


CIGARS & LIFE'S BURNING DESIRES

34 CIGARS REVIEWED!

# SMOKE



→ William C. Paley (above) has brought back La Palina, the cigar his grandfather, Samuel Paley (opposite) created.



## LA PALINA REBOOTED

*Widely produced in the 1920s, La Palina cigars faded from the market as their maker moved from tobacco maven to media trailblazer. Now, their return has arrived. → Staff Report*

This is a cigar story; a story of rebirth. It involves one of the best-known corporations in America and an iconic cigar brand from the turn of the last century. The inspiration for the revival of the brand was all about family. One of America's most prominent.

What sets this cigar story apart from most is that it does not begin in Cuba. It doesn't begin in Honduras, nor even in Nicaragua. This story begins in Kiev, Ukraine towards the end of the 1800s.

Samuel Paley immigrated to Chicago and began what would be a long and profitable career in the cigar business. At the time, there were some 50,000 cigar manufacturers in America and Paley became a "lector" at one of them. Rolling cigars is a tedious, repetitive, boring task. It took place in a gallery with anywhere between 10 and 100 rollers, depending on the size of the company. To relieve the boredom, there was a lector in the front of the gallery that read to the rollers from books or newspapers. This was the position in which Samuel Paley began his career in the cigar industry.

Eventually Paley moved on to become a roller, and then graduated into the role of blender. Paley had a nose (or a palate) for tobacco and he honed and developed his technique and his knowledge.

Like so many immigrants, he yearned to have his own business and be his own boss. As a result, he opened a cigar shop with a small factory next to it. In 1896, Paley introduced La Palina, a play on the Paley name—a feminization of it, figuratively "Paley Woman." And, for the band, he chose an elegant black and white etching of his wife, Goldie Drell Paley. It is the proto-Art Nouveau image of a beautifully coiffed, regal woman.

Shortly thereafter, Paley's company—now dubbed Congress Cigar Company—moved to Philadelphia. It wound up with factories in Allentown, Pa. and Camden, N.J., in addition to the Philadelphia headquarters. All of the plants were owned by the company and

were the epitome of modern, well-equipped cigar manufacturing facilities. To obtain and provide tobaccos for his operation, Paley's company maintained offices in Havana, Cuba as well as Puerto Rico, which at the time grew some very desirable tobacco leaf used in cigar production.

Congress handled every aspect of the production, from the raw leaf to cellophane. The only thing the company didn't do was grow its own tobacco, however the Havana and Puerto Rican operations assured Paley and his company access to a wide variety of the best quality tobaccos. Samuel Paley often visited Havana and personally dealt with the acquisition of tobaccos, while the company distributed the cigars they produced through three offices they maintained in New York City, Philadelphia, and Chicago.

Later on, Paley was joined by his brother Jacob as well as his own son, William S. Paley, who had graduated from the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Business and Finance (now known simply as The Wharton School). Samuel placed a great deal of trust in his son William, to the point where the workaholic allowed himself to be pulled from his duties to take Goldie on a trip to Europe. During his absence, the younger Paley spent a several hundred dollars sponsoring a radio show that became known as the





→ William C. Paley in the aging room of Graycliff Cigar Company, Nassau, Bahamas, where the relaunched La Palina cigars are hand produced.

*La Palina Hour*. His obvious purpose was to advertise the cigars. William returned to America to find that sales of La Palina cigars had risen dramatically in his absence.

William S. Paley became enthralled by radio, radio advertising, and the potential profits in the operation of radio stations. So enthralled, in fact, that he acquired a small network of stations (six of them) and created the Columbia Phonographic Broadcasting System, which would later be renamed the Columbia Broadcasting System, or "CBS."

William S. Paley remained Chairman of CBS until 1986 when the company was acquired by Laurence and Preston Tisch. Between 1928, when he became President of CBS, and his death in 1990 at age 89, Paley had created what became known as the "Tiffany Network," an obvious reference to the elegant New York jeweler and its renowned quality, and an equally obvious compliment to the broadcasting giant's quality.

### The Rebirth of a Forgotten Cigar

William C. Paley, the son of William S. and his wife Barbara "Babe" Cushing Paley, grew up surrounded by fine art, elegant homes, and a cigar smoking father, who was an awesome figure in society and

the business community of his day. The Paley estate in North Hills, Manhasset, Long Island; the family summer home on Squam Lake in New Hampshire; and "Lightbourne House," an exquisite waterfront manse in Lyford Cay, Bahamas, proved to be places where "Little Bill," as he was known to distinguish him from his father "Big Bill" witness to the amazing growth of television under the passionate influence of his father, known at work simply as "The Chairman." It is not surprising, therefore, that he has had a lifelong interest in art, cigars, and an eclectic business career in which he has indulged all his interests and passions.

From restaurants to yachts (both captaining them and brokering them), to stints as a bartender, teen disco owner, and electronic media consultant, Bill has garnered considerable knowledge of the public's tastes. Today, Paley has managed to combine a formidable charitable presence—not least of which is his own William C. Paley Foundation. And all his varied business interests are run out of his offices on Massachusetts Avenue in Washington, D.C. including the current incarnation of La Palina Cigars.

It was to provide a very special cigar for his guests at Lightbourne House, that Paley commenced the search for the caliber of cigar that he himself would smoke. A man of taste, elegance, and discernment all packaged in a warm, friendly, regular

guy; Paley found his way to Graycliff Cigar Company and to the doorstep of the late, great cigar master, Avelino Lara. Working with Lara, he moved the man through 11 blends, each one 'tweaked' by input from Paley until the final version was able to meet his extremely high standards.

During the course of the development of the cigar, Paley began to envision the return of La Palina. He acquired the lapsed rights to the name as well as the marketing images of his late grandmother and proceeded to assemble the necessary elements.

Working with graphic designers, he was able to bring his vision to life with a band reminiscent of the original, incorporating the same elegant image of Goldie as its centerpiece. Paley chose Enrico Garzaroli's Graycliff Cigar Company to produce the blend Lara had created for him. A man used to going 'first cabin,' Paley implored Garzaroli's son Paolo to obtain the finest aged tobaccos available for the blend. Four- and five-year-old tobaccos are used for fillers and binders. Wrapper of matching quality, if not age, are being used to envelope the elegant sticks in all the shapes being produced.

While eager to make a success of La Palina, Paley understands that this will take time. He has marshaled all the elements necessary to get there and, like everything else he has done in his 63 years, has sought only the best materials and people to employ in the venture. A meticulous man is bringing back an iconic cigar, meticulously. **S**