

The Cigar With An Attitude

By Joe Lyons

I don't like Bruce Springsteen, so I stepped outside during the Superbowl halftime show. I took with me my "Lex Luthor" model Xikar cutter (as seen in Superman Returns) and lighter and a new Xikar Defiance cigar.

The Defiance was introduced after Xikar sales reps discovered that they could stock cigars as well as cutters and lighters in the stores they served. Besides, their name was getting stronger while their main competitor, Colibri, was starting to slide. (Since that time Colibri has gone out of business.)

But Defiance was more than just another smoke. It was designed from the start to make a statement.

Most cigars have pastoral names. Translated into English they are The Glory of Cuba, The Joy of Nicaragua and even the Home of the Toraño Family.

Defiance stands up for the rights of cigar smokers across the nation.

Cigars were once a symbol of the contented male. Not any more! Today they have been legislated out of the ballpark and the office and the restaurant and just about any other public place. It is feared that someone will soon figure out how to make my cigar illegal in my own back yard.

In 2006 the Retail Tobacco Dealers met in Las Vegas. Their biggest fear was Prop 86 in California. It would have burdened the dealers with new taxes and made it hard for them to do business. Manufacturers feared 86 because if the dealers went out of business they would have no one to wholesale their products to.

The proposition failed, but by 2008 a bigger problem loomed over the Las Vegas expo. SCHIP.

It stands for the State Children Health Insurance Program. George W. Bush vetoed it, but a new version is moving through Congress as I write this and our new president says he will sign it. It is a paradoxical piece in that it will fund children's health care through taxation of tobacco sales. In other words, we have to smoke a lot of cigars to help the kids. If we don't they can't get medical help. For the sake of the kids we should buy a lot of smokes. We just can't smoke them.

Does this make sense to you?

The entire cigar industry is up in arms. Eric Newman of the J.C. Newman tobacco company and others have been supporting Cigar Rights of America. Rich Perelman, of the Cigar Cyclopedia, has formed the "We Are Not Criminals" website to cover the battle

for Los Angeles.

Defiance goes one step further. A portion of every sale goes to fight anti-tobacco legislation and taxes at the state level. This may prove to make lawyers and lobbyists rich, but it is a defensive, dare I say defiant move. As they said in the note that came with my Defiance cap, "Your Defiance against anti-cigar legislation is the only thing that will ensure your rights, so keep fighting with us."

So what about the cigar itself?

It is rolled in the Plasencia factory in Honduras by Cuban born cigar maker Jesus Fuego. The wrapper is 4 year old Nicaraguan shade grown Criollo tobacco. The binder is Nicaraguan sun grown Corojo. The filler is a combination of Nicaraguan and Honduran. Cigar Aficionado magazine listed it as #18 of the top Twenty-Five cigars of 2008. They rated it a 92 out of a possible 100.

Better palettes than mine describe the smoke as "serious" and "heavy on the leather, with caramel and tea to balance it."

The Defiance currently comes in four sizes; The Guardian, a 6 _ inch Toro, The Sentry, a six inch Lonsdale, The Instigator, a six inch Belicoso (torpedo) and the Renegade, a five inch Robusto.

I'm personally a big fan of Robusto cigars since they are shorter and let you get back to work sooner. But that's not really defiant, is it?

By the way, on Superbowl Sunday I smoked an Instigator and still got back to my chair in time for the last ten or fifteen minutes of Glory Days. Springsteen does go on and on.