

Are Peoples' Lungs Different Today?

Written by Smoke Signals

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A question popped into our minds recently, as we were watching a few old movies from the 1940s on TV.

As is often the case, smoking was ubiquitous in the movies, with everyone lighting up regularly, no matter where they were, no matter what the circumstances.

The female smoking was, of course, outstanding; style was paramount, particularly in social settings. French inhales, snaps, nose exhales, residual exhales were commonplace. But that's the subject for another lament.

What really hit us, though, was the way that everyone, men and women, young and old, were taking cheek-hollowing drags on their powerful, unfiltered cigarettes - almost non-stop. And that's what got us thinking.

What is it about smokers in the 2000s, that sees most of them taking shallow inhales on light or ultra-light cigarettes, yet often only able to handle a few cigarettes a day?

We understand that the amount people smoke, particularly these days, is often constrained by the price of cigarettes and the difficulty of smoking in public. Even so, it seems that the modern day smoker's ability to "handle smoke" is far from what it used to be.

We see it regularly in filming models, who often complain about being asked to smoke full-flavored cigarettes, who more often than not can't even smoke two cigarettes without a break, and who complain about being "smoked out" when a session isn't even halfway over.

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We also see the flip side of it, when members of the community lionize women who chain smoke on camera. It used to be, not so long ago, that chain smoking was almost "required behavior" in social situations. Today, fetishists rhapsodize about women who are able to chain into a second cigarette, and pledge undying love if someone smokes three in a row.

There's no question that regulations and cigarette prices have changed smokers' behavior, and there are therefore sociological reasons why people smoke less than they used to. That has no doubt made it harder for people to chain smoke.

But in watching women devour the smoke from their unfiltered cigarettes in old movies, we also have to wonder if there's been some sort of physiological change as well - making today's lungs less able to tolerate large volumes of smoke. Air pollution, perhaps? A greater prevalence of allergies, weakening lung capacity? More additives in the smoke lowering the lungs' ability to handle even light or ultra-light cigarette smoke? Fear?

There may be some elements of this discussion better suited for Vesperae's analysis - she's better at providing answers. We're better at asking questions. And this one is stuck in our minds, at least this month.

Whatever the explanation - it's certainly a shame from our perspective.

Happy New Year - and enjoy the January-February issue!