

KELLY'S CORNER

by Jan Kelly

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A cigar is a separate pleasure—like a good dream or a pleasant memory—uncalled for, but arriving in the wakened mind. It renders a unique experience unlike its lesser cousin, the ubiquitous, habit-forming, health-stealing cigarette. A good cigar, a real cigar, an all-tobaccohand-rolled cigar is free of chemicals and is one perfect leaf, hand rolled and tapped on the end by a human being. It would never be tiny, white, in multitudes tumbling down a conveyor belt to be packed tightly into plastic to flirt with and conquer peoples' health.

A cigar is a planned pleasure, not a necessary jump start in a nervous world, but a taste unto itself, another form of dessert, not a destroyer and inhibitor of taste buds. You do not reach for a cigar when you are nervous, or in a tight spot or bored. You do not carry packets of 20 around with you everywhere but the shower. You do not smoke a good cigar while engaged in an activity which demands your attention. You do not smoke a cigar first thing in the morning or on an empty stomach at any time. A cigar is a reward, a peaceful time, a form of meditation and is always a pleasure.

A cigar is not to be inhaled, but to be tasted and experienced. They come in qualities like steak, wine, cheese. They come in strengths and sizes and indicating colors. Maduro is dark and has a stronger flavor. E.M.S. English Market selection is brown, medium in flavor and the most popular, Claro-Claro is green in color and lighter in flavor. A cigarette is just a cigarette, floor sweepings of the great smoke.

Cigars may extend your life as they promote relaxation, reflection, private times, pleasure and perhaps sharing. Cigarettes will shorten your life and may make you miserable on the way: instantly gratified, constantly entangled and losing, losing breath, taste buds, untold money and precious time from your life.

I have smoked cigars since the age of eight and remember precisely my first cigar experience. On a hot summer Saturday, a neighbor was washing his car with a hose, the next-door neighbor thought this was a good idea and so began on his own car.

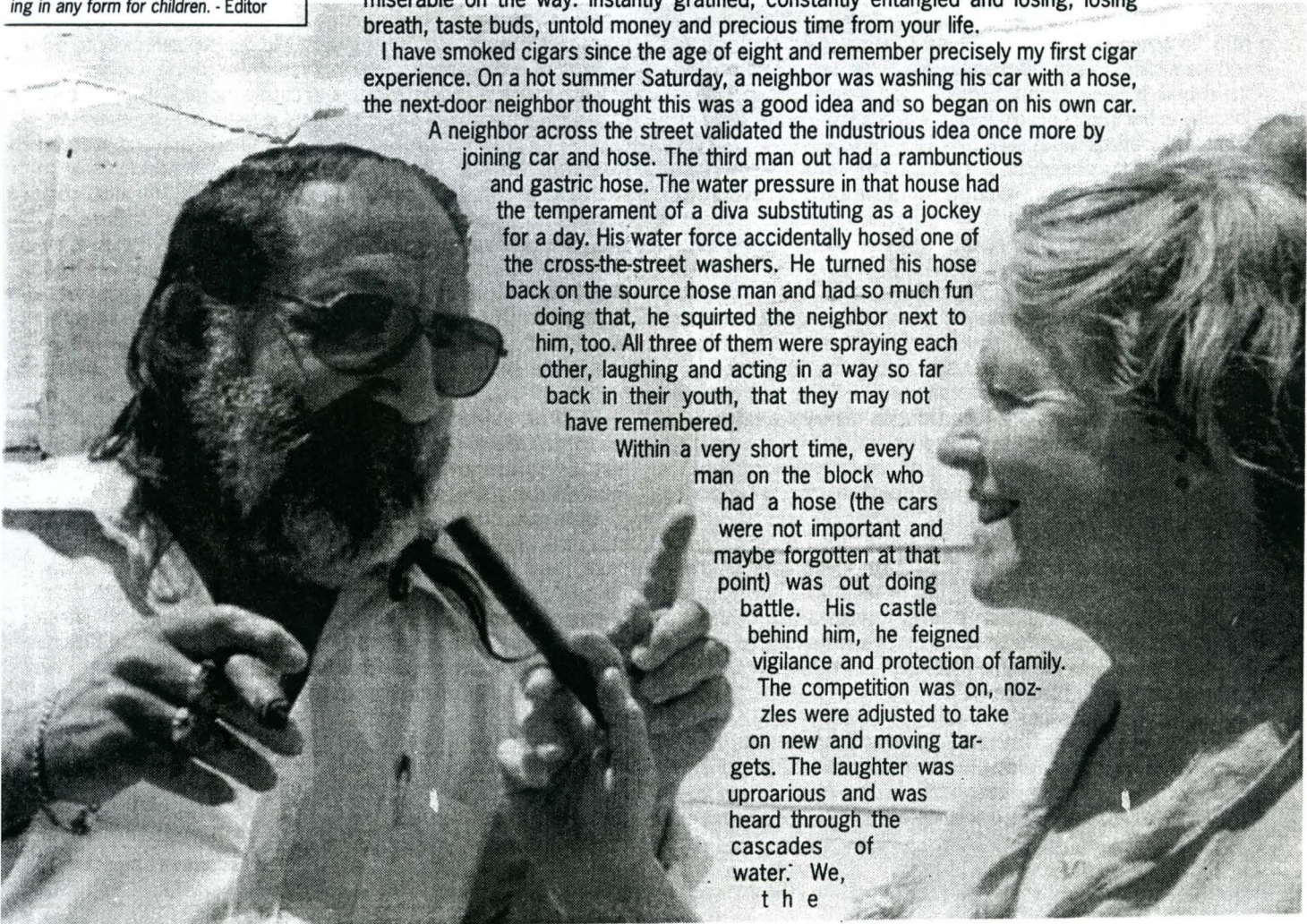
A neighbor across the street validated the industrious idea once more by joining car and hose. The third man out had a rambunctious and gastric hose. The water pressure in that house had the temperament of a diva substituting as a jockey for a day. His water force accidentally hosed one of the cross-the-street washers. He turned his hose back on the source hose man and had so much fun doing that, he squirted the neighbor next to him, too. All three of them were spraying each other, laughing and acting in a way so far back in their youth, that they may not have remembered.

Within a very short time, every man on the block who had a hose (the cars were not important and maybe forgotten at that point) was out doing battle. His castle behind him, he feigned vigilance and protection of family.

The competition was on, nozzles were adjusted to take on new and moving targets. The laughter was uproarious and was heard through the cascades of water. We,

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While respecting the author's literary freedom, Provincetown Magazine does not endorse cigar smoking as a benign, harmless activity nor condones smoking in any form for children. - Editor



children, were into bathing suits in a flash. Backing up and supporting our dads in the robust water sport, our squeals were heard far from the scene. We sat in major puddles catching our breaths for the next scream. The hot, steamy boring macadam was changed into a neighborhood Niagara. Spontaneity and humor changed the setting so.

The women were dodging in and out, squealing and huddling together as girl friends, to cheer on and admire their white knights. Only Mrs Martineau stayed indoors. We need one serious person watching out for us. Why she was so serious may have been Mr Martineau, a jolly miniature Santa Claus beholding to his Mrs.

While she was looking, Mr Martineau, 5 feet, 2 inches tall, his age around 70, and a retired milkman, exited his castle and was about to cross the moat. He announced, "You'd better not wet me. This is Mrs Martineau's dress and whoever does so will answer to her!"

There was silence. There stood Mr Martineau looking more like Mrs Martineau who was about the same height and age as her husband. Every man with a charged water hose knew what dealing with Mrs Martineau could be like: strict, brief and not fun.

Well, who knows who did it, but the first squirt on the lacy-flowered smock almost knocked Mr Martineau down and the next moment, all hoses, water sounds, shouts, laughter, squeals and guffaws were on for the second round. I would imagine everybody present that day remembers the fun, the camaraderie and the unjudged joy as I do.

Great story, but on with the column—cigars. By mid-afternoon, all had calmed down from the great water fight, and everyone relaxed in fresh dry clothing in a dripping, drying neighborhood. In the backyard for his mid-afternoon smoke, Mr Martineau sat in a wing-backed chair, milkcase for a hassock and enjoyed what he couldn't enjoy in the house: peace and quiet and a cigar. With all the ruckus of the day behind us, joviality lingered.

"Would you like a cigar, little Kelly?" he asked. If your surname is Kelly, you are always called by that rather than your first name. Catchy, so no matter how many members in your Kelly Family, you are all addressed by this common denominator. So what does an eight-year-old answer when asked such a question? Politely, "Yes, please." And Mr Martineau, up to a little more mischief, acquired a smoking companion.

I would meet with him each afternoon about 3 pm and we would light up White Owls and talk the day's business and smoke dreams. it was quite a picture: roly-poly Santa Martineau and I in overalls or a dress and ribbons, ringlets and a cigar.

I've come a long way since the Parker Street mid-afternoon White Owl. I learned quickly the Hav-A-Tampa was a better choice as it had a wooden tip. During student days I would have one a week. An excellent \$2 cigar, steep on a student budget. I smoke about five a week these days as it states on all my medical records and, I have a companion of the cigar in the 90's. Joe Peters of "A" House fame is also a lifer on cigars. He and I and Reggie Cabral used to love swapping and sharing. Reggie used to carry one around for an occasional lingering sniff after the doctor forced him off tobacco, even cigars.

Joe Peters is also custodian at the Heritage Museum. My shift is 12-2 on Mondays and Joe and I inevitably palaver on cigars. We dissect J.R. Reynolds Tobacco Company's latest catalog and compare smoking experiences. When tourists arrive at the desk, they may hear, "6 x 42 good, best size for regular after dinner, 7 x 50 Churchills for weddings, christenings and Bar or Bas Mitzvahs, Uppman Demitasse when you have less time, smokes like a 6 x 42."

The first digit measures length, the second digit, girth or "ring" size. Rothschild is a short and stout, 4 x 50, flavorful and cool smoke...Panatellas are longer and thinner, hence, a hotter smoke... Dunhill, Uppman, El Rey De Mundo Siglo, Punch, Royal Dominicana Royal Jamaican, Santa Clara, Macanudo Monte Cruz, Plieades, Joya del Rey, Joya de Nicaragua, La Finca, Monte Cristo Tabantillas and Te-Amo.

Most people passing the desk not only have no idea what we are talking about but they also don't know what language we are jabbering. We jabber cigar. We test and taste, jabber and reenjoy. We choose cigars to suit our mood, our schedule and unfortunately, our pocket books. It was frustrating these last two years. Cigar "caught on" and prices went out of the reach of most people. We all went deep into our humidor collections. J.R. operators used to sigh and smile when we would give our orders. "Oh, so nice to talk with someone who understands and loves cigars. Not someone asking "What kind of cigar would be good for bar-b-que? A golf game?" We waited patiently. Cigar smokers have patience. After the surge of neophyte stogie

smokers tired of the non-addictive cigar, prices dropped like well-packed parachute into our realm again. And so, Joe and I chat happily of last night's cigar, our choices from the current catalog and all the pleasant experiences surrounding our sybaritic passion.

I'm checking my humidors and cabinets for you, Joe, and I am wishing you a very happy birthday in October.

Happy Birthday, Joe Peters!

