

# On smoking a pipe

Amolith

2020-04-05T21:38:07-04:00

The Lord of the Rings is one the greatest book series I have ever read as well as one of my favourite movie trilogies; when I was younger, I watched them so often that I knew *almost* exactly where all the scenes were in the timeline and could quote a fair few of the lines verbatim :wink: Pipe smoking was very prominent throughout, from the hobbits to the humans to the dwarves, and I was always intrigued by it. In my second year of high school/college,<sup>1</sup> I took a public speaking course and decided to do my persuasive speech on the topic; my purpose was not to convince people *to* smoke a pipe, rather that they shouldn't judge pipe smokers as harshly. In conducting my research, I ended up wanting to try it for myself.

Another influence was likely my grandfather. I don't remember it *particularly* well other than a few scattered images here and there but I do know he smoked everything from cigarettes to cigars, cigarillos, and pipes. A few days ago, my grandmother commented on my pipe stand and said he had had one very similar before his stroke.<sup>2</sup>

Shortly after my 18th birthday, I ordered [my first corn cob pipe](#) from [Missouri Meerschaum](#) and ended up falling in love. I went to my local tobacconist and asked what he recommended for someone who was just getting into it. He suggested two blends I think they created in-house; one was an aromatic<sup>3</sup> called *Indian Summer* and the other was an English<sup>4</sup> which I've forgotten the name of.

The first one I tried was Indian Summer as people typically start with an aromatic. It's sort of like drinking beer before brandy (I've never had brandy so I don't know what it actually tastes like); the former is palatable to most while the latter is an acquired taste. The flavour was a little odd but I enjoyed it

---

<sup>1</sup>I attended an Early College; I was taking college courses *instead of* some high school courses yet getting credit for both. I ended up going to high school for five years and coming out with three Associate Degrees.

<sup>2</sup>When I was 7 or 8, he had a severe stroke due to a blood clot likely caused by how often he smoked. He spent the next 9 years paralysed on his left side and wheelchair-bound.

<sup>3</sup>You can read about the different styles and flavours of pipe tobacco at the [Pipedia](#), a fantastic resource on pipe smoking.

<sup>4</sup>You can read about the different styles and flavours of pipe tobacco at the [Pipedia](#), a fantastic resource on pipe smoking.

nonetheless. The English on the other hand . . . suffice it to say<sup>5</sup> that my palate hadn't (and still hasn't) developed that far. When I open the jar, my nose is assaulted with a smell reminiscent of burning rubber; it's very sharp and acrid. Other than smelling it and promptly deciding to leave it for another day, that blend has stayed in the same jar since I made the purchase.

The pipe I started with, the [Missouri Pride](#), is one that pretty much every podcast, blog post, and tutorial recommends. There's no reason to pay over \$100 for an artisan pipe when you can get a feel for the hobby spending less than \$15 including tobacco, tamper, and pipe cleaners. It wasn't a *stellar* experience but I would certainly recommend it to anyone that's curious; corn cob pipes are the best way to see if you'll enjoy the activity. In addition, many pipe smokers still buy cobs because of their low price. You can take one out with you and, if you drop and break it, you're really not out that much. My [Emerald](#) is supposed to get here sometime tomorrow (I know that website is down at the moment; I'll edit this and add a picture or two once the pipe arrives).

One of my favourite aspects of smoking a pipe is the "ritual" associated with it. You pick which pipe you're in the mood for, select the tobacco, go through the stages of packing the bowl, striking the "false light",<sup>6</sup> letting it go out, tamping it down again, striking the "true light", and then, finally, sitting back to enjoy the flavour whilst reading a good book. It's one of the most relaxing hobbies I've ever had. Another aspect I appreciate is the *rich* history and tradition associated with pipe smoking. I may discuss this further in another post but, for now, I'll say that tradition and history are *incredibly* important to me.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup>[Dictionary.com](#): "It is enough to say this and no more, as in *Suffice it to say that the judge was furious when the invitation was withdrawn.*"

<sup>6</sup>When you're lighting a pipe, you first put the flame to the tobacco and move it around the bowl trying to evenly "toast" it, all the while drawing the flame down further by sucking as you would on a straw (*not* inhaling). After doing this for 15-20 seconds, you stop and let the flame die. The tobacco will fluff up from the heat (like when lighting any other fire with tinder) so you tamp it back down. The next time you light it, it will stay lit. This is the "true light".

<sup>7</sup>Because this is my blog and I don't have to conform to any academic standards, I'm ending it here. Goodbye and thanks for reading :grin: