

CALLING IT QUILTS

One local man's fresh idea began a 30-year campaign of butting out

By **FRED HANSON**

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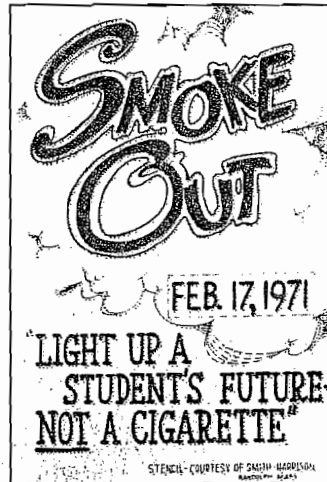
One day in 1969, Arthur Mullaney was talking with a group of Randolph High School students about paying for college.

Recalling the sight of cigarette butts littering the walkway to the front door, he had an inspiration.

"If I had a nickel for every cigarette butt, I could send you all to college," Mullaney said, and a campaign was born.

He called it a "smokeout." It took a few years, but the idea went national in 1976. Today is the 30th anniversary of the "Great American Smokeout."

During that time, 46.5 million people have quit smoking, and the rate of tobacco



■ The poster for the second Randolph smokeout.

use in the country has dropped from 37 percent to 21 percent.

When the Smokeout started, smoking was allowed almost anywhere large quantities of explosives were not present – in airlines, grocery stores, workplaces, restaurants, bars, and even in schools and maternity wards.

Now smokers have been relegated to indulging their habit outdoors – and not too close to entryways.

Mullaney, who lives in Kingston's

Help for you

■ For help to stop smoking, call the American Cancer Society's Quitline at 1-800-ACS-2345 or go to cancer.org

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INSIDE: State offers stop-smoking aids, counseling to low-income MassHealth members **SECTION PAGE 2**

30-year campaign to snuff smoking

■ SMOKING Continued

Rocky Nook, was the guidance director in Randolph when he organized the first smokeout. Residents were asked to give up smoking for the day and donate the money they saved to a scholarship fund. A member of the Randolph Rotary Club, Mullaney got the group to sponsor the event.

"The kids picked it right up," Mullaney said yesterday. "We had a top-notch group of kids. They made it a big thing. It was their energy that activated the town."

During the months of planning that went into the big day, Feb. 18, 1970, the focus of the event changed. It wasn't just about the money anymore — it was getting out the word about the dangers of smoking.

"It was the first shot, the first time the anti-smoking movement came to prominence," he said.

The event was six years after the original surgeon general's report on the health hazards of smoking. It was two months before Congress voted to ban cigarette commercials. And it was a time many high schools had smoking areas for students.

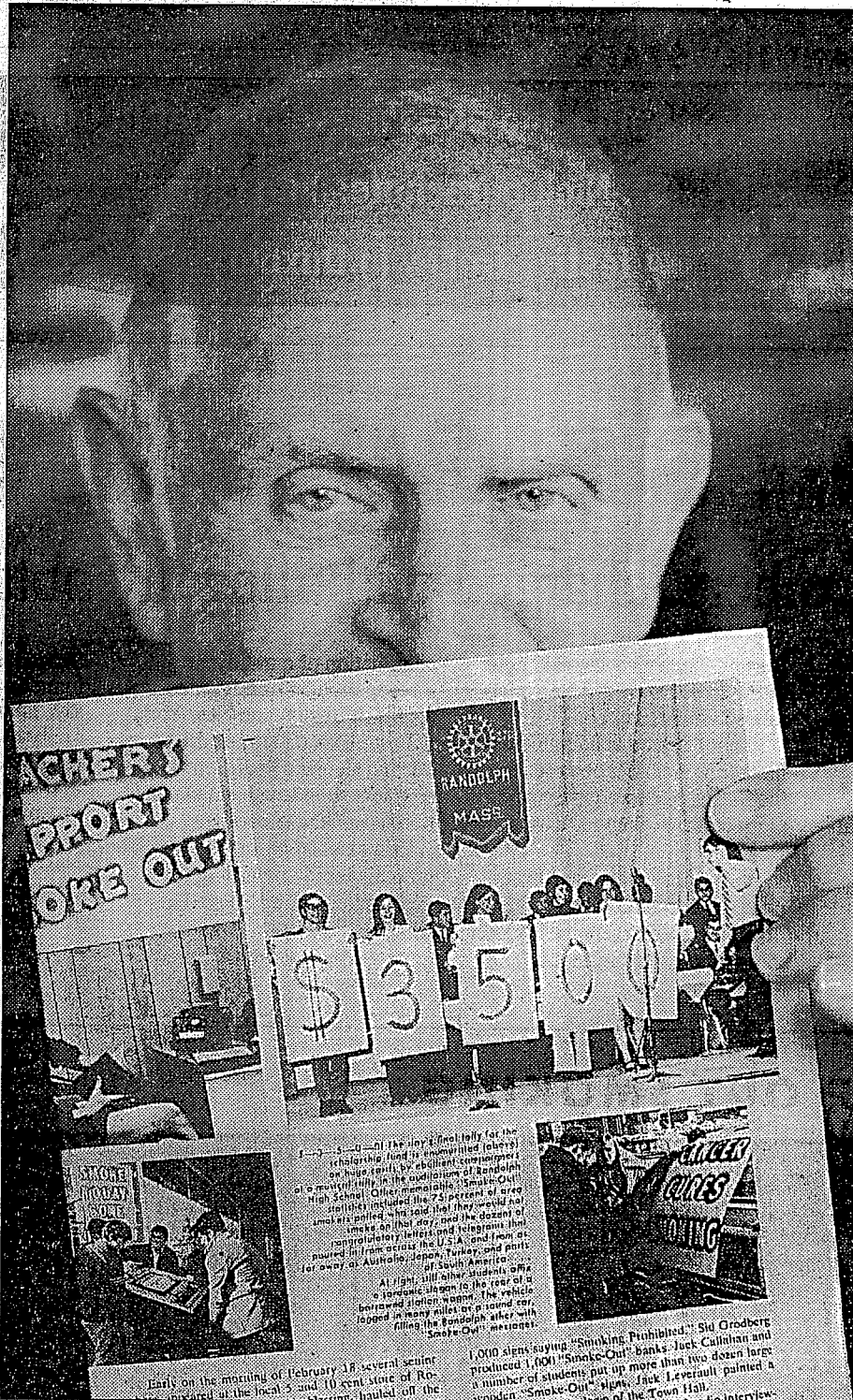
The students papered Randolph with signs. They went door-to-door asking residents to participate and handing out information from the American Cancer Society. A survey showed 75 percent of the town's adults planned to participate.

Press releases were sent out and the inaugural event was covered by local newspapers, network TV crews, and written up in Newsweek and Reader's Digest. Celebrities also got into the act, including future NFL Hall-of-Fame linebacker Nick Buoniconti and Boston Celtics player Thomas "Satch" Sanders.

On smokeout day, cigarette counters around town were draped in black. At the old 5 & 10 Store on North Main Street, students removed the cigarette machine for the day. A hotline was set up to give smokers encouragement to make it through the day without lighting up, and there was a community rally at the school to end the day.

In the end, the students collected \$4,500. At 50 cents a pack, the going price in 1970, that meant 180,000 cigarettes went unsmoked that day.

One of the students who worked on the campaign was Harvey Rosenfield, a 1970 graduate of Randolph High School who is



Art Mullaney shows a newspaper story about America's first "smokeout," held Feb. 18, 1970, in Randolph. In the photo, students hold up a running total on the night of the event. By the time it was over, they had raised \$4,500.

now a lawyer and the president of the Foundation for Taxpayer and Consumer Rights in Santa Monica, Calif.

"He took a vice and turned it into a virtue," Rosenfield said of Mullaney. "We were glad to be his foot soldiers."

"He was constantly prodding us to rise to the challenge. He thought big and worked small. I learned things from him that are the core skills of every other successful project I've ever done. I owe my success to Art Mullaney and a few people like him," he said.

In 1988, Rosenfield led the campaign in support of the California insurance reform measure Proposition 103. He ran a grass-roots campaign against one by the insurance industry that spent \$80 million, a record that still stands for a statewide campaign.

"We did what was done on the Smokeout. In the end, we won and the insurance companies lost," Rosenfield said.

The Randolph Smokeout only lasted two more years, but the similar efforts were launched in other communities.

Mullaney said a few years after the initial smokeout, he got a call from the American Cancer Society asking for permission to use the word smokeout.

The society organized the first national "Great American Smokeout" in 1977.

"They've done a good job with it," said Mullaney, a former pack-and-a-half a day smoker.

The cancer society estimates that reductions in smoking have prevented at least 146,000 cancer deaths between 1991 and 2003.

Mullaney retired in 1999 after four decades in education, 29 of them at Randolph High. He moved from Canton to Kingston three years ago. Now 70, he still does some consulting work, helps students and parents with college admissions, and writes a newsletter on the admissions process.

He said his involvement in that early anti-smoking effort represents his 15 minutes of fame.

As for the lives that may have been saved and changed as a result, Mullaney said, "That's the stuff you think about, but you never have the answer."

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