

points of view

Smoking in the workplace



STEVE FECHT/staff photographer

Just because Jack Gladden and his fellow smokers are dying for a smoke doesn't mean I am, says Tom Henderson, a crusading anti-smoker.

STEVE FECHT/staff photographer

Jack Gladden asks non-smokers for equal treatment. "Give us a place where we can do our work and smoke if we choose, but don't try to put us in our place" in the process.

Butt out, anti-smokers

... the test of a man's love of liberty is his concern about liberties which he hates to see exercised.

— Walter Lippman 1937

TOM HENDERSON works out. I don't. Tom runs. I sit. Tom eats foods rich in fiber and other healthy things. I eat potato chips and Snickers bars. Tom does admit to one vice. He likes strong coffee. So do I.

That's one thing we agree on. But there's something else we don't agree on. Tom doesn't smoke. I do. And that's why Tom's angry. In fact, he's mad as hell.

Tom isn't just a non-smoker. He's an anti-smoker. And he doesn't want to share an office with "anachronisms" like me who, he says, are puffing our lives away.

Never mind that the office we share is more like an airplane hangar than a broom closet. Tom doesn't even want to share the planet with us.

Tom wants us to STOP SMOKING. Or, if we insist on continuing our filthy habit, he doesn't want us to do it around him.

IN TRYING to prove something or other, Tom notes that this issue of smoking in public places didn't even exist 10 years ago. He's right. It didn't exist five years ago.

Not until the last couple of years, when the anti-smokers began their push for a smokeless world, did the subject become an issue at all.

And that's where Tom and the other anti-smokers are confused. The subject is smoking; the issue is rights in conflict.

Tom does acknowledge, grudgingly, that smokers have some rights. Yes, Tom, we do.

I have the right to smoke. Tom has the right not to smoke. But Tom doesn't want to be bothered by my smoke. And that's where our rights begin to butt heads.

Tom doesn't mind if I smoke, as long as I don't do it in the same room with him. He says I can smoke on my

breaks or my lunch hour. He suggests that the company could partition off a section of the lunch room for smokers.

Then, when the nicotine urge calls, we could go there to relieve it. Or we could go outside.

TOM FIGURES that since I am the one lighting up, I should be the one to go somewhere else to do it. He doesn't want me to blow smoke in his space. But, Tom, it's my space, too.

I often work 10-hour days editing copy on a computer terminal, writing headlines, laying out pages. I smoke to relieve the tension. Maybe it's a bad habit, but I do it. I can't pick up my terminal and take it to the parking lot when I want a cigarette. And I shouldn't have to.

Tom thinks that I am a thoughtless boor whenever I light up a cigarette in the cavernous "office" that we share. But I don't smoke in the smaller offices or during staff meetings.

I don't even smoke in my own car when non-smoking friends and co-workers are along. But in a room big enough to park a fleet of Cessnas... come on, Tom, give me a break.

IF TOM and his fellow anti-smokers want to divide the globe into smoking and non-smoking areas, that's fine with me. Just give me equal treatment.

Don't follow the lead of some of our local governmental bodies and make the "smoking area" the parking garage next to the fire station or a small unheated room in the basement. Give us a place where we can do our work and smoke if we choose, but don't try to "put us in our place" in the process.

Meanwhile, Tom, until your smokeless world is a reality, I'll make a deal. I'll do as much of my smoking as I can on my lunch hour and coffee breaks. But when I do feel the need to light up, in the middle of editing one of your stories, I'll warn you about it. You can leave the room until I'm done.

Jack Gladden is a copy editor at the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers. He lives in Canton Township.

Don't share your habit

JUST BECAUSE Jack Gladden and his fellow smokers are dying for a smoke doesn't mean I am.

If smoking doesn't get him, though, time will. He may not know it, but he's already an anachronism. Before either one of us retires, ash trays in the workplace will be as rare as spittoons.

(According to U.S. government figures, 54 percent of U.S. businesses now restrict smoking. In 1986 it was 36 percent; 10 years ago it wasn't an issue. The U.S. Public Health Service says pack-a-day smokers have 50-percent higher absenteeism and cost their companies an average of up to \$784 a year in higher medical costs and decreased productivity.)

In college I worked in a sheet-metal shop with an old coddler who chewed tobacco all day long. By the end of the day, there was spit all over the floor and spit all over my work boots. No problem. I can change my boots at the end of the day, but how do you rinse out your lungs?

FORGET THE overwhelming evidence about the health hazards of passive smoking; at the very least, smoking at work is a violation of common courtesy. Why would you do something that bothers your co-workers? Why should your inability to control your drug habits become my problem?

I frequently work out at Vic Tanny's on my lunch hour. After a sauna and a shower, it drives me nuts that I have to put on clothes that reek with the putrid, foul stench of stale tobacco smoke. Maybe Jesse James had the right idea; he once shot a guy for smoking.

It also bugs me that when the company put in new mainframe computers, they walked them off and put up no smoking signs. Isn't it cost effective to protect people, too?

And it bugs me that if I eat at work, I have to do so at

my desk because the cafeteria often is a blue haze. But I'll gladly give them the cafeteria if they'll give me the office.

One day recently, of the 13 people in my immediate area, only two had cigarettes. But all 13 of us were smoking. The rude fact, Jack, is that if one person at work smokes, everybody smokes.

Those without bad habits are either dead or terminally boring. Lord knows I've had more than my share. I like coffee so strong it walks over and pours itself. But if every sip of coffee resulted in a mist of the stuff permeating the air, would I expect the non-coffee drinkers around me to put up with it? No.

What, Jack may ask, about smokers' rights? I'm not saying he can't smoke; I'm just saying I shouldn't have to. If he needs to smoke so badly, let him set his alarm every two hours during the night. Let him smoke his brains out on the way to work and on the way home. Let him go out on his lunch hour and smoke 'em three at a time.

WE GET a 15-minute break in the morning and in the afternoon and an hour for lunch. That gives him 90 minutes during the day to take in all the tar and nicotine a man could want. All I ask is for Jack to control himself in two-hour stretches between breaks — and even heroin addicts can go that long between fixes.

In the meantime, before ashtrays become collector's items, can you do me a favor, Jack? If you have to smoke at your desk, so be it. But when you cross the office to ask a question or pay a visit, try not to bring your cigarette with you. Who knows? Functioning without one might be habit forming.

Tom Henderson is a freelance journalist. He works frequently as a reporter at the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers.



remodeling sale

The Biggest Sale in Our 60 Year History!

The remodeling is scheduled to begin soon. We've taken **FURTHER REDUCTIONS** throughout the store in order to clear out existing stock to make room for construction.

SAVE 20%-60% on all furniture including area carpets, original oil paintings and accessories.

EVERYTHING IS REDUCED INCLUDING:

HENREDON
CENTURY
THOMASVILLE
SIMMONS
SLIGH

MGM
SHERRILL
HICKORY
STIEFFEL
MARBRO

HEKMAN
MASTERCRAFT
CHAPMAN
UNION
NATIONAL

SALE PRICES
ARE IN EFFECT
FOR SPECIAL
ORDERS, TOO.

50% Off
SELECTED
HENREDON
PIECES

60% Off
SELECTED
CENTURY
PIECES

50% Off
SELECTED
SHERRILL
SOFAS

55%-60% Off
SIMMONS
BEAUTYREST
"EXQUISITE"



18850 MACK AVENUE, GROSSE POINTE FARMS, 886-5200

Conveniently located just off I-94 at the Morass (7 Mile) exit, east to Mack Ave. and south on Mack.

Use your Mastercard, Visa or Scott's Revolving Charge

Open Daily 9:30 to 5:30 • Mon., Thurs., Fri. 'til 9:00 pm • Closed Sunday