

Once upon a time snuff took Point Hope boy's life

by Josie Lane

Point Hope eighth grader

POINT HOPE — Once upon a time a boy who was 5 years old stayed in the store until a person would buy him a can of snuff. He would keep some snuff in his mouth for about 15 minutes, then spit it out and have some more. When he would eat, he would eat with it, too.

When he was 9, he got oral cancer. When he told his mother and father, they took him to the clinic, and they sent him to the Kotzebue hospital. The Kotzebue hospital sent him on to the Anchorage hospital.

There, Dr. Jenkins said, "Nicotine is addictive. Oh, and it can cause leukoplakia. Leukoplakia varies in appearance from a smooth, translucent white patch to a thick, hardened and wrinkled lesion considered to be pre-cancerous."

The mother said, "Are there any diseases it causes?"

Jenkins said, "OK, I'll talk about diseases. First, snuff can affect the heart and rest of the circulatory system. Blood pressure can increase and cause stroke or heart attack. Gum diseases from snuff cause damage in as little as three to four months. It has already happened to your son. He also has gum inflammation, soft tissue lesions, cuts and sores in his mouth. He should stop chewing snuff, and he can maybe have a chance to live, but if he still uses snuff, he could die in about one to three years from oral cancer."

The boy said, "Athletes use snuff, so why can't I use it?"

Then Dr. Jenkins replied, "That's what the companies would have you believe."

The boy asked, "Is it safer than smoking?"

*The boy yelled,
'Dipping snuff
makes me tough!'*

Dr. Jenkins said angrily, "No! It contains 10 times the amount of nitrosamines, the same cancer-causing substances as in cigarettes. A hundred times higher than the Food and Drug Administration permits in other products."

The boy yelled, "Dipping snuff makes me tough!"

Dr. Jenkins replied, "There's nothing cool about chewing snuff. It won't make you a better athlete, and you will scare the girls away."

The boy said, "Girls in Point Hope chew snuff, so the girls already like me for giving them snuff. Besides, I have a nickname, 'Snuffie.' It sounds so cool and makes me feel bigger."

Dr. Jenkins said, "Let's talk about more problems caused from snuff. Because tobacco has an unpleasant taste, it contains various amounts of sugar which cause tooth decay. Snuff also contains salt which delays wound healing, making the habit especially undesirable when a tooth has been extracted or when oral surgery has taken place."

The boy walked out and said angrily, "I'm not quitting."

The next day before his operation the boy went back to Point Hope because he thought it would hurt him.

The next year he died of oral cancer.