

Bedbugs: The stuff that bad dreams are made on



BEDBUGS are back in the news. Calls to pest control companies across the country about infestations have jumped 70% in the last five years, reports the National Pest Management Association on its Website. Companies that used to get one or two bedbug calls a year now get one or two a week, it says.

But Dr. Johnson Ojo, San Francisco Environmental Health special program manager, says we're controlling the buggers better than others.

"We're much more proactive than other cities in attacking the problem," he said. He cited Supe Daly's March 2006 hearings on bedbugs and, later that year, the city's publication, "Director's Rules and Regulations on How to Control Bedbug Infestation," which added bedbugs to the Health Code list of official public nuisances.

Dr. Ojo said the city isn't experiencing a "boom" in bedbugs, as reported in a recent Chronicle story, "but we are seeing mild progressive increases." In 2003, there were only nine reports. They rose to 81

in '04, 168 in '05, 290 in '06, 332 in '07, 398 in '08. So far this year there have been 168, putting us on track for about the same number as last year.

For less official stats, the little critters also can be tracked online at bedbugregistry.com. Launched in 2006 by computer programmer Maciej Ceglowski after he was bitten in a San Francisco hotel, the site lets users report when and where they were bitten, info that goes into a national database. The registry lists 50 reports in the city between Feb. 8 and May 11, 20 of them in the Tenderloin. You also can enter an address to check for reports and get email alerts whenever someone within a mile of you reports bedbugs.

So much for science and cybertechnology. Now for art: Poet Ed Bowers writes, "Nobody loves a bedbug or a poet," and he tells us why. ■

—MARJORIE BEGGS

Excerpts from

Bedbug poems written while having anxiety attacks



BY ED BOWERS

*Dedicated to William Burroughs
In charge of the Insect Trust Corporation*

I am just a word tangled with words.
Bedbugs are invisible words.
They hide under mind.

Bedbugs
Fill mind with anxiety.

Prisoners in churches
singing about crimes,

conceal bedbugs in souls,
shipped out, burned out.

Life and death is all that counts.

I am hiding between depression
and ecstasy
between the sheets
of my Tenderloin hotel.

I sleep with bedbugs.
I pay rent.
Oh how boring and stupid i am!

Bedbugs are the boring
insignificant itching and scratching
of body and soul.

I am a poet.

I am a bedbug.

My words crawl inside fear.



I am a bedbug in the United States of America.
Scratch me! I am an American poet!



The last thing in a star-spangled multiple personality universe
I want to do is love anyone other than me.

I am an insect.
I am not you.

I have always been
invisible.

That's the way you wanted it.
And that's the way you got it.

Nobody loves a bedbug or a poet.

Bedbugs don't have money. Neither do poets. I'm broke.
The bank is my enemy.

Bedbugs don't have weapons of mass destruction.
Poets don't have words
of wisdom. Nobody listens to words
or bedbugs.

All bedbugs and poets have is a desire
to live and die!



Postscript:

I wish I could say
one word

that would liberate
you from
this nightmare

But all I can do is bite you.
I'm sorry.
But that's my nature.

City attorney: Supe's neighborhood press law is 'a bad idea'

BY JONATHAN NEWMAN

CITY Attorney Dennis Herrera invited the San Francisco Newspaper Association to his office May 6 for a roundtable discussion on how Herrera's office could work with the "smaller media." One way, he said, was to bring their readers' concerns to his attention. Ten of the 17 association newspapers were represented.

Herrera began by introducing his new press secretary, Jack Song, and catching the newspaper reps up on his latest effort: The previous day he had filed a lawsuit against the U.S. Postal Service for violating its own regulations by refusing to provide safe private mail service to SRO residents as it does for apartment dwellers.

The suit filed in U.S. District Court cites some cases described in Central City Extra stories on SRO mail delivery.

Glenn Gullmes of the West Portal Monthly led the questions by asking what Herrera thought about Supervisor Ross Mirkarimi's proposed ordinance to require newspapers to publish a phone number for complainers to cancel delivery and to impose fines if the newspaper continues to deliver.

Herrera demurred at first, saying the pending legislation had been relegated to the back burner. But, when pressed, he conceded the ordinance "was not a good idea. Ordinances should not have a chilling effect on small business owners communicating with their customers."

Doug Comstock of the Westside Observer chided Herrera, calling the city attorney's office "a major impediment to the enforcement of the sunshine ordinance" because it was doing nothing about Mayor Newsom's failure to publish his daily calendar. The Sunshine Ordinance Task Force found that to be a violation, Comstock said, but the city's Ethics Commission had refused to do anything about it, and he thought Herrera should take legal action.

Herrera disagreed. He said he publishes his daily calendar, and his office is "light-years ahead" (of other public offices) in terms of transparency, and difficulties enforcing the sunshine ordinance should be addressed to policymakers. Citing attorney-client privilege, Herrera wouldn't disclose any advice he may have given to the mayor about the calendar issue.

Comstock persisted. Whether the mayor's daily calendar is subject to the sunshine ordinance or the state Public Records Act, it's still a document created by public servants at public expense and should be published, he insisted. Herrera told Comstock he had a right as a citizen and taxpayer to take the issue to court.

"The sunshine ordinance has no mechanism for enforcement — no real teeth," Herrera said.

Asked about the looming city budget cuts, Herrera said he wasn't sure how they would affect the city attorney's office, but when his tenure began in 2001, he had 225 lawyers and now is down to 185, with potential layoffs pending. To help offset

cuts, he's instituted new budget and billing procedures designed to match the efficiency of major private law firms, essential because his office is called upon to advise and counsel more than 100 city agencies and commissions and scores of elected officials, he said.

Herrera noted how that contrasts with his time as a private lawyer, responsible for every aspect of the case at hand, like a chef perfecting a meal. His duties as a public official overseeing myriad legal matters is more like a short-order cook contributing only a little to each dish.

His most rewarding moment as city attorney, he said, was getting a \$1 million Section 8 housing lawsuit settlement in 2004. The city supplemented the settlement with funds from the mayor's office, the S.F. Giants and the 49ers, and used it to build the first Boys and Girls Club in Hunters Point, which opened in 2008.

His most difficult task, he said, was navigating the contentious dispute that erupted between the Civil Service Commission and the Elections Commission over the firing of Elections Director Tammy Haygood in 2002.

And yes, Herrera acknowledged, he is running for re-election and is gathering campaign funds, though he is currently unopposed. He vowed to campaign, opposed or not.

"It's an insult to the public not to campaign. I do my job and give the voters the opportunity to agree or disagree," he said. ■