

James L. Holly, M.D.

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Letters to the Editor
Beaumont Enterprise

Dear Sir:

A whimper! Yes, a “low whining, plaintive” sound ushered in the day of no smoking in public places in Beaumont. In 2000, we were told that calamity would befall all of us due to “Y2K.” Some -- I had friends who did -- stocked up on food and prepared for “nuclear winter.” It was another whimper. For all of the moaning and for all of the silliness which saw non-smokers “light up” on July 31st in solidarity with their tobacco-addicted friends, the arrival of the day of enforcement of the smoking ban in Beaumont has been a non-event.

For those who will recall the pre-August 1, 2006 smoking liberties in Beaumont as the halcyon days of freedom and actualization, I would like to recommend that we start a new society. Its purpose will be to make certain that our children never forget that once upon a time their fathers and mothers were free to smoke anywhere. To that remembrance, we will add the lamentation that we are no longer free to use lead in our paint. Of course, lead in paint poisoned our children, but we’re talking liberty here. Who are you to tell me that I’m not free to use lead in my paint, if I choose? And besides, we need the lead in our paint to make paint durable on the Gulf Coast. It will cost millions of dollars in additional maintenance of wood homes if we don’t have lead in our paint. People will leave town and move to Lubbock. It will be the end of prosperity for our region, if we take the lead out of paint.

We’ll also have a subchapter which will celebrate the days of asbestos use and we’ll have an annual march protesting the fact that we can’t exercise our freedom to use asbestos siding and insulation, if we choose. We, of course, will have to get someone to speak up for us because most of us who used asbestos either can’t breath, or have succumbed to the complications of our exposure to asbestos, but that’s a small price to pay for liberty and freedom. Give us back our asbestos, our lead paint and our public use of tobacco; we want to be free. We can’t breath, but we are free!!

Our new society will add other issues to our agenda as we attempt to roll back the tide of responsible citizenship in favor of unfettered freedom regardless of the consequences. We will certainly be joined by those who want to make automatic weapons loaded with armor piercing bullets available over the internet. No matter that our young men and women who patrol our streets are placed at risk by this choice. After all, we are for total freedom.

However, it is possible that our new society may not do so well, as nothing will invigorate our community like the “breath of fresh air” which became available to all in Beaumont, Texas on August 1, 2006. Parents may be glad to use lead-free paints for the benefit of their children. We

may find little sympathy for the use of asbestos with the disease and death which it caused. We may find that the overwhelming majority are willing to relinquish their “right” to own automatic weapons with armor-piercing bullets for the increased safety that brings to our law enforcement officers.

Congratulations, Beaumont. No lead, no asbestos, no tobacco smoke – what will we think of next to improve the health of Southeast Texas. And, by the way, no thank you, I don’t want to join the new society which I proposed above.

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