

Blowing Smoke



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY JAY CALDERON/DN

Cigar craze smokes tobacco taboo

BY SEAN MCCARTHY
Staff Reporter

In an era when smoking is as socially acceptable as big hair glam rock, cigars have stubbornly boomed in their popularity.

Celebrities have played a big role in this boom. Christian Slater, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Sylvester Stallone and yes, even Madonna have mugged with fat stogies in their mouths for many photo opportunities. Magazines devoted solely to cigar appreciation have also popped up on newsstands.

Michael Wright, manager of Ted's Tobacco at Gateway Mall, has seen a huge growth in cigar sales in the last

few years. National cigar sales have risen about 400 percent since 1991, Wright said, and even that estimate is conservative.

Ted's Tobacco, in business for 19 years, has accommodated this increase by shifting the store format. Before the boom, Ted's Tobacco mainly sold cigars, pipes and tobacco products. Now cigars and cigar-related items account for 70 percent of the store inventory.

"We've seen a big shift," he said.

Cigar fever officially took over his store just last week. Wright said that in the span of one weekend, he sold an entire shipment of Arturo Fuente cigars, one of the more popular cigars currently available.

With the increase of cigar sales, the

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consumer base has also expanded. Wright said he has seen a definite increase of women cigar smokers. He added that another group which has been significantly on the increase is college students. "Cigar sales used to be for middle-aged males," he said, "but I'd say now about 20 percent of my business is with college-aged students."

Ken Semler, owner of Libations at 317 S. 11th St., said he sees a weekly growth in cigar sales. He said the trend, originally popular on the West and East Coast, has finally made its way to the Midwest.

One of the more popular cigar favorites that Libations sells is the Macanudo cigar, which is handmade in Jamaica. Most of the cigars at Libations are made in either the Dominican Republic or Honduras.

"Of course there's Cuba, which produces the finest tobacco in the world," Semler said. "It's more alluring because you can't get it."

John Maes, a cigar smoker who visits Libations, said a cigar from Honduras is his favorite. He said he thinks the growing popularity in cigar use can be attributed to a variety of reasons.

"Some people smoke because it's a fad. Others because it's the best tobacco, it's aromatic, tactful and enjoyable."

Traveling artist teaches importance of interaction

BY ANN STACK
Senior Reporter

Dressed in baggy denim overalls, a plaid flannel shirt and worn sneakers, Grisha Coleman doesn't paint the glamorous picture of a world-traveled artist.

Rather, she looks like any other student walking around campus.

But looks can be deceiving because Coleman has traveled the world and she isn't a student.

Coleman is visiting the University of Nebraska-Lincoln as part of a two-week residency with the Artists Diversity Residency Program through the College of Fine and Performing Arts. Today is her last day teaching classes at UNL.

The dancer isn't a stranger to Lincoln—she's been here before with her vocal group, Hot Mouth, and again with her dance theater piece "Black Alice" at the Wagon Train Project. She

also performed at the Lied Center for Performing Arts a few years ago with the international dance company the Urban Bush Women.

But this time around, she's in the role of instructor, visiting the freshmen University Foundation classes. Ron Bowlin, special assistant to the dean for the College of Fine and Performing Arts, said bringing diversity to the freshmen classes was an important facet of the residency program.

"UNL is 95 percent white," Bowlin said. "Many people have never had the chance to have a positive experience with a minority group. It's a good experience for students to come in contact with other cultural groups."

Add to that experience students coming in contact with other students. Coleman teaches through movements and motion rather than lectures. She also uses song and dance in her form of outreach teaching.

Please see COLEMAN on 14



TANNA KINNAMAN/DN

GRISHA COLEMAN stands beside her favorite statue, "The Floating Statue," in the sculpture garden at Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery Wednesday. Coleman is a visiting resident in the College of Fine and Performing Arts.