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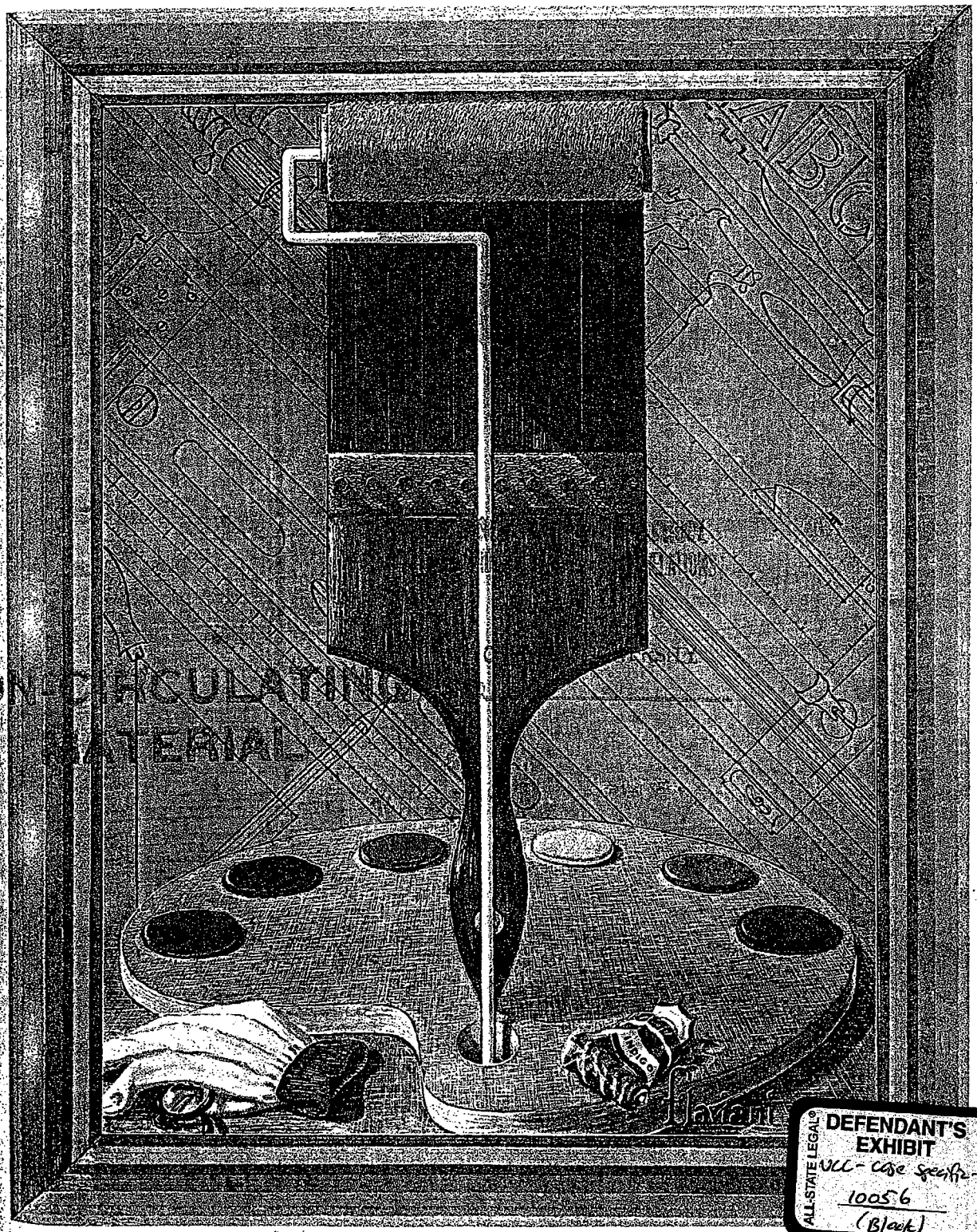
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Painters & Allied Trades Journal

MARCH, 1978



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Local 4 Craftsman Wins Coverup Contest

Painters & Allied Trades Journal

On the Cover

The winning entry in the IBPAT Coverup Contest. Story, page 4.

NEWS AND FEATURES

page

Inside Front Cover From the General President

7 AFL-CIO Calls for 2 Million Jobs

8 Tomorrow's Home: the Shape of the Future

14 Smoking: the Worst Thing for You

31 The General Secretary-Treasurer Reports

DEPARTMENTS

page

11 Davis-Bacon Forum

16 Local and District Council News

22 June-December Audit Report

26 Financial Report

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Any member or subordinate body publishing programs, souvenirs or other documents of any description must not designate them as "The Official Journal of the Brotherhood," or as "The Painters and Allied Trades Journal," either upon the publication itself on their advertising contract forms or stationery.

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Ask The Doctors

. . . Smoking: The Single Worst Thing

Do you worry about the chemicals with which you have to work? Do you have symptoms of an illness which may be connected to your occupation?

"Ask the Doctors" is the JOURNAL feature designed to answer your questions about the hazards in the painting and allied trades.

This month Dr. Edwin C. Holstein of New York's Mount Sinai School of Medicine discusses the dangers of smoking.



Dr. Holstein has been with New York's Sinai School of Medicine since July of 1976. Before joining MSSM's staff, he was the Chief of Internal Medicine for the United States Air Force Hospital at Pease AFB in Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

Brother L.P. writes:

"Within the last few years I've been wheezing while I'm sleeping and my wife keeps telling me that it sounds like I'm dying. So I put the blame on the cigarette and cut down to 10 a day. When the doctor examined me he said I had bronchitis. I'm 54 and hope to at least enjoy my retirement in 8 more years."

Brother C.K. writes:

"I have emphysema. I quit smoking ten years ago."

Dr. Holstein replies:

At this point most of my readers have probably guessed that I am going to bother them about cigarettes again. Probably many of you are tired of hearing that you should stop smoking. I've had quite a few patients who felt that when their doctor didn't know what else to do, he blamed all their disorders on their cigarette habit. And every working man knows that smoking is brought up all the time by the insurance company to contest workman's compensation cases having to do with lung problems. For these reasons, I don't blame my readers if they suspect that the dangers of smoking may get exaggerated.

Unfortunately, these dangers are *not* exaggerated—cigarette smoking is probably the single worst thing you can do to yourself, other than "shooting" narcotics or drinking to the point of alcoholism. In this column, I am going to tell you all of the harmful effects of smoking, and why this habit is particularly dangerous for working people. That way, no one can say he didn't know. But beyond that, only you can do something about it.

Most people are aware of the fact that cigarette smoking can cause lung cancer. What is not well known is just how powerful this effect of cigarettes is. The fact is that a cigarette smoker has 8-10 times the chance of getting lung cancer as the non-smoker. About 85 percent of all cases of lung cancer are due to smoking.

Pipe and cigar smokers have about the same risk as non-smokers, unless they inhale the smoke into their lungs, in which case their risk is similar to that of a cigarette smoker. Unfortunately, many pipe and cigar smokers can't tell whether they inhale the smoke or not.

The figures I just gave you should be enough to convince anyone not to smoke. But the situation is even worse for a worker who may be exposed to cancer-causing materials. Asbestos and uranium, for instance, *multiply* the risk of lung cancer in cigarette smokers. Thus, if you can believe this, the lung cancer risk for smokers who are exposed to asbestos is 70-90 times as great as the risk for the person who doesn't smoke and is not exposed to asbestos! On the other hand, the *non-smoker* who must work with asbestos has almost no additional risk of lung cancer than if he did not work with this fiber. (He still must worry about asbestosis, mesothelioma and intestinal cancer, however.)

Warren Dropcloth reacted to these facts by saying to himself, "I'll take my chances on beating the lung cancer if and when I get it." He was encouraged by the successes of John Wayne and Arthur Godfrey, both of whom survived the disease. However, he had forgotten about Humphrey Bogart and Robert Taylor, both of whom smoked and paid for it with their lives. So here is another depressing fact: even with the best efforts at early detection and first-rate care, at least 90 percent of the people who get lung cancer die of it. Modern medicine still can't conquer this one.

John Taper is a pessimist who figured that there was no point in giving up cigarettes, that when his number comes up, it comes up. Here again, the figures prove him wrong: if you give up smoking your risk of lung cancer gradually decreases until, somewhere around 5-10 years later, it is no worse than if you had never smoked. So you *can* do something about it!

Most of the things I have said about lung cancer are also true for cancer anywhere in the breathing system: the lips, mouth, throat, voicebox, and windpipe. However, you don't hear as much about these cancers because they occur much less often than lung cancer. As in the case of lung cancer, a worker who may be exposed to cancer

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While we are on the subject of cancer, I should add that cigarette smoking seems to increase the chances of bladder cancer also. As you know, the nation lost Hubert H. Humphrey to this disease. He was not a cigarette smoker. But his cancer may have been occupational. When he was young, he frequently helped out in his father's pharmacy. Benzidine, now known to cause bladder cancer, was freely used in many pharmacies to perform certain urine and stool tests, and would be expected to take several decades for its effect to appear. It is not known why cigarettes cause this tumor.

Finally, we get to the subject of the letters we received. Cigarettes are the main cause of chronic bronchitis and emphysema. These lung diseases show themselves as increasing shortness of breath over the years, as well as coughing and phlegm production in most such people.

Painters have a special problem here, since you are exposed to a great number of chemicals and dusts that can produce the same problems. Why add cigarette smoke to the hazards you already face, especially when this habit may *multiply* the risk of chronic bronchitis or emphysema? In the Mount Sinai study of painters, for instance, we found that about 13 percent of the non-smokers had chronic bronchitis, while 50 percent of the smokers had it! And no matter how terrible their job conditions may be, the smokers among them would have trouble winning a compensation case.

There is an important difference between chronic bronchitis and emphysema and the diseases described above: Giving up smoking may not stop the disease from getting worse. For some reason we don't understand, there is often a point of no return after which it is too late to stop the progress of the disease. That is why it is sad to get letters from people like Brother L.P., who cannot help himself just by cutting down to ten cigarettes a day, and Brother C.K., who quit ten years ago but has emphysema anyway.

All questions for "Ask the Doctor" should be directed to:

IBPAT Journal
c/o Robert Petersdorf
1750 New York Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006

If writing about a personal illness, please include as much detail as possible: Present work? How long? Years in the paint trades? Usual work? What are your complaints? When did yon notice them? If you have seen a doctor, what does he or she feel is wrong with you?

Job Injuries Hit 1 of 11 . . .

One out of every 11 workers in the American private economy experienced a job-related injury or illness in 1976, according to a Labor Department study.

The survey, based on reports submitted by employers, shows an increase over 1975 in job-linked injuries and illnesses of about 3 percent, which is proportionate to the rise in hours worked. Thus, the Labor Department reported, the incidence rate of 9.2 injuries or illnesses per 100 full-time workers was virtually unchanged from 1975.

According to the survey, work-related fatalities declined by about 13 percent over 1975, from 5,200 to 4,500 although more workers were employed in the latter year.

The number of injuries involving lost worktime increased 8 percent over the period, from 1.77 million to 1.92 million.

Translated into what the Labor Department calls a "measure of severity," the incidence rate of lost work-days per 100 full-time workers rose from 54.6 in 1975 to 57.8 in 1976.

Among high-risk industries, the largest over-the-year change was reported for construction, where the injury incidence rate declined from 15.6 to 14.9 per 100 workers.

the Bills Can Wipe You Out

No. 1 cause of personal bankruptcy is hospital bills, avers Vice President Mondale. He says that by 1987, unless some leash is put on them, hospital costs will rise to $640 a day—"at those rates it will be cheaper to fly to the French Riviera and lie in the sun than to stay overnight in an American hospital."

Just a couple of examples of how soaring hospital costs wipe out families financially: A Denver couple took their disabled son from doctor to doctor and from one clinic to another for treatment. Many tests and operations and years of physical therapy erased their medical insurance and left them with $10,000 in bills to pay. A doctor in Houston suffered a coronary. He did not have full insurance coverage. His life savings were wiped out and he was left $15,000 in debt in hospital and doctor bills.