**Smoking Ban a Good Idea**

As noted in the article by Dr. Chuck Kelley, the way we do business in our Hawaii hotels and restaurants will significantly change in less than two weeks when a new state law on smoking in public areas and our company’s new smoke-free policy take effect. The occasion gives me a chance to reflect on the history of tobacco use in the United States and how it has changed dramatically over the past century and particularly during my lifetime.

As Dr. Chuck has pointed out, the use of tobacco began in the Americas in pre-Columbian times and has always been controversial. It is interesting to note that despite the ongoing controversy, in more modern times, the U.S. government has had a hand in promoting the use of tobacco products through crop subsidies and by offering free or deeply discounted cigarettes to troops during World War II.

Some of my earliest memories about the use to tobacco date back to the 1940s, during World War II. My mother, Estelle Kelley, was a smoker. She had begun smoking in college, but for the duration of the war, she almost stopped. Everything was rationed and perceived luxury items, such as liquor and tobacco products, were particularly hard to get.

She found an unexpected source of each in members of our armed services who were stationed in Hawaii prior to departure for island battlefields in the Western Pacific. Roy and Estelle Kelley held open house at our family home many a Sunday afternoon and invited military sons and daughters of mainland friends to come over for a swim, volleyball, and some good food. The soldiers, sailors, and Marines had access to low-priced tobacco products and alcoholic beverages through the base PX and often brought them to our home as prized gifts for their hosts.

Fortunately, Estelle Kelley voluntarily stopped smoking some time after the war and lived to age 91. Many other smokers have not been so wise or so lucky.

When I entered medical school over 50 years ago, I knew that tobacco products were dangerous, but I had no idea of just how deadly they could be. At that time, the popular name for a cigarette was a “coffin nail,” but it was a humorous term that few really understood.

Then I began to notice that patients I saw in the wards with a wide variety of diseases were also heavy smokers. Men and women with cancer of the lung, mouth, larynx, urinary bladder, and pancreas were often people who smoked several packs of cigarettes a day. Patients with emphysema and a spectrum of other lung diseases had a similar history.

I took an informal and very unscientific personal poll of what brands of cigarettes these patients smoked and found a heavy bias for Camels. My professors reminded me that long-term, heavy smoking damages taste buds, and Camel cigarettes had one of the strongest flavors available among the popular brands.

For a while, the tobacco industry countered fears of a connection between smoking and disease with filter-tipped cigarettes, heavy advertising and slogans such as “I’d walk a mile for a Camel,” or “More doctors smoke Camels.” However, the link between tobacco use and disease was becoming more and more clear, and for several decades now, there has been a steady progression toward restricting its use in the U.S.

- In 1964, U.S. Surgeon General Luther Terry issued a report that stated categorically, “cigarette smoking is causally related to lung cancer in men.”
- In 1971, cigarette ads disappeared from television.
- Smoking on commercial airliners was banned in 1990.
- Over the past 15 years, more and more states and communities have put restrictions on smoking in public buildings, restaurants, bars, and workplaces.
- The new Hawaii law, among the most restrictive in the nation, is just the latest step in that direction.
According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), tobacco is the nation’s leading cause of preventable death. Worldwide, it is the second major cause of preventable death, killing more people than AIDS, legal drugs, illegal drugs, road accidents, murder and suicide, according to the World Health Organization and the American Lung Association.

In recent years, tobacco use has been declining in many countries in North America and Western Europe but increasing in many others, especially in Asia. The World Health Organization estimates that over 25 percent of the world’s smokers live in China, where 300 million men are regular tobacco users--a number equal to the entire population of the U.S.!

I support the new Hawaii law on smoking. There will be a number of questions and perhaps even a certain amount of confusion during the coming months, as the law is implemented and practices and policies are established. We will try to keep every member of our ‘ohana, our guests, and travel partners informed as we take the next steps in making Outrigger and OHANA hotels safer and healthier for all.

Hawaii is well known for its clean, fresh, fragrant air. This is an important step in keeping it that way.