American "Heroes": Rachel Carson & Leo Burnett

By ACSH Staff — January 31, 2000

To the Editor:

No one can dispute the inclusion of Rachel Carson on your list of "25 Shapers of the Modern Era" (Dec. 27), However, I was stunned to see the name of Leo Burnett on the list. But after some reflection, I now understand your rationale:

Ms. Carson's writings may have been responsible for the chirping of "untold numbers of birds" who owe their lives to her. But, should we not also remember the millions of malaria victims in the third world whose voices have been prematurely stilled due to the banning of the DDT she demonized? It is Ms. Carson's spiritual cohorts who hope to stifle the potential of food biotechnology to feed the hungry masses, thus following in their mentor's misguided footsteps.

Similarly, Mr. Burnett's "Marlboro Man" captured the imagination of millions of youngsters, who went on to become enslaved to the addiction of his client's brand of cigarette. The repercussions of his work remain with us today, as youth smoking is again on the rise, and the inevitable result will be thousands more premature deaths. For this, we have Mr. Burnett and his marketing colleagues to thank.

They certainly left their mark.