

Kicking the Habit

"I want a cigarette with every fiber of my being!"

These are the words of a self-professed addict who claims she spends her day thinking about when she'll get her next "fix."

Mary Beth Owen is not a patient in drug rehab, she's a student at Meredith College. Cigarettes are her life. What an appropriate subject for a story on the American Cancer Society's Great American Smokeout, which is planned for this Wednesday, November 15.

The following is an account of a day in the life of smoker trying her darndest to kick the habit for a 24-hour period.

I was asked by the Herald staff to oblige them and the students of Meredith College by giving a step by step account of one day in my life. While that may seem mundane to many of you, the request was not just an account of my day. You see, I am a smoker.

On one level I am embarrassed by the grip tobacco has on me, on another level I love it. I love to smoke! It's ugly and smells bad, offensive to many and deadly to some; nonetheless, I love it.

Anyway, I was asked to quit for one day in order to enlighten others of the difficulty involved in eliminating a chemical dependance—so here goes.

Saturday, November 10, 1990—

8:35 a.m. I just woke up. Normally, I fix a pot of coffee, drink a cup, smoke a cigarette and scan the paper. But no cigarette—I feel panicky. Maybe I'll swill the coffee and then jump in the shower. I'll fill all the gaps in my day with some productive activity in order to keep myself preoccupied. (Avoidance of reality: I want a cigarette with every fiber of my being!) Sick child that I am!

9:30 a.m. I've been awake for an hour. I have had my coffee and shower, finished the crossword puzzle, washed the dishes, walked my dogs, done a load of laundry. It's amazing how much you can do in an hour! (Not only do I want a cigarette with every fiber of my being, but with every fiber on the fibers of my being!)

10:30 a.m. Well, my house is immaculate, I've eaten breakfast as well as all the leftover Halloween candy. I can't seem to find the right thing to put in my mouth. I want to smoke. I start to rationalize as to why I shouldn't just go ahead and light up—who would know? I'll just make up a bunch of stuff about how anxious I am and they'll never know. (From the right lobe: But you'll know you smoke—you'll know!)

11:30 a.m. I can't take much more of this. I don't think I'm going to make

it. I've done 95 minutes of aerobics and I still want one. That's the best one, you know. After you have worked up a sweat, done something really good for yourself, you reward yourself with a self-destructive activity. A big fat ciggy!

12:30 p.m. I'm feeling good now. I've been awake for four hours. No smoke, lots of food, a good workout. Maybe I'll study. Maybe I'll go into respiratory fitness. I'll become a lung surgeon, or counsel people trying to quit. Get real— I'm going to the store and buying a carton.

1:30 p.m. Well, I bought a carton but have yet to smoke one. I can do this. I feel like someone has taken away my best friend. I've been dumped by a man. I'm drowning. No, I'm being deprived of my life support system and I'm almost out of my coma. HELP!

2:30 p.m. Give me Marlboro's or give me death.

3:30 p.m. I'm fine. Really. I'm fine. This day is moving so slowly. I tried to study but I have this free hand—my smoking hand. If only I were ambidextrous right now. I could take notes with both hands. What am I going to do with this free hand?

4:30 p.m. I lied at 3:30. I'm not fine. I'm a wreck. I'm disgusted with myself. I'm mad a Julia and all of the Herald staff for asking me to do this. Why did I agree? I'm pathetic!

5:28 p.m. Well, I've made it through the whole day—part of the day. Oh, IT'S SATURDAY NIGHT! How will I deal with the night part? Thank goodness it's almost time for dinner.

6:30 p.m. Well, I blew it. I didn't make it. I'm a failure. I feel terrible. I have to admit that it was one of the best cigarettes I've ever had in my life.

While this small account of someone deeply embroiled in addiction may seem pathetic and silly, pathetic is the operative word here.

Being addicted to anything is very difficult to overcome and, while I don't believe I can properly express the anxiety I felt during this little experiment, I think it's safe to say that something unnatural has an enormous grip on my life.

It's really not amusing, it's sad. I only hope my next attempt and that of all those trying to quit are more successful than I was today.

From his perspective

Happy to be of the weaker sex

by Dennis Rogers

Don't tell me women are the weaker sex. The average man—beer drinking, football watching, bird killing, leering swine that he is—would last about 15 minutes if forced to undergo the pain and stress of womanhood.

Don't get me wrong. I admire men, too. I've been one for a pretty good stretch of time now, and I like it—but what I admire about men is our ability to make things as easy as possible.

You want proof? The TV remote control.

That's clearly a man's invention. If women had their way they would put the TV controls inside a lion's cage in the attic. Women never do things the easy way and men always do.

Examples abound. If a man walked into a store and saw a shirt and then he picked it up and saw that the buttons were on the back, he'd laugh the clerk out of town. Women not only will keep looking at the buttons-on-the-back blouse, there is a pretty good chance they actually will give the clerk money for it.

Same thing with pants. They'll buy pants with the zipper on the front, the back or the side. Not a man. If that darned zipper is not where he can find it in a hurry, if you know what I mean, we're not going to buy it. We don't want to have to search for the fly.

A man complains about having to wear a necktie. Oh, it is choking me, the poor baby whines. What a wimp! Try 10 minutes in a pair of high heel shoes, Mr. Macho Man.

Only a woman would have the courage to wear a pair of shoes that could not, under any circumstances, actually be comfortable or be good for you. Not only do they put them on, they leave the house and risk serious injury from sidewalk grates, curbs, soft lawns, dog do-do and dancing men. And they have the guts to do it without offering a single, rational reason.

My hat's off to you women. Feet of iron. But do us all a favor and don't complain that your feet hurt! How could they not hurt?

Ask a beardless man about shaving and he'll go on and on about how terrible it is. Oh, dragging a sharp steel razor against his soft baby face (all men say they have a tough beard and soft skin) is such a downer. Every morning he's got to shave. On and on he goes.

Get real, guys. Not only do women

shave their armpits (how's that sound, Mr. Tough Guy?) they rip the hairs of their eyebrows out by the roots. Yes, that's right, they grab them with tweezers and PULL! You want pain? Try covering your hairy old legs with hot wax, let it get hard then quickly RIP IT OFF! Oh, yeah. And women do it all the time.

I could go on here, but you get the picture. Not only is it not easy being a woman, what with sex discrimination, childbirth and a constant diet of salads, it hurts. "I am woman, hear me roar," is exactly what I'd do if someone handed me a little device that looks suspiciously like an electric razor and I ran it over my soft face and it pulled the hairs out rather than cutting them off.

Although, to be honest, women can get a little whiny on this childbirth thing. Yeah, yeah, I know it is a tad uncomfortable giving birth to a 10-pound thing with arms and legs sticking every which way, but guys, what about kidney stones? A woman voluntarily will have more than one kid but you'd better bring a gun and some Demerol if you expect me to go through that again. *-Reprinted from the News & Observer, October 25, 1990 by permission of the News & Observer Publishing Co., Raleigh, NC*

Letters...

opportunities should have dwindled that night and I feel that it is a disgrace for the citizens of this state to have re-elected him as their representative, he certainly is not mine.

In his victory speech last evening, Jesse Helms commented on the loss of Muddville, clearly geared towards the Harvey Gantt campaign and supporters, as well as the candidate himself. To me this statement of racial prejudice emphasizes the narrow mind of Jesse Helms. The "North Carolina values" that he repeatedly stated in his campaign are simply a reflection of the opinions of the conservative persons of this state - the majority. What about the minority? With 99% of the presents [sic] tallied, the percentage was Helms 53% to Gantt 47%. Clearly, the minority has reservations about Helms' ideas of North Carolina values and about the Senator himself.

Lee Connelly