



Second Hand Smoke, A New Perspective

by George Lunt

It has become politically correct to demonize smoking. It's not enough to force owners of offices, factories, restaurants, and bars to forbid smoking, now they're going after the parks and beaches.

First of all, let me make it clear that I'm a non-smoker, I haven't smoked for over 35 years and don't intend to start. I have no vested interest in

smoking itself, but worry about all the unwarranted laws that are currently being passed concerning the subject. When they're done with smoking, there's many other issues these corporate alien lawmakers will be legislating on. Our freedom gets gradually eaten away, as they pass more and more silly restrictive laws.

Whenever the government wants to push an issue, they use highly exaggerated statements and statistically unsound studies to try to scare us. Getting people to quit smoking is one of the current issues of choice.

Here's a quote from the surgeon general's web site.

We know that secondhand smoke harms people's health, but many people assume that exposure to secondhand smoke in small doses does not do any significant damage to one's health. However, science has proven that there is NO risk-free level of exposure to secondhand smoke. Let me say that again: there is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke.

I want to examine the subject from a different point of view, to see if statements like the one above are warranted. I will use real world facts, observation and logic to challenge this statement.

Do I believe that smoking kills? Yes, I know it does. But there are interesting facts behind smoking deaths that are not quite clear. Lets look at two famous personalities that unquestionably died from smoking related diseases. First is Edward R. Murrow who died at 57 from lung cancer. He was a very heavy smoker. He once remarked he couldn't live a half hour without a cigarette. Johnny Carson was another personality that died at 79 from emphysema. He too was a very heavy smoker.

Both these individuals abused their bodies by overindulging in cigarettes for many, many years. Smoking didn't just kill them a year after they took their first drag. In fact, they lived longer than some non-smokers. It appears that Carson was more resistant to chain smoking than Murrow. That could explain why Carson lived longer than Murrow.

I personally witnessed a neighbor, who was a heavy smoker, succumb to emphysema while in his seventies. You could go on and find many, many such cases. One conclusion you can draw from such examples is that the development of smoking illnesses come from many years of overindulgence. Exactly how long it takes for such illnesses to develop depends on the amount of cigarettes smoked per day and the person's natural resistance to toxins.

Now how about light smokers? The longest living documented person was a French woman named Jeanne Calment. She died in 1997 at the age of 122. At the age of twenty-one in 1896 she began smoking. She smoked no more than two cigarettes per day. She quit when she was 114 because she could not see well enough to light her cigarette and not because of problems from smoking. She died from old age and not smoking.

Most people are more familiar with the comedian George Burns. He died in 1996, forty nine days after reaching his hundredth birthday. He smoked up to ten cigars per day for seventy years. He once commented that if he had listened to his doctor and quit smoking, he wouldn't have been able to attend the doctor's funeral. He didn't die from smoking.

Let's apply some logic to our examples. Do you suppose that if Edward R. Murrow, Johnny Carson, and my neighbor were light to moderate smokers they would have lived longer? Logic says yes! In fact it looks like Johnny Carson had a lot of natural immunity. He could have conceivably lived to be a hundred or more. Light smoking may have had no effect on him or it could have even helped him live longer.

What if Jeanne Calment or George Burns smoked two or three packs a day? They could have lived longer than most heavy smokers because of their strong immune systems, but I doubt that either one of them would have been alive to celebrate his or her ninetieth birthday.

We can deduce that the immune system determines how people react to smoking. Your immune system will eventually be overwhelmed after you've been chain smoking for years. I've never heard of a light smoker dying from cigarettes. (There are always exceptions. Someone with a very poor immune system will die of anything.) Light smoking might even have beneficial effects for some people like Jeanne Calment and George Burns.

What about second hand smoke? Wouldn't inhaling second hand smoke be even less toxic than being a light smoker? If you smoke a cigarette a day, then you smoked 365 cigarettes per year. According to one study, being in a room filled with second hand smoke for eight hours a day would amount to smoking 4.3 cigarettes per year. Even if that's a miscalculation, and its really equivalent to 100 cigarettes per year, that's still much less than Jeanne Calment's one or two cigarettes a day. We should be able to easily assume that being exposed to second hand smoke has a much smaller effect than being a light smoker.

I'm a member of the baby boomer generation. There are about 77 million baby boomers living today. It turns out that smoking was so prevalent during the 50's, 60's, and 70's that practically everyone living during that time period was exposed to some form of second hand smoke. Everyone was smoking at work, many parents were smoking in front of their children, some parents would let their teens smoke, even in Army boot camp the barracks were always full of second hand smoke. When I was going to college, many teachers would allow smoking in class. Some teachers would even lecture with a cigarette in hand. During that time, even if you didn't smoke, exposure to second hand smoke was unavoidable.

How has all this exposure affected the baby boomers? The ones that are currently suffering from smoking related illnesses are the ones that are heavy smokers who refused to quit. People like me kicked the habit years ago. No matter how much second hand smoke they were previously exposed to, they have no smoking related problems, except, perhaps, heart disease. I know people in their late seventies that smoke moderately and still show no signs of any disease.

Heart disease is not only a smoking related disease, but can also originate from food, genetics, and frustration. It's practically impossible to prove that baby boomers who have heart problems and currently don't smoke got their heart disease from exposure to second hand smoke that occurred years ago. Of course if they're currently heavy smokers, their heart disease probably was caused or aggravated by their habit.

Let's look at my smoking history. My father was a moderate smoker. So for about 13 years I was exposed to second hand smoke from him alone. When I was thirteen I started smoking and smoked for about twelve years. So I was exposed to some form of primary or secondary smoke for about 25 years in my early life. Ever since I quit, I have had very little exposure to second hand smoke. Because I don't really fear second hand smoke, friends and acquaintances expose me to short periods of passive smoke several times a year. I have no smoking related lung disease, or heart disease. I'm in my early sixties.

Politicians have come out with a lot of studies that show that second hand smoke is dangerous. Unfortunately, most of these studies are not statistically significant, which means that they prove nothing. There are also studies that have shown that that second hand smoke has beneficial effects. Some are even more statistically relevant. Of course, it is not politically correct for anti-smoking factions to mention them.

In spite of the fact, that I defend the right of people to smoke, I also think it's a good idea for most people to quit. There is no doubt that heavy smokers eventually die from smoking, but years before they die, they must undergo the harsh effects of their debilitating disease. Even though, light smokers may never get a smoking related disease, it's almost impossible for most people to remain light smokers. One reason for this is that smoking is addictive. It draws you to an ever increasing daily cigarette quota. In today's corporate alien society, many people claim that they smoke because of frustration at work. If profits fall, corporations are quick to blame their workforce and subject them to a barrage of endless harassment. The calming effects of cigarettes are used to cope with many of today's on the job abuses. The light smoker under stress then quickly evolves into a chain smoker.

Does it really seem logical, that when it takes thirty years of smoking to kill a chain smoker, that a few hours of second hand smoke is going to hurt you? Get real! Yet the government has convinced a lot of people that this is a reality. Just recently [Chicago has banned smoking on playgrounds and beaches](#). With all the problems this city is facing, why do Chicago politicians concern themselves with such nonsense? It's, probably, just [greed](#), since violators of this ordinance face a hefty fine of \$500.

The fewer substances you depend on the better. If you depend on cigarettes, try quitting. If you can't quit, cut down. If you encounter second hand smoke, don't worry, it may annoy you, but it won't hurt you. It could even strengthen your immune system.

George Lunt is someone who feels the world is getting too corporate. His writings relate the individual's struggle with big government and big corporations. His website is <http://www.corporate-aliens.com>.

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