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Burning Ambition

The Inspiring Story of One Man's Quest to Cure the World of Smoking

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Extracted from Burning Ambition by Allen Carr

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Introduction

SOME YEARS AGO I had everything I wanted but something was missing. I had a problem that was killing me. Time after time I had tried to quit smoking and I had always failed.

In the end, luck got me off that hook. I found a way to quit smoking that I called Easyway. I knew it was not just a cure for me. It was a cure for all smokers. If I could beat my 100-a-day habit, then anyone could quit. This led me to take up the quest against smoking.

In this book you can learn about my life. It may remind you of battles you, your family or friends have had with smoking. If so, I hope to be able to show you that there is a way to stop.

I read not long ago that dry-cleaning was invented when a man spilt some paraffin on to a dirty table-cloth. He saw that the bit it had soaked was clean. Was he the first person to spill paraffin on a table-cloth? Perhaps not.

Many had done so before. But he was the first to turn that accident to good use. I did the same with Easyway. This story will tell you how it happened. It is a story of a smoking addiction and how it was overcome, and of a struggle to bring to life something new. That something would change my life and the lives of millions of people.

1 FAMILY LIFE

MY FIRST MEMORY IS of lying, aged two, on my father while he slept in his chair. I felt the rise and fall of his chest and I smelt the beer on his breath. That was as close as I ever got to him.

We lived in Putney, south-west London. At that time it was a working-class area and Dad was a builder. He liked drinking at the local pub, betting on horses, and smoking.

Dad made plenty of money, but he still used a barrow to take his tools to work. He never had a van. I knew him for more than thirty years, and he lived in the same house for twenty. He saw no need to better himself. I did not know him very well, even if he was my dad.

Most kids love their father. I respected mine and was a bit scared of him. The only time he hit me was at one Christmas dinner. He got back late from the pub, drunk, and my mother

started to nag him. He wanted to hit her, but I was good at boxing and stopped him. He sprang at me very fast and I was helpless. He put his hands round my throat and there was murder in his eyes. I must have looked scared because he suddenly let go. My mother didn't say a word.

She saw life as hard. She was the eldest of fourteen children. Her mother drank and her father left them. Mum was still a child herself when she became mother and father to her brothers and sisters in the 1930s. Her view of life had a strong effect on me, my older sister Marion and two younger brothers, Derek and John.

When Dad was at home he sat in front of the fire, reading his paper. He had difficulty telling us kids apart because we all had red hair. He knew our names. He knew the order in which we'd been born. But he didn't know which red-haired brat was the cause of any trouble so he told us all off. 'Allen! Derek! John!' Then he had done his duty, and went back to the paper.

Our mother was the main force in the family, but I don't think she talked to us much either. Dad didn't try to talk to us, and Mum didn't

know how to. I loved her, and I knew she loved me, but I was the bane of her life. When we boys were fighting, she smacked me. Often I had started the trouble, but she did not bother to ask what it was about before she hit me. I didn't mind being smacked when I knew I had done wrong, but I did mind when someone else had!

However, Mum and Dad gave me the best gift ever. My life. The smacks, with everything else they did, helped me to learn not to take anything for granted. It was an important lesson, but I learnt it the hard way.