

Kinky Friedman

When I was a child, I spoke as a child and, believe it or not, I smoked as a child. At the tender age of eighteen months, when my mother's back was turned, a prescient if somewhat perverse uncle surreptitiously substituted a cigar for my pacifier. I don't know if I should thank Uncle Eli, but 61 and a half years later I'm not only still smoking—I've started my own cigar company. I named it Kinky Friedman Cigars, or, as it's become increasingly known throughout Texas and the world, KFC.

Although smoking in general is currently being attacked from all quarters, I have no qualms about becoming a Jimmy Dean-style pitchman for my product. I strongly believe smoking cigars can yield at least three positive effects: reducing stress, increasing longevity, and irritating Lady Gladys Cumwell. From time to time, of course, as the situation dictates, I still resort to the pacifier. This draws the occasional rude comment, but truthfully, there's not that much difference between a good cigar and the time-honored pacifier. After a lifetime of smoking I have only one or two taste buds left, but I can assure you, those little buds are having one hell of a party.

Simply to suck on a cigar these days is tantamount to making a political statement. Politicians and bureaucrats at all levels of government have failed so disastrously at resolving the issues that matter to most people—health care, education, immigration, energy, property taxes, the environment—that all they seem able to do is tax tobacco and pass ever more stringent smoking regulations. The combined might of our government appears capable only of criminalizing trivia. You'd think George Washington crossed the Delaware expressly to keep Winston Churchill, Mark Twain, and Groucho Marx at least twenty feet away from the entrance to Katz's Deli.

We're turning our beautiful country into nothing more than a condo association. Rules, regulations, and political correctness are strangling the best things America has to offer: freedom of speech, freedom of expression, freedom to be who you are. If you own a bar and want to let people smoke, you should be able to put a sign on the door, "Smoking allowed." If you don't want smoking, fine. Maybe you have a bar and you don't want drinking. That's fine too. If you're gay, you can go to a gay bar; if you're straight, you can go to a Jewish singles Purim party. This is the way America should be. Instead, we have |CONTINUED ON PAGE 221



Sometimes a cigar is just a cigar. More often—especially today—it's a political statement.

Smoke Gets In Your Eyes

INHALE FELLOW WELL MET: My two remaining taste buds are having one hell of a party.

Smoke Gets in Your Eyes

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a Houston city councilman who told former mayor pro tem Michael Berry, explaining why he voted for a citywide ban on smoking in bars, "What if I want to bring my kids to the bar?" Common sense is going up in smoke, folks.

Misguided zealots behind draconian smoking laws often fall back on the argument "It's for your health." They haven't noticed, apparently, that whenever you see a ninety-year-old geezer, most of the time he's still puffing a stogie. But you almost never see a ninety-year-old smoking a cigarette. This is because we cigar smokers religiously follow the wise example of Bill Clinton: We don't inhale.

Unfortunately, not everybody's fired up about my new venture. One malcontent recently e-mailed me the following message: "It is sad to see an icon turn into a whore."

"I don't care what you call me," I wrote back. "Rick Perry calls himself a public servant. Al Sharpton calls himself a civil rights leader. Besides, whores tend to hang around with a better class of people than icons." I'm waiting, with bated smoke rings, for his response.

The other folks who aren't too happy with Kinky Friedman Cigars are some of the cigar industry Goliaths who don't like seeing little David sharing their shelf space in stores. Nevertheless, after only a matter of months as the CEO of our small start-up, my friend Little Jewford (he's a Jew and he drives a Ford) filed the following report: "We've moved more than 100,000 sticks in the last quarter. You're on track to become the Famous Amos of the cigar world!"

While being the face of the company is fun, I know we need some savvy as well. That's why I tapped a true cigar maven, Sean Robinson, to be the president of KFC. At the urging of cigar magnates Hank Bischoff and Rafael Nodal, Sean traveled to the jungles of Honduras. There, amid machine guns, tarantulas, and beautiful women rolling beautiful cigars on their beautiful thighs, he befriended a man named Nestor, the king of the Cuban cigar-makers, who promised to create a special blend for Kinky Friedman Cigars.

When Sean returned, he had several small darts in his back, compliments of the Mosquito Indians, and five cigar lines: the Governor, the Kinkycristo, the Texas Jewboy, the Willie (which has a little twist on one end), and the Utopian, the only cigar in America benefiting animal rescue (profits go to the Utopia Animal Rescue Ranch). Sean and Nestor are currently developing three new lines: the Clinton, a replica of the Cuban Montecristo I once presented to Bill at the White House; the Kinky Lady, with the butt (of the cigar, that is) dipped in honey; and a brand-new cigar whose blend, I'm told, enhances the flavor

of tequila. In anticipation of their arrival, my friend Ben Welch has built the largest portable climate-controlled cigar vault in Texas. We are very concerned the Clinton's becoming too moist. In the humidior.

I'm sure there are people out there who'll write letters to the editor of TEXAS MONTHLY casting asparagus upon this column, but I promise you, my words aren't hazardous to anybody's health. I'm just saying that God's not going to honk your horn until he's good and ready, so you might as well find what you like and let it kill you. Don't get me wrong: I admire Lance Armstrong, consider him a friend, and

appreciate his work fighting cancer. I respect anyone with genuine intentions regarding the welfare of all people. What I object to are officious little hall monitors who use health as a smoke screen to promote their agenda and themselves. What I want these people to put in their pipes is this: Spain, Israel, Japan, Italy, France, and Greece all have more smokers per capita than the U.S. They also have longer life expectancies than we do. What can we conclude from this? Speaking English is killing us! ♦

Kinky Friedman's column will appear every other month, alternating with Sarah Bird's.



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