

# Lobbyist burns up anti-smoking zealots

By THOMAS J. MORGAN

CRANSTON — Raymond A. Oliveira watched as the elevator doors closed behind the disgruntled group at City Hall, and, with a small sigh of relief, pulled out a pack of cigarettes and lit one. **MAR 28 1976**

Such amenities are necessary when you are the man on the spot for the Tobacco Institute and you are trying to head off an antismoking ordinance.

A few minutes earlier, Oliveira had stood at a podium before a City Council subcommittee reciting statistics and countering the arguments advanced by the Rhode Island Lung Association and other foes of Lady Nicotine.

Cancer? "Thirty types of cancer are caused by genetic factors, and viruses are suspected in other types. In all the years of study, scientists have never found any tobacco component directly related to heart disease, lung cancer or emphysema. Only a statistical link has

been demonstrated, and simple statistics aren't satisfactory to many people. You can bend statistics any way you want. More research is the answer."

The effect of cigarettes on nearby nonsmokers? "The Massachusetts Lung Association commissioned Dr. William C. Hinds and Dr. Melvin First to study the problem, and the doctors published their findings in the April 1975 edition of the *New England Journal of Medicine*."

"They devised a smoke concentration testing machine and went into restaurants, cocktail lounges and the like in the Boston area. They found the cocktail lounges the smokiest places, and their tests showed a nonsmoker would have to remain in a lounge for 100 hours to inhale the equivalent of one filter cigarette. Your liver would succumb before your lungs at that rate."

Oliveira was to lose his case, because the City Council two weeks later passed an ordinance restricting smoking in city-owned buildings and requiring hospitals to designate certain rooms for nonsmokers.

But the debate was heavy that evening. The subcommittee refused to hear anything but direct testimony, and the pent-up emotions poured out later in the corridor outside.

Oliveira found himself literally surrounded by the opposition. One angry woman doctor told him she would start smoking cigarettes again the day a nonsmoking lung cancer victim walked into her office.

Oliveira shrugged. "Research is the answer," he repeated.

"That's why we're here," snapped a woman from the lung association.

"The American Lung Association's budget last year," Oliveira replied, "showed income of \$45.3 million. Their fund-raising expenses were \$11.4 million. Salaries, fees and benefits took care of \$25.5 million. That left \$854,000 for research awards and grants."

On the other hand, he said later, the tobacco companies have spent \$57 million in the last 20 years on research into the health aspects of smoking. "The money is provided through the Council for Tobacco research, a completely autonomous organization. The scientists on this council maintain their university affiliations and they are free to publish their conclusions in medical journals."

He contrasted this with the reaction from the Massachusetts Lung Association to the cocktail lounge research project. "Not unexpectedly, the lung

association canceled further sponsorship."

Oliveira said he feels the key to smoking problems lies in creating a greater sensitivity among smokers and nonsmokers.

"We recognize that in poorly ventilated areas, smoking can be a problem — even to smokers themselves. It's bothersome to the eyes, but it's not doing any harm. The question is: Are we going to have government intrusion into areas of annoyance?"

"I think we have more government regulation than we need. We're trying

to legislate personal behavior here, and it's hard to come up with a law that's fair and reasonable as well as workable and enforceable. The answer doesn't lie in legislation. It lies in social courtesy."

Oliveira, 33, has a graduate degree in public relations and has worked as a lobbyist or director of public information for several large firms, including General Electric and DuPont.

He has been with the Tobacco Institute only since last fall and has spent much of his time as a lobbyist at the Massachusetts State House.

Cranston was his "maiden voyage"

before a city council, he said. "That probably was the most emotional group I've encountered," he added.

"The latest thing now is that they want to prohibit smoking on airliners. If you've ever flown, you know that an airplane is the best place of all to smoke. The ventilators draw the smoke up vertically and it bothers no one."

He took the job well aware he was getting involved in "a very controversial industry." But, he added, "I feel the industry has been singled out and treated unfairly. It's challenging in that respect. That's why I took the job."

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