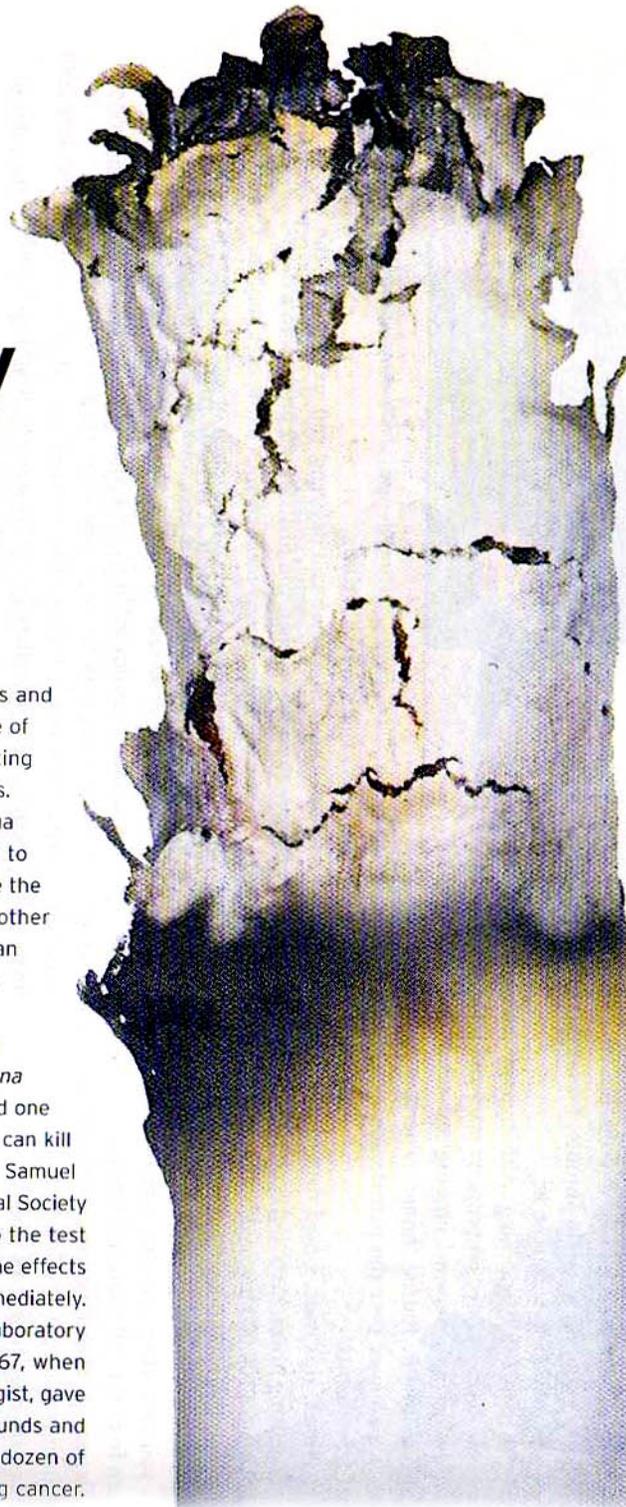


Puff Daddy

How smoke
got in our eyes

BY KATE BARKER

TOBACCO ROADS When Columbus and his crew first arrived in 1492, the people of the Americas had already been getting a kick out of tobacco for at least 1,500 years. The ancient Nicoya shamans of Nicaragua would smoke cigars, then collapse to the ground, succumbing to visions, while the Aguaruna aboriginals of Peru had another way to imbibe the powerful plant, which began growing in the Americas 8,000 years ago. They inserted enema tubes fashioned of lengths of bone and cane, and then blew the tobacco into their innards. *Nicotiana Tabacum* is of the nightshade family, and one drop of distilled nicotine, an alkaloid, can kill a person. It can also kill a cat, as the writer Samuel Pepys observed in 1665, when the Royal Society put the lethality of distilled tobacco to the test in the first recorded experiment of the effects of nicotine on animals. The cat died immediately. The end was not quite so quick for laboratory beagles some 300 years later in 1967, when Dr. Oscar Auerbach, a New Jersey pathologist, gave tracheotomies to 86 of the docile hounds and let them "smoke." Three years later, a dozen of the canines had developed lung cancer.



CROSS-SECTION A cigarette is composed of paper, filter and blend. The blend consists of lamina (or flat part of the leaf), stem and up to 600 additives that can be legally tossed into the mix. These include: ammonia (a chemical that raises the alkalinity of tobacco smoke, ensuring that it packs as much punch as possible when it hits the blood stream); cocoa (to enhance the flavour and to produce bromide gas, which dilates the bronchioles, increasing the body's ability to absorb nicotine); and menthol (also to enhance flavour and to numb the throat). The cigarette paper is a lot more than just packaging. It directly influences burn rate and contains not only monosodium phosphate to "condition" the ash, but also disodium hydrogen phosphate and sodium and potassium citrates to make it burn more quickly when left unattended in the ashtray.

BUTTING IN With the oncoming ban on tobacco-company sponsorships of sporting and arts events in 2003, Imperial, the largest of Canada's cigarette manufacturers, is turning to unorthodox marketing strategies. For example, starting in late January, just as people lost their zeal to follow through on their New Year's resolutions to butt out, the company started distributing three lifestyle magazines: *Real Edge*, geared to men, *The Art of Living Simple*, which targets women, and *Pursuit*, an arts mag. You won't find these glossies at your local magazine rack, because Imperial mails them to the 10,000 smokers listed in its database. Interspersed between the pages featuring articles on celebrities like Sarah Jessica Parker and the usual food and fashion fare are "ads" touting the company's sponsorship and charitable activities. Another initiative was May's Imperial Tobacco Patio Tent Smoking Lounge in downtown Toronto, which lured lunchtime puffers inside with contests, good coffee, fresh flowers and the opportunity to give Imperial pollsters their names and addresses so the company could send them, among other things, issues of *Real Edge*, *The Art of Living Simple* or *Pursuit*.

WEIGHTS AND MEASURES Canada began commercial tobacco production in 1800 in southern Ontario, when pipe smoking and tobacco chewing were the habits of choice. The region's 1,050 farmers now produce 85% of the national crop. (Quebec and the Maritimes provide the remainder.) The average auction price per pound of tobacco is \$1.77 and on a typical day of trading at the Ontario Flue-cured Tobacco Growers Marketing Board, about 415,000 pounds of the stuff is moved. In total, the farm-gate value of a year's crop is about \$300 million. The top three Canadian tobacco manufacturers – Imperial (68% market share), Rothmans, Benson & Hedges Inc. (22%) and RJR Macdonald (10%) – pay out roughly half a billion dollars a year for raw materials, spend \$100 million on marketing and make a combined profit of \$1 billion. In 1998, Canada's six million smokers bought 592 million packs, while provincial and federal governments took in approximately \$7 billion in "packaged-cigarette taxes." The average Canadian smoker has been puffing for 24 years, smokes 16.8 cigarettes a day and sparks one up half an hour after waking.

GLOBALIZATION At last count, the global cigarette industry was worth US\$400 billion. Experts predict that figure will keep climbing as manufacturers target the emerging markets of Eastern Europe, Asia, Africa and South America, which already have around 800 million smokers and tend to offer cigarette companies almost unlimited access to new customers. In Buenos Aires, for instance, a Jeep-driving, khaki-clad woman recently offered free Camels to high school students at recess. In Eastern Europe, Philip Morris handed out freebies to teens at concerts and clubs. And prospects look so good in Malaysia that RJR is bumping up production from 5.2 billion to 15 billion cigarettes a year. No wonder, then, that companies such as Philip Morris, the world's largest tobacco manufacturer and No. 11 on the Fortune 500, had such a great year – US\$63.3 billion in revenue for 2000 – despite being hamstrung not only by advertising and marketing regulations, but also by ongoing lawsuits from various governments. In the U.S., for example, cigarette manufacturers coughed up \$246 billion in 1998 to collectively settle a slew of lawsuits.



OUTLAWED Think today's anti-tobacco legislation is too tough? In 1674, Russians faced capital punishment for lighting up. In 1624, Pope Urban VIII equated sneezing with orgasm and consequently deemed snuff-taking an excommunicable offense. And in 1492, Rodrigo de Jerez, one of Columbus' crew and one of the first two Europeans to use tobacco, so alarmed Spaniards when he exhaled smoke that he was incarcerated for several years by the Inquisition.

FOLLOWING THE PACK In 1847, almost 250 years after Sir Walter Raleigh convinced Elizabeth I to take her first puff, Philip Morris, who would become tobaccoist to the Crown, set up his smoke shop on London's posh Bond Street and sold his hand-rolled Turkish cigarettes. He was after the discerning, upper-class customer. The Lorillard company of the U.S., however, wanted the mass market and, in 1860, set out to grab consumers by hiding \$100 bills in random packs of Century cigarette tobacco. It was perhaps the world's first cigarette-marketing gimmick. Others quickly followed, including cigarette cards in 1875. Ostensibly there to protect the fragile product, they also captured the attention of an earlier, pre-radio-TV-and-Internet generation with such pictorial themes as "50 scenes of perilous occupations." Today, smokers are treated to scenes of perilous health: diseased gums, shrivelled lungs and the like. In response, enterprising firms like Cigarette Cover of Quebec City offer cardboard sleeves to cover up the gruesome images with such things as happy faces and sprigs of marijuana. As of May, Cigarette Cover had sold over 300,000 sleeves at a buck a piece.