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Fire Eater! Editor

The Beatific Vision of the Blessed Seegar

14 July 2005

(Originally published on Dixieinternet.com.)

Why is it that nearly all my closest friends smoke seegars? This is the sort of question that, normally, one would dispense of quickly and neatly, but not today. Contemplating the question, it occurred to me that there is something about seegars that eludes certain people yet brings others together. Simple matter of taste perhaps? Perhaps. Perhaps not.

All I really know is that the finest men I've met have all loved a good seegar. Equally true: Not one of them ever loved a bad seegar. Equally, equally true: Few women like seegars. Why is that? Most men know the standard nag about the vice that so comforts them on their flawed and transient sojourn through life. If you're a man, you know the conversation:

"...the truly Southern way of pronouncing the word is simply "seegar". As Churchill said about the Arthurian Matter, "It's all true, or it ought to be."

"But honey! It's just money up in smoke!"
"Yes. That's true. But it's also worries gone up in smoke."
"You drop ashes all over the place!"
"I'll swear to do better. Promise. Mean it."
"They smell bad!"
"No. They smell remarkably good. Almost like the smell of mud after a summer rain. Dusky and chthonic."
"Thongic?"
"Never mind."

Women, it seems, are doomed to drift along down the years without the Beatific Vision of the Blessed Seegar. One can but weep for their loss. Meanwhile, the sane among us know a Good Thang when we see it. And there is nothing gooder than a Good Seegar.

Oh, you're wondering about the orthographic divagation from SYE (Standard Yankee English)? Yes, there's a reason. First of all, the word "cigar" stems from an old Mayan word, "sicar", which meant, appropriately enough, "to smoke rolled tobacco leaves". Clearly, the word was not invented, as Everything Else of Ultimate Human Worth was, by Yankee mercantilists. It was invented by a bunch of men down in southern Mexico, Guatemala, and Belize. Of course, along came the Spanish and wiped them all out, but, being the clever sort of Conquistadores they were, the Spanish brought some of the Mayan tobacco back home with them and the word made its way into Spanish in about 1730. Of course, as Columbus discovered, the Indians in the New World smoked their seegars in dried palm leaves or corn husks. Obviously, improvement was needed. In any case, the practice spread; even unto my Choctaw ancestors who lived along the coast of Alabama and Mississippi for a few thousand years. Did I say Alabama and Mississippi? The Deep South? Yass. Certainly, then, the word would have been pronounced "see-gar" and not "sih-gar". Well, OK, the Choctaw for seegar is "hakchuma shana", but that just proves my point. What is my point? Oh, yes, that the truly Southern way of pronouncing the word is simply "seegar". As Churchill said about the Arthurian Matter, "It's all true, or it ought to be." Besides, the modern word, "cigar", comes from the Spanish "cigarra", or "grasshopper". Who wants to smoke a grasshopper? Not I, grasshopper.

"Philosophy itself may be a simple excuse for a good seegar. I puff, therefore I am. Speculative philosophy at its finest. "

Even if the logic is wobbly, what remains is still the Beatific Vision. Those of you who love seegars know whereof I speak. The oily sheen, the thin tendrils of smoke curving up into the air, the accompanying glass of a good Scotch or a Cabernet or a Guinness. Or iced tea for that matter. Naturally, where the Brethren gather with their seegars the air is full of more than just smoke, for the preeminent virtue of a good seegar is not just its flavour, but its productive logorrhoeic effects as well. How many a stimulating conversation have I had over a fine trabuco? There is something about a seegar that just demands an abundance of words to accompany it. In fact, I have a suspicion that most philosophers of worth have smoked their share of the leaf. Philosophy itself may be a simple excuse for a good seegar. I puff, therefore I am. Speculative philosophy at its finest.

However it may be with philosophy, men have waxed philosophical about their seegars for years. The Nobel Prize-winning novelist and poet, John Galsworthy, proclaimed: "By the cigars they smoke and the composers they love, ye shall know the texture of men's souls." Another British poet, Edward G. Bulwer-Lytton, wrote: "A good cigar is as great a comfort to a man as a good cry to a woman." Yass. Let the wailing and gnashing of teeth begin.

Naturally, the Yankee got it all wrong. Emerson, for example: "The believing we do something when we do nothing is the first illusion of tobacco." One wonders what the second illusion might be. The need to kill your own countrymen in an imperial orgasmic burst of New England righteousness? Hand me my Battle Flag and my panatela.

Not all have spoken so eloquently of the seegar and its virtues:

> "Happiness? A good cigar, a good meal, a good cigar and a good woman—or a bad woman; it depends on how much happiness you can handle." (George F. Burns)

> "If I have to choose between a woman and a cigar, I will always choose the cigar." (Groucho Marx)

On a less misogynistic note:

> "A good cigar is like a beautiful chick with a great body who also knows the American League box scores." (M*A*S*H, Klinger, Bug-Out, 1976)

Mark Twain expounded upon the Noble Weed as well: "It has always been my rule never to smoke when asleep, and never to refrain when awake." Twain, ever the sagacious expositor, even offered practical advice: "I have made it a rule never to smoke more that one cigar at a time."

Even Lord Byron was inspired to poetic rumination:

> Divine in hookas, glorious in a pipe
> When tipp'd with amber, mellow, rich, and ripe;...
> Yet thy true lovers more admire by far
> Thy naked beauties—give me a cigar!

Note that all these words are the words of men and not women. Such is the case with the Beloved Stogie. A seegar will always remain the province of man and not woman. Why this is so only God knows and He has not sent the sudden revelation yet to explicate the reason. Nevertheless, tobacco is as much God's creation as the sun or the sea. For me, the issue is settled in Genesis:

> "And the earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed after their kind, and trees bearing fruit with seed in them after their kind; and God saw that it was good." (Genesis 1:12)

Lest the heathen among you remain unconvinced, consider Adam's first day job after the boot from the Garden:

> "...the Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken." (Genesis 3:23)

Come to think of it, there's a beautiful sunny day outside. I'll take the Good Book and a cheroot as well and contemplate both the Word and the Wrapper at the same time. It should be clear why my Associates in the Leaf, my friends, enjoy their seegars as much as I do. They are all contemplative men to whom the Lord has given an incomparable gift. As the Good Divine, Charles H. Spurgeon, put it: "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."

Amen, brother, amen.