



News from the Vegas Room

"What Happens in the Vegas Room Stays in the Vegas Room"

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A Good Padrón Gone Bad!– Chief Chair Warmer

Well this is the first editorial of the new issue cycle for the newsletter. I have found it increasingly difficult to write something germane or even interesting for you to read. Earlier this week, I must confess that I was stumped, until I went to Hawaii this last week on a business trip. Now I don't know about you, but when I travel on business, I usually take one, two or ten smokes to make sure that I have something to smoke in case I stay at a hotel that in not near a smoking establishment that I can buy my favorite cigars. Fortunately, near the convention in Honolulu there were two cigar stores that sold premium cigars. I will not mention their names, but one of the stores was infamous for having "Traded with the Enemy" coming from allegations about two years ago. So I thought that with a place like that, you can't go wrong regardless of the local fascist smoking bans. My first stop at this legendary store was met with an

extraordinary amount of disappointment. First the store was a over the counter only sales place with a back humidor for reserve cigar boxes, but the front humidor where you could actually buy a cigar, was a display, showcase, humidor with glass in the front. Undauntedly, I bought a nice little Padron 1926 35 (overpriced by 3 dollars from Top Shelf). I asked if I could light up the cigar and smoke it in the shop (it was raining lightly outside). I was told by the counter attendant (a Goth-like youth who smoke flavored cigarettes) that the owner did not allow smoking in the shop. I was shocked that the owner of such a legendary establishment would not have more sensitivity for us cigar smokers, but that was not the case.

So I went back to the convention center and tried to find a covered area that was more than 20 feet away from a public entrance. I found an alcove close to utility doors, but well away from a public entrance so that I thought it was safe to smoke there

without "breaking the law".

Things started out fine, but about 20 minutes into my cigar, a motorcycle policeman noticed me and approached me. After the usual amenities where he asked me for my ID and he went over the smoking ban on the island, he informed that I was in violation of the smoking ban. I then made a tactical mistake, I argued with the officer. I told him that I was clearly beyond the 20 foot line from the public entrance and that the door I was close to was a utility door and rarely used to traffic entering and exiting the building, also the weather outside the alcove was rainy and certainly would have put out my cigar. He told me that this was not his problem. At that point, things nasty as the officer offered to take fine me for violating a city ordinance. Cheerfully, I stepped out into the light rain and proceeded to continue puffing on my stoogie, but at that time, it had gone out and trying to relight it in rain and wind was impossible.



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Top Shelf Premium Cigar Club

The Premium Cigar Club met on Sunday January 25th at the shop. There were about 16 attendees and Clayton Smith stirred up a bunch of Mexican food including chicken tacos. There was plenty of

beer and soft drinks to the teetotalers in the group. Of course, there was some left over single malt Scotch. Clearly the cigar star for the evening was a Rocky Patel Edge Sumatra Toro. This wonderful cigar had many of

the same characteristics as the regular Edge. The binder and filler are kept secret, but this cigar has a Sumatran wrapper with a Mexican binder and Nicaraguan and Panamanian filler tobaccos.

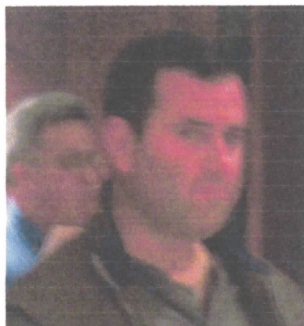


Have the cigar bans nationwide gone too far? What do you foresee as happening 5 years from today with the cigar bans?



Band (Banned) In The USA

by Perrin Lovett JD



(Editors Note: About the author: Perrin (Perry in the Vegas Room) Lovett is an attorney who has practiced civil, criminal and government law in Augusta and Atlanta. He is the author of numerous articles, chapters and studies regarding law and political theory.)

Dear friends, I was honored when Jorge requested an article on smoking bans, those pesky laws which restrict our great hobby. This is a topic frequently discussed in the Vegas Room, a subject of growing importance. Russell likes to jokingly remark his is the only establishment in Columbia County where one can enjoy a stogie free from the prying eyes (noses, rather) on the local Gestapo. The other day the Chief Chair-warmer himself made a crack about having to hide from the smoke police after Hitlerly...er... Hillary gets elected. Unfortunately, this is no laughing matter.

Cigar lovers know lighting up a Padrón or a Rocky is an act entirely apart from smoking a Winston or a Camel. However, the mindless Beast of government reckons no difference. The mantra is simple — SMOKE BAD! TOBACCO BAD! All things tobacco are under attack. This assault is part of the ongoing war on our individual liberties and our ability to decide for ourselves what is best for us. Now, without further delay, let's briefly examine a few of the laws affecting the wonderful

world of cigars.

First, Russell is correct about Columbia County. Top Shelf is exempt from local stupidity as a "retail tobacco store," meaning "it derives not less than 85 percent of its gross revenues from the sale of tobacco products and accessories..." Other exempt places are: private residences (unless used for certain business like daycare), designated hotel and motel rooms (not to exceed 20% of the total number of rooms), outdoor areas of employment, certain outdoor dining areas, and certain private clubs.

Just where does the county prohibit smoking? Well ... bars, banks, elevators, Laundromats, lobbies, nursing homes, polling places, restaurants, retail stores, county offices, et cetera, ad nauseam - damn near everywhere! The penalty for violating the county ban is a maximum of sixty days in jail and a fine not to exceed \$1,000. Further, "a violation ... by a person who owns, manages, operators or otherwise controls a public place or place of employment may result in the suspension or revocation of any permit or license issued to the person for the premises on which the violation occurred."

Across the border in Augusta-Richmond County, smoking is prohibited in all county owned or operated buildings and in movie theaters. The Garden City's ban sounds more reasonable than Columbia County's though, for years, Augusta has debated enacting an more comprehensive ordinance. Thanks to the State of Georgia they need debate no longer.

In 2005 our General Assembly created a statewide ban, via the Georgia Smoke free Air Act. Smoking is now prohibited in all state and local public buildings, all enclosed public places and

most places of employment.

Once again, ye Olde "retail tobacco store" lucks out with a special exemption. The State will also allow smoking (for now) in residences, designated hotel rooms, etc. A violation of the Act is a misdemeanor, with a penalty "of not less than \$100.00 nor more than \$500.00," in addition to any local penalties.

Please remember all this is for our own good. Seriously, no sarcasm from me. The original Senate Bill, which gave us the Act had a section explaining that tobacco is just plain bad and "the need to breathe smoke free air shall have priority over the desire to smoke." The Act itself provides for an ongoing public education program to explain everything to us dullards. The program is administered by the Department of Human Resources. Let's make sure to call or write on at least a weekly basis to ensure we understand why the State arbitrarily decrees what we can and can't do.

Currently South Carolina does not share Georgia's draconian, nanny state approach to smokers and business owners. However, along with the Palmetto State, only eighteen other states allow mature adults to make their own decisions whether they allow smoking in their businesses - Alabama, Alaska, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Texas, Virginia, West Virginia, Wisconsin and Wyoming. That means thirty-one out of fifty states have some form of anti-freedom tobacco law on the books.

The most famous smoking ban in history stems from the U.S. embargo against Cuba, ordered by President Kennedy in 1962, later codified under the Cuban

Democracy Act of 1992. Former presidential press secretary Pierre Salinger once relayed the charming tale of Kennedy's personal quest to obtain 1,200 Cuban Petit Upmanns. Once the cigars were in JFK's possession he immediately signed the decree. Penalties for violating the restrictions, related acts or the myriad federal regulations swirling around are stiff - up to ten years in prison and fines in excess of \$250,000.

There you have it. From Evans to Washington cigar tyranny abounds. The fault lies not with our politicians, but rather with we, the people. Across the country to many folks are more than willing to surrender their freedom and responsibilities to some government edict, promising safety and smoke free air. It seems that in the old days people decided on their own whether they would allow smoking on their property or whether they would enter a smoking establishment. No one was forced to breathe unwanted secondhand smoke and no business was forced to either allow or prohibit smoking.

Alas, no more. We can take comfort in knowing our fellow citizens penchant for heavy handed government regulation is nothing new. Over two thousand years ago, the Roman statesman and historian Sallust put it best, "Only a few prefer liberty, the majority seek nothing more than fair masters."