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Underage smokers, look out

Peabody
Gazette-Bulletin
Peabody, KS
Circ. 1149
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31591



If you are a regular reader of this column, you know about the Geezers who haunt Food Mart at Ninth and Walnut streets. Mostly retired guys, they are free to spend an inordinate amount of time each day just hangin' out and commenting on the world around them.

These guys have been around long enough not to give a rip what anyone thinks of their ideas or opinions. They do not care whether anyone thinks their jokes are funny (they think they are hilarious) and are not impressed by youthful chutzpah, having once been chutzpah-filled youths themselves.

You know about chutzpah, don't you? Chutzpah means guts, daring, audacity. The Geezer Group members have seen it all and done it all (according to them, anyway). The proprietress of Food Mart is tough and sassy and she wants no grief from any of her customers. She has more chutzpah than any of the Geezers. She also has a business to run and rules to uphold.

Among those rules is one you all know. Shoot, even I know it. It is the rule about buying cigarettes for minors. The rule is you can't. GASP! Yes, it is true. There are all sorts of signs in her store telling you not to do it. And even if there weren't, you already know it is against the law. Yup, you do. You know you do!

And guess what? Things are about to get a little dicey up there for those of you buying smokes for kiddos younger than 18 because the Geezers are going on patrol. They will be watching.

One of them caught an underage would-be smoker sifting through the cigarette butts in the outdoor ashtray a couple of weeks ago. He hiked out the door and said, "Yo, Bubba, are you 18?" The cigarette-butt picker said, " duh-h-h-h-hmaphybnelnadhhl....." The Geezer said, "That's about how old I had you pegged for ... beat it before I call your mom. I know who she is." Bubba hustled himself out of there. The

Geezer was pleased he won. He is looking for more victories.

Mary the Proprietress has already called the parents of several older-than-18 youngsters who think it should be their right to buy tobacco products for minors. And she has called parents to rat out the sneaky young smokers who are receiving the tobacco.

"I could lose my license over this," she said. "And I'll tell you what. I am not interested in losing my livelihood just because some idiot wants to be popular with the high school crowd. I want to go on record here ... if I (or any of my help) catch you buying smokes for underage kids, we are going to turn you in. Then I am going to turn in your little underage buddies. And I am going to have a conversation





with your parents and their parents and then the law. Buying smokes for a minor is a misdemeanor and I WILL press charges. A minor in possession of tobacco products gets fined \$97 ... yeah, Mom and Dad will LOVE paying for that!

“Not enough to make you nervous? Well; figure this ... you are then banned from coming in here,” she added. “I don’t need you and I don’t want you. And if I am not here, the Geezers will have your name and THEY will keep you out! Go to Walton or Florence for your gas. You won’t be allowed back in here until you have convinced me you are not going to break the law with high school kids.”

I would guess her chutzpah is in overdrive. I’m pretty confident we all know what she is talking about and just how she feels about anyone buying tobacco products for the under-18 crowd.

Any questions?

—Susan Marshall

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