

A SMOKER'S LAST REFUGE

Cigar shops are among
the few places that a cigar
smoker can call home

BY DAVID SAVONA

An inviting cigar lounge has reinvigorated one of the oldest cigar shops in Connecticut, The Owl Shop in New Haven. Opened in 1934, the store is located a few steps from the Yale University campus. Pipes—guaranteed to make a college student look more intelligent—have been a mainstay at the shop for decades, but it was the new ownership of Glen Greenberg and the couple hundred thousand he put into renovations in the last year that have made the difference.

“Turning it over to a lounge here really injected a whole new life into the store,” says Greenberg, a 40-year-old with a shaved head and hip style of dress. He bought The Owl Shop in 1998 with his father and another investor, acquired a liquor license and yearned to transform its small cigar lounge—which had a circa-1970s, Brady Bunch look—into something classier. Dad and the investor balked, so Greenberg bought them out and went ahead with his plans. When the Connecticut smoking ban went into effect in 2004, Greenberg

was sitting pretty. He transformed The Owl Shop from a cigar store with a lounge into a cigar store with a full cigar bar, stocked with upscale liquors. “All of a sudden, because I had the license, it allowed me to smoke and drink,” he says.

The refurbished room has a tin ceiling, slow-turning ceiling fans and a huge bar that takes up the middle of the room. In the back are sofas and chairs. The crowd “is very eclectic, across the board,” says Greenberg, who decorated one part of the room with old Owl Shop labels, celebrating the long history of the store. He also still employs Joe Lentine, a pipe tobacco blender and cigar expert who has worked there since 1964, when he was 19 years old. “Yale U. grad students, politicians, actors...here egos are left at the door,” says Greenberg. “Everyone has this one common denominator—the cigar.”



www.TheOwlShop.com

Glen Greenberg, the owner of The Owl Shop, relaxes in his spacious smoking lounge with a fine cigar. The once-sleepy shop is now a popular late-night hangout.



The grand, well-appointed bar (left) and refurbished smoking lounge at The Owl Shop in New Haven, Connecticut, injected new life into an old store.