

## Something Will Mess Up Your Life

by Edwin Wollenberg, Retired Supt.

Don, my next door neighbor here in Tampa, retired from Knight-Ridder News a few years ago after triple by-pass. But printers ink still flows through his veins, and along with reading the local papers, he subscribes to the Wall Street Journal and Washington Post. The other day while rapping with him, he handed me the Post, saying he was finished with it. THERE, on the first page was a very disturbing article about the terrible *Blatella asachinai*, also known as the Asian cockroach.

That was nothing.

A few paragraphs into the story was the real shocker. According to the Post, the invasion is beginning right here in Tampa.

"They first appeared in this country about 3 years ago near Port of Tampa", the story went on to say. At least they do not have to add "Florida" when they are identifying this city. I suppose once you've hosted a Super Bowl you are world class. Or it could be that the whole nation knows the Buccaneers are the lousiest football team in the league. and the stigma is deeply embedded.

It is assumed that the roaches were stowaways on a ship from Southeast Asia, where the species is common. And last summer when they first came to the attention of entomologists, the insect had infested an area of about 6 square miles. And now they cover 400 to 500 square miles around Tampa, and it's estimated they number up to 100,000 per acre.

Now, our mobile homestead here is on considerably less than an acre of ground, but I figure it still means we must have 30,000-40,000 of the little devils out there in the crabgrass somewhere. And that's a pretty nasty thought when you're the one who has to take out the garbage at night.

I'll tell you what, I've been hearing some odd noises at night out there in my back yard — like a heavy breathing — and maybe the Post story may be offering some real clues to this.

Apparently, according to the story, the Asian roach reproduces faster than the more common German roach. Five fertile German roach females (the story gets graphic here) are capable in producing 45 million descendants in one year.

The story leaves it to your imagination as to how many Asian roaches that could mean huddled outside your back door waiting for you to come out and grill this summer. Fortunately for me, I guess, I don't grill outside at any time, and I don't plan on being here this summer.

I mentioned this roach information to another neighbor, and he told me he had been invited to his son's (who lives on the outskirts of the city) for a cookout last Saturday, and there didn't seem to be any of the "buggers" around. But he also added that his son had two puppies, and there was little of anything left alive out in the back yard.

I read the entire story before I recognized the name of the person they had interviewed. He was Philip Koehler, professor of entomology at the University of Florida. I do remember him now.

Last year he announced to the world that the best way to stop cockroaches from breeding was to turn them into homosexuals. He said at the time that he had come up with a chemical that caused male roaches to become attracted to other males. Personally, I don't think this is a good idea. We already have human males attracted to human males, and all it got us was AIDS. And we certainly don't need these "critters" infesting us with mini AIDS.

Just a thought.

It's been a year now, and he makes no mention in the Post as to how successful his chemical was. I'm sure if it was successful, that by now we would have available to us roach motels in pastel colors, instead of the "blah" black ones.

Of course I don't like to stereotype and it's difficult enough to tell a gay roach from your basic straight type. And that's also going to be a problem with these new Asian cockroaches, which Koehler claims look just like the German roaches we already have.

I don't know of anybody besides Koehler, who is going to get down that close to find out if their household has been invaded by Germans or Asians, although I suppose you could observe them from a distance to see if they march in a straight line and follow orders, which would mean, of course, they were Germans.

Whenever I read something like this, I'm convinced all the more that we should become isolationist. We would not have to be subjected to German roaches, Asian roaches, German measles, Dutch Elm Disease, Japanese Beetles, English sparrows, Asiatic Flu, Columbian drugs, Mediterranean fruit fly and the list could go on and on.

But we do have them and so if you are the fretting kind, you have a legitimate reason to "bitch" along with many others about these foreign invaders.

Try to have a happy day.

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