

Cigar Smoking

It's Good For You!

by Tommy Zarzecki
Illustrations by Jerry King

I am here to deliver a message—brutally unpopular as it may be with many, but certainly on the money with the readers of this fine magazine. It's a secret that we Brothers of the Leaf have literally known for centuries. And even though what I am about to state may be my own humble opinion, I am willing to risk ridicule and damnation to stand up for one of the greatest passions I have ever known in my entire life.

I am here to certify that smoking fine cigars is, without a doubt, *good* for you!

Say what, you crazy Polack?

You heard me, Smoke Nazi.

Dare to back that up, you clinically insane freak?

You bet your agenda-laden, transparent, politically correct ass I do.

I realize my brazen remarks fly smack into the face of conventional wisdom... but conventional wisdom once told us that the earth was flat, man could not fly, the Russians were evil, and there was only one cigar-themed magazine in this world. To that I say, *feh!* (And, may I digress to state that I have *still* never tasted orange zest, marzipan, or roasted venison in my Montecristo?)

Listen again as I say it loud and say it proud: The act of smoking fine cigars is *good for you*—good for the mind, good for the soul, and an absolute benefit to the human condition. A good cigar is a best friend in moments of thoughtful reflection, a calming influence when the brain is frenzied, and a stimulating boost when your battery has run low. In the words Charles H. Spurgeon, a highly influential British Baptist preacher during the mid-1800s, “When I have found intense pain relieved, a weary brain soothed, and calm refreshing sleep obtained by a cigar, I have felt grateful to God, and have blessed His Name.”

I proclaim that the mental effects of cigar smoking bring forth relaxing benefits that no \$300-an-hour shrink can provide. A savored nightly smoke delivers the mental tranquility that is absent from a long, hard day at work. The rich aroma of a finely aged blend and the physical act of drawing that heavenly first puff can truly put one into a happy place that no horse-pill tranquilizer could ever provide. And, most amazing of all, the physical body follows suit, as your nerves calm and your breathing slows to a healthier pace. All the foibles and pratfalls of daily life seem to drift magically away into a blue swirl of bliss. The mind/body connection has never been so evident to me than after partaking in a handrolled cigar. Oh yes, I will state my case again: cigar smoking just may be the remedy to what ails you.

So who am I to make such a demonstrative assertion? What credentials do I retain that qualify me to declare such statements as solid truths? You're right if you assume that I possess no MD or PhD. But odds are, neither do you, oh insolent smoke-Nazi turd! If you have never reveled in the ritual of a post-dinner puro, then how can you disclaim my words? And, this is just an observation, but, when I attend smoking bars and private clubs, I witness a great many doctors relaxing with fine cigars... and enjoying themselves! And *that* is a fact.

I didn't just make this stuff up. If you Google “cigar quotes,” you'll find a plethora of statements, much like Reverend Spurgeon's, made by lauded poets, novelists, and great people of history who have found the cigar to be the secret ingredient to a long and

wonderful life. In “The Company We Keep” (*CM*, Fall 2007), author Steve Saka mentions many of the great men throughout history who made cigars a part of their very personae. What we must keep in mind is that the likes of George Burns (100), Sigmund Freud (83), Winston Churchill (90), J.P. Morgan (75), Groucho Marx (86), Thomas Edison (84), and Mark Twain (74), all smoked an astounding fifteen to twenty cigars per day for close to half a century... apiece! (A spritz of Febreze, anyone?) And, just in case you wondered about those numbers in parentheses: the ages that each of them lived to be. Blow that one out of your partially damaged ozone layer.

Of course I do believe that, in this day and age, moderation is an important factor in sustaining a healthy lifestyle. A hundred years ago, people weren't dealing with the pollutants in the air, water, and food that we face today. It has been stated that these factors, combined with smoking, can escalate any possible physical ailments that could show up in a person. So, while it has been pointed out that many great men throughout history have smoked an abundance of daily cigars, let me be clear that I am not advocating that type of behavior for today. Red wine has been lauded as good for your heart, and a glass per day is suggested. However, polishing off a bottle per night would most likely have your liver pickled in no time. Olive oil is supposedly great for your cholesterol, but pouring an entire jug onto your salad will probably send you off to

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worship the porcelain god. *Moderation is key.* I generally smoke one cigar per day, sometimes two, sometimes none. For me, it is always at night, and often while gathering with a good friend or two. We who enjoy our stoags know that there is something amazing about the effects of communal bonding with other cigar lovers. But, whether alone or in good company, be your choice a Habana, Dominican, Nicaraguan, or Honduran, I maintain that the act of cigar smoking—in moderation—can have profound benefits to one's overall longevity.

I did some Web research to further support my claims and found a fabulous article from the *New York Times* (printed on April 24, 1910) called “Effect of Tobacco on Mental Work,” about a

study performed by a well-known German physician named Dr. C.F. Van Vleuten. The doctor surveyed one hundred of the most prominent poets, painters, and composers almost a full century ago to give their honest views on the effects of tobacco upon their work. “There are also a few who went on into raptures, describing their cigars as their friend and their aid in moments when their inspiration showed signs of leaving them,” the article states.

A handful of responses were printed in the article and, *wow*, these are just fascinating.

“The cigar is indispensable to me at work. I smoke every day during my work—about five cigars. When my work goes on smoothly, my cigar rests. When I reach a place at which I must



concentrate all my efforts, my hand unconsciously grasps the cigar,” said author Rudolph Herzog. “And it has always been to me a friend and a helper. For the smoke cloudlet obstructed from my view all things about me and helped me to concentrate my mind upon one point.”

Novelist and dramatist Paul Heyse stated, “I have smoked only cigars, always after meals; a light cigar after breakfast, an imported cigar after dinner, and in the evening a cheap German cigar. Smoking has always been a pleasure to me... it has a soothing effect upon my nerves.”

“I smoke only cigars, I prefer the better to the poorer brands. I use daily from eight to ten cigars, including one large sized imported cigar. I smoke before, during, and after my work,” revealed author Otto Ernst. “At one time I broke my habit for fourteen days. I left

off smoking because I was suffering from catarrh [runny nose]. I regard this as the greatest manifestation of my willpower in all of my life. Now I smoke even when I am suffering from catarrh; it does me no harm and it tastes particularly well.”

And, author Timm Kröger said, “When I am resting and my cigar is missing, my happiness is not complete. I never smoke while working.”

Whether it was spoken one hundred years ago or only yesterday, the feelings and the emotions are all the same. Cigars are a definite “state inducer,” putting you in a better frame of reference after you have a smoke. And when we are in a “good” state, doesn’t life take on a newer meaning? In those rare moments of clarity, aren’t we able to view our so-called “problems” as mere trivial nonsense and place our focus upon the fine things that life has to offer? Absolutely. In times that our minds and bodies are calm, we are healing, and sense is made of things that, perhaps just hours before, seemed impossible. Creative ideas pop into your head with greater ease. Answers to problems unmask themselves before your very eyes! And you sleep well (which is an absolute pleasure) and wake up ready to take on what life throws your way. *All because of a cigar*, you ask? Yeah, all because of a cigar.

You always hear the naysayers talk about the nicotine content

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of cigars. Well, again, after doing some research, I’ve learned that there are a number of positive effects that nicotine can actually have on people: it can help with weight loss; it can produce an alert and rational calm; it can improve memory and problem-solving skills; it can serve as an analgesic with painkilling properties; and it can produce an antiaggressive effect. It’s said to improve a person’s attention span, and adults with ADD and ADHD often self-treat by smoking. It can help decrease behavior associated with obsessive-compulsive disorders and it can also produce an antianxiety effect. Sounds pretty damned good for something that is supposedly pretty damned bad.

And today, a bunch of new and amazing health discoveries are under discussion, as tobacco plants are being used to create drugs for treating diseases. At the University of Central Florida, diabetes was cured in mice as insulin was grown in specially modified tobacco plants. Experts at the University of Louisville are using tobacco plants to develop a drug to help fight cervical cancer, which could reduce the cost of an existing drug, already on



the market, from \$120 per dose to *one* dollar! In the July issue of *Archives of Neurology*, a UCLA study reveals some interesting info about Parkinson’s disease: “Never-smokers have about a twofold higher risk of Parkinson’s disease than ever-smokers,” writes Beate Ritz, MD and PhD, of the University of California, Los Angeles. Dr. Robert L. Copeland Jr. of Howard University College of Medicine in Washington, DC, points to studies showing that nicotine protects neurons that generate dopamine in the brain. “Parkinson’s symptoms appear after patients lost 70 to 80 percent of their dopamine-making neurons.”

Astounding stuff, right? But you certainly don’t see and hear it splattered all over CNN, Fox, the *New York Times*, or the local six o’clock news... we all know that’s just not going to happen. And you certainly won’t hear about any studies on the positive mental effects of cigar smoking because the smoke-Nazi media and Hollyweird meatheads like Rob Reiner will never let that kind of information get to the public. For crissakes, there aren’t even any conclusive studies on the effects of secondhand smoke, even though the antismoking zealots will lead you to believe that there are. And furthermore, give us some proof; show us death certificates on which the cause of death is listed by a medical examiner as “secondhand smoke.” No one can, and we all know very well the reason: *there aren’t any*.

Contrary to what the rabid antis seem to believe, no one is

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advocating that anyone smoke himself into a stupor. But we who enjoy our puros have known all along about the wondrous effects a good smoke can bring. I think the point I’m getting at is that we take it for granted. It’s our routine, our ritual—one that we’ve performed for so long that we don’t think about the benefits it gives us; we just light up. And if you think about it, that’s the way it *should* be. But with the antismoking movement gathering greater force every single day, we really cannot take our beloved stogies for granted any longer. We have got one hell of a fight ahead of us, fellas.

Maybe you’re enjoying a great stoag while reading these words. If not, just let your mind’s eye picture your favorite spot to smoke. Envision snipping, then applying flame to, that beautiful handrolled work of art. Smell the toasting tobacco dance through

your nose, taste that first draw, and blow out that thick, swirling puff of delicious smoke. Even without a real cigar in my presence, I can sense it so clearly, as I've done a thousand times before. Other than lovemaking or enjoying an exquisite dinner in an unforgettable place, smoking a fine cigar is one of the most sensual things you can do in life. It is a pleasure so vital to our well-being that we must do whatever it takes to keep our pastime alive and well.

Now I'm not sure what "whatever it takes" really means, but I'll be damned if I'm going to sit back and watch my constitutional rights get bludgeoned and gutted while some self-righteous son

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of a bitch attempts to make smoking illegal. I'm not going to let these Big Brother bastards bring prohibition into our daily lives. Uh-uh, no way.

You know, guys, I really had no intention of turning this article into a "fight the Nazis" pep rally, but it just kind of headed in that direction all by itself. By sitting back and taking a close look at what cigar smoking *really* does for our lives, we can appreciate our love for the leaf all the more—which, in turn, makes us want to hold on to our right to smoke all the more.

Face it, smoking is on the endangered species list and we're the preservationists who have to save our oily little brown friends. It's

up to us. The cigar industry is fighting for its life with hundreds of thousands of jobs on the line throughout several countries. Back in October, President Bush vetoed the proposed SCHIP (State Children's Health Insurance Program) bill that would have put the cigar world in great peril. Thankfully for all of us BOTLs, the veto held up by the tiniest of margins. But then there's Pelosi and her henchmen who just keep grinding away... *for the kids!* She and her slimy political cohorts knew very well what the original proposed bill would do to the cigar industry, and they obviously didn't give a rat's ash. And *that's* what we're up against: a collective mindset that is simply disgraceful.

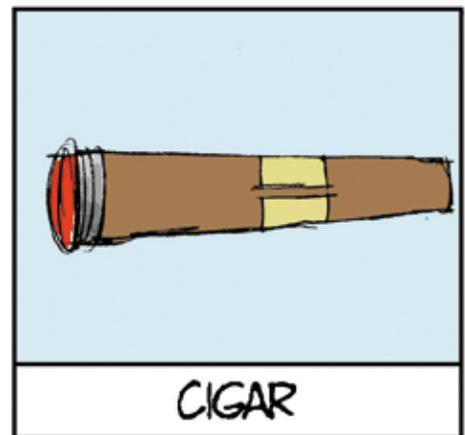
If your congressmen and senators voted for SCHIP, let them know how pissed off you are at what they are letting happen to an industry that is five centuries old and serves a fine purpose. Let them know they've lost your vote. Keep those bastards on their toes. Check in with the Cigar Association of America. Keep informed and find out what else *you* can do. We are at war, guys, and fight we must.

I hope I've made a great case for Brothers of the Leaf everywhere. I hope I've made you reflect on a joyous part of our lives that brings us relaxation, peace of mind, and great satisfaction in a world where not much else can bring those things to fruition, day in and day out. Cigar smoking is wonderful. It is important. It is meditative and beneficial. It is so incredibly special.

Let me once again proclaim that cigar smoking is a soothing stress reliever and a valuable part to the sanctity of one's life. The simple act of cutting and lighting becomes an anchor, and that first whiff of toasted tobacco sends us to a place of sheer nirvana that no pharmaceutical company could ever concoct.

And here, I rest my case. Cigar smoking *is* good for you. *CM*

ENDANGERED SPECIES



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