Read the article below and answer the questions on the next page.

Sean Marsee was a popular and respected athlete at his high school. He had won 28 track medals. Sean began chewing dip tobacco in his mid-teens. Even though he thought spit tobacco was safe, he became addicted. His mother was a registered nurse. She begged him many times to quit, but Sean was unable to stop his habit.

One day he came home and told his mother, "Mom, my tongue hurts." He showed her a red sore the size of a half dollar on his tongue. The sore had a hard white core. "We'd better get you to the doctor," she replied. At the hospital the doctor performed some tests. A few days later, Sean was watching TV when the phone rang. His mother answered the call. A few minutes later, he heard his mother's muffled sobs. He went into her room, and softly put his hand on her shoulder. "What's wrong, Mom?"

"Sean, you have cancer in your tongue," she sobbed. They went back to the hospital, where Sean was shocked to learn he had to have most of his tongue cut out. He would never be able to talk again. He was 18 years old.

"Can I still run in the track meet on Friday?" he asked the doctor. The doctor said okay. After the meet, Sean went in for the operation to remove most of his tongue. But the cancer did not go away. In fact, it spread to his jaw and neck muscles. Two more operations followed. Sean had to have half of his jaw removed, along with part of his nose, and many neck muscles on one side.

At age 19, Sean lay in bed, sad and disfigured. He was in horrible pain. His best friend came down from Chicago to see him for the last time. On first seeing Sean, he fought back tears. He thought about the great times he'd never get to have with his childhood friend. Sean didn't have much longer to live.

The next day, as they visited, the friend said, "Sean, what if we took a photo of you like this?" But Sean shook his head, glaring, and wrote, "No, no, not like this!" He was ashamed and embarrassed. But his friend persisted. "What if many kids could see the photo, and learn the truth about what chewing tobacco really does?" Sean thought about this for a while. Finally he allowed this picture to be taken, with his track medals pinned to his chest. That picture is his gift to you.

His friend asked him, "Sean, what if you could get a message out to other teens? Do you have any words you'd like them to hear?" And Sean nodded—because without his tongue he could not talk—and he gestured for pen and paper. His hands trembled as he began to write, perhaps from the pain he was in. He struggled to write these words. This was his message to you: "Don’t dip snuff." And not too long after that, Sean died.

*This activity is continued on the next page.*
Name: ________________________________  ACTIVITY 14B

A True Story about Spit

1. Why do you think Sean Marsee thought spit tobacco was safe?

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2. Imagine you discovered you needed to have most of your tongue cut out. How would your life change?

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3. How do you think Sean's battle with cancer affected his family?

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4. How did Sean's picture make you feel? Did it change your attitude about spit tobacco? How?

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5. Imagine you were Sean's best friend. What would you say to him when you visited him in the hospital?

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*The article on the previous page was excerpted from www.tobaccofree.org/children.html*