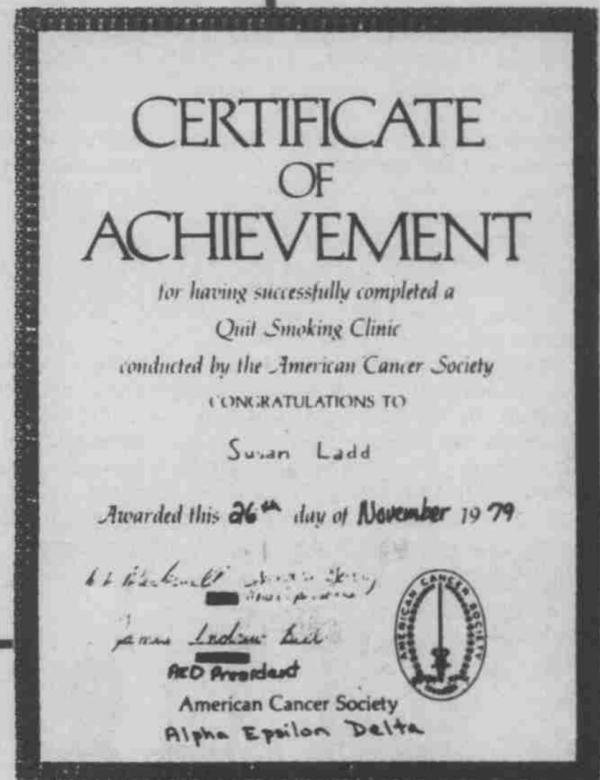


n of cigarettes  
 respiratory systems,  
 ak their habits



Susan Ladd uses an Ecolyzer to measure the level of poisonous carbon monoxide in her bloodstream, an indicator of smoking's effects on the body. Ladd was awarded the certificate at right after successfully giving up cigarettes.

In addition to carbon monoxide, cigarettes contain substances such as ammonia, acetone... and formaldehyde. At least six carcinogens, or known cancer-causing substances, are contained in cigarette smoke, including benzene and vinyl chloride.



fruit to satisfy the "oral fix" of cigarettes, setting limits on where and when you will smoke, hiding ashtrays and lighters so they're hard to get to, not carrying cigarettes with you to work, trying to smoke with the opposite hand and drinking fruit juices instead of smoking for a pick-me-up. The tricks you can use to break the smoking habit are endless, and we were encouraged to try a variety to find the ones that worked for us.

Though we were under no pressure to report our weekly cigarette consumption, most of us did discuss what progress we were making and exchanged suggestions and ideas. The encouragement we received from the clinic leaders and each other was a powerful incentive. Though quitting was the ultimate goal, any reduction in smoking was a step forward and was worthy of praise. The shared struggle made us a cohesive group and made the clinic not only positive, but fun.

Guest speaker Penny Bruce, who was also trying to quit, pinpointed the main difficulty I found in quitting—the conflict between short-term and long-term rewards. When you smoke, you are immediately rewarded with the pleasant sensations of smoking—stimulation and relaxation. But the rewards of not smoking—better health and longer life—are not immediately gratifying.

Bruce recommended that the smoker set up his own personal reward system whereby he earns points for not smoking and, upon a certain accumulation of points, rewards himself with something that he really wants. Another way to accomplish this is to put money in a jar for every pack of cigarettes not smoked and use that money for a present.

Although all of us had made a partial commitment to quit simply by coming to the clinic, Bruce said, it would take a strong personal commitment to quit for good. "Having made a conscious decision to smoke, you can make the decision not to smoke," Bruce said. "Willpower is not something you have no control over. Willpower is consciously choosing to change your behavior."

During the next week, I began to limit myself to three cigarettes per day. The more I cut down, the less I liked them, and often after waiting all day for my quota of three cigarettes, I would smoke only one. The longer I abstained between cigarettes, the more nauseated and dizzy smoking made me. I still wanted a cigarette at times, but smoking became so unpleasant that I rarely finished the one I started.

Thursday, Nov. 8, 1979, I stubbed out my second cigarette of the day after two puffs, and said aloud, "That's it."

For the first time, I really didn't want to smoke anymore. I had finally reached that point at which I no longer wanted to be associated with the habit and was truly willing to leave it behind. For the first time, I felt tremendous resolve, freedom and confidence. I didn't want a cigarette and I didn't think I'd ever want one again.

At first it was easy, but it wasn't long before I did want one. To keep from backsliding at work, where the cigarette lust was usually the worst, I told my non-smoking co-workers that I had quit. Then whenever I wanted a cigarette I'd tell them, and they would help talk me out of it. Instead of a cigarette I began reaching for a stick of gum, and found that the action of chewing worked off more nervous energy than smoking.

The trick for me was finding those things about cigarettes that I disliked the most and working to magnify the negative aspects of smoking in contrast to the pleasantness of not smoking. Since I disliked the smell and dirtiness of cigarettes, I brushed my teeth more often than I needed to and bought myself some expensive perfume as a reward for not smoking. The thought of smoking became even more unpleasant in contrast to the sweet smell of perfume and a fresh-tasting mouth.

One of the most powerful deterrents, however, was the anticipation of telling the group that I hadn't smoked for a week. I had missed the Monday meeting, and the excitement of sharing my accomplishment with the others kept me on the wagon until Friday.

They shared in my triumph and lavished praise. It was a good feeling to share the struggle of the past week's abstinence and offer hints that might help them. Several others in the group had quit as well, and we together could laugh about the trials of being a non-smoker. "The rest of me died, but my lungs are working," one said wryly.

I was also jubilant to discover upon retesting with the Ecolyzer that the carbon monoxide level in my bloodstream had dropped from an initial measurement of 13 to seven—lower than Blackwell, who never has smoked.

In the last week of the clinic, I continued to abstain, using some of the same techniques and experimenting with others. I found that the very act of not smoking for a day became self-reinforcing—for every day I didn't smoke, the next day was a little bit easier.

Even though my resolve grew daily not to smoke another cigarette, my mind looked nervously ahead to graduation and job-hunting, and more pressure than I had ever known, when I wouldn't have the clinic to help me. At the last meeting of the clinic, I found that this was a common feeling among others who had quit.

But when I came to realize in talking with the others

was that I had quit only because I wanted to and decided once and for all that I would. The clinic supplied me with the techniques and with moral support in the crucial time that I quit, but I alone was responsible for quitting. If I smoked again, I would still have those techniques to use. But if I didn't want to smoke, I wouldn't have to.

The clinic began with 21 people. Throughout the four weeks of the clinic, all four men and seven of the women dropped out. Of the 10 remaining women, eight had quit smoking, at least temporarily, by the last meeting.

It has now been three months, two weeks and six days since I stubbed out that last cigarette, and I still have not lit another.

The first two months were not bad. The desire to smoke was still strong at times, but having many days of abstinence behind me gave me the willpower to resist a moment's fancy. Lately, my cigarette lust has gotten worse. I dream that I am smoking, and wake to mixed feelings of shame and ecstasy.

But I know that if I smoke again, it will have to be a conscious decision. It will not be a failing of the clinic, but of my own.

Upon completion of the clinic, I was rewarded with a Certificate of Achievement, a button that says I quit, and perhaps as much as eight more years of life.

Who says quitters never win?

Susan Ladd is features editor for *The Daily Tar Heel*.