The landlord came over one day to take the screens off the windows, saying he'd be back with new ones the following week.

That was two years ago. The landlord has since painted the house twice, including a coat of pretty blue trim around the (still screenless) windows.

I also suspect that the post office is relieving its budget stress by hiring illiterate people to deliver the mail in my area.

Then there's the neighbors.

There's a white trash encampment across the street. The house is barricaded by hulking wrecks of cars and broken furniture, and the lawn is dotted with beer cans and dirty children. The male and female heads of the household always air their disagreements at top volume, and usually out in the middle of the street. But I can ignore them easily enough, as long as I avoid using my front door.

The upstairs neighbor worries me the most. I have many names for her, all of them politically incorrect and most of them obscene. She is sinister and vindictive, and I'm afraid that someone in my household is going to land in jail for attacking her.

I've lived next to noisy people before. I once lived in an apartment downstairs from a would-be opera singer, who liked to practice trilling devotional songs in the wee hours of the morning. I've also lived above an unstable Vietnam veteran, who bellowed at invisible demons through the night and called my male friends "pussies" and "mama's boys" by day. Unfortunately, I was sandwiched between these two in the same building.

My current residence was quiet for a while. The former upstairs neighbor was a polite man in his late 20s. At first I was unnerved by the fact that a lot of his mail came in discrete wrappers. I was immensely relieved to find out he was gay.

Then he moved out, and the new neighbor moved in. I asked one of my household members what the newcomer looked like. He rolled his eyes, shuddered and muttered, "scary."

I should have known we were in trouble. This guy doesn't scare easily.

I heard her before I saw her. She's an exceptionally loud woman. All of her friends — all three of them, if you count the dog — are loud, too. They like to come to her house late at night and try to bash her door in. When they are let in, they spend the night rearranging her furniture.

On a normal day, she stomps



Jennifer Mapes

"All her friends — all three of them, if you count the dog — are loud, too ... When they are let in, they spend the night rearranging her furniture."

around her apartment with the television blaring. When she's angry, the stomping begins to sound less human and more like the product of demonic possession.

I've never started a feud with a neighbor, and I swear I didn't start this one.

The first couple of times the water pressure plummeted during my shower, I was willing to chalk it up to coincidence. But this curious pattern of water pressure loss continued. When I asked my household if they'd noticed it, my worst suspicions were confirmed. It was her. She was lurking upstairs, daring us to bathe. When we did, she'd turn her water on, leaving us with little more than a lukewarm dribble.

My household members retaliated by clearing the yard of her dog's debris. They left a pointed message on her doorstep in a brown paper bag.

She responded by calling the landlord one night to tell him that we'd set the house on fire (he was relieved to find out that we'd merely been using the grill to cook dinner.)

My household will be moving soon. We're already plotting our final revenge. One household member thinks he'll come back a few times a year and let all the air out of her tires. I was thinking more along the lines of land mines.

We're going to have a party when we get all of the valuables out of the house. I know a couple of people who own earth-shaking Harley Davidsons, and I have a friend who perfected a blood-curdling war cry for use against his own obnoxious neighbors.

It's shaping up to be quite a bash. And if you're loud, you're invited.

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Bribery

Induce student voters with chocolate, slinkies

A bag of M&M's, a slinky and a T-shirt are going to save the voting future of America's 18- to 24-year-olds.

Dammit, I'm not on my fourth Mountain Dew! Listen to me!

No, let's be honest, when it comes to voting in elections, people our age suck. No, we suck and don't even get a straw. That's the literal degree of suckdom we have achieved.

Which elections? Take your pick. Recent ASUN elections had an 8 percent turnout, a 25-year low. Elections for state senators and legislators rarely rise above a 15 percent turnout for young voters.

Or how about presidential elections, in which young voters' turnout has consistently been at less than 20 percent since 18-year-olds gained the right to vote.

But never fear, I've discovered the solution that will raise voter turnout for the 18 to 24 age bracket, make the Mars and Morris company almost frothy with joy and leave young voters feeling good about themselves at the same time.

Yet before we go into my solution, we'll take a look at another widely seen solution that's available. Call it the "MTV" solution.

Anyone who's watched MTV in the past month knows exactly what I'm talking about. MTV has been airing a ton of commercials urging young people to vote.

In thought, this is a good solution — run commercials on a widely watched network with idols of the music world as spokespeople. Yet in reality, it will work very poorly come election time because, after all, they're stereotypical commercials.

Take, for example, one I saw late last night. It featured an attractive woman who, during the 30-second clip, had her hands and feet bound



Kasey Kerber

"... when it comes to voting in elections, people our age suck."

and mouth gagged.

The point of the commercial was that if you don't vote, you're not using your voice, so why bother to have it.

Yet I doubt that the Calvin Klein-style binding and gagging will send youths flocking to the polls. Maybe to see if the attractive girl is there, but that's it.

Consider also that it's only a commercial. If there's anything we know, it's that commercials rarely faze us. OK, maybe we react to Mentos commercials and those million-dollar Fabio commercials in which he struggles to say "I Can't Believe It's Not Butter," in broken English, but that's about it.

So here's where the "Kasey" solution comes in. It's simple really; if you want people in the 18 to 24 age group to vote — bribe them.

I'm talking about offering people our age little incentives to vote. Little material things.

Am I insane? We'll discuss that another time ...

But for now let's look at the companies that should serve as

guides to getting students to vote. What companies am I thinking of? Credit card companies.

NOW maybe you know what I'm talking about. We've all seen the booths where Visa, Mastercard, American Express and the Discover card give away items such as slinkies, one-pound bags of M&M candies and T-shirts to get students to sign up for their supposedly risk-free cards.

While I initially don't endorse their means of getting students into a never-ending battle against high interest rates, these card companies have succeeded where MTV's 1992 "Rock the Vote" campaign failed (young voter turnout actually decreased that year). They have attracted people to their cause.

So why not adopt their strategy? I say let's do it (not that you sick-minded freaks). Let's start offering each person in the 18 to 24 age bracket who votes a one-pound bag of M&M's, a deluxe colored slinky and a T-shirt that says "I Voted for the Person Who Won and All I Got Was This Stinking T-shirt."

I'm willing to bet that voter turnout will increase by no less than 5 percent. Throw in a few "pogs" and we may see even bigger increases.

Is this stupid? Desperate? Pathetic?

Yes, but we are living in stupid, desperate and pathetic times. Credit card companies know it, MTV knows it and it's about time we realized it as well.

Voting for the future of this country is critical, and if it takes a pound of chocolate, a T-shirt that's already two sizes too big and a plastic slinky that will get tangled five minutes after you open it to get the job done, then so be it.

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