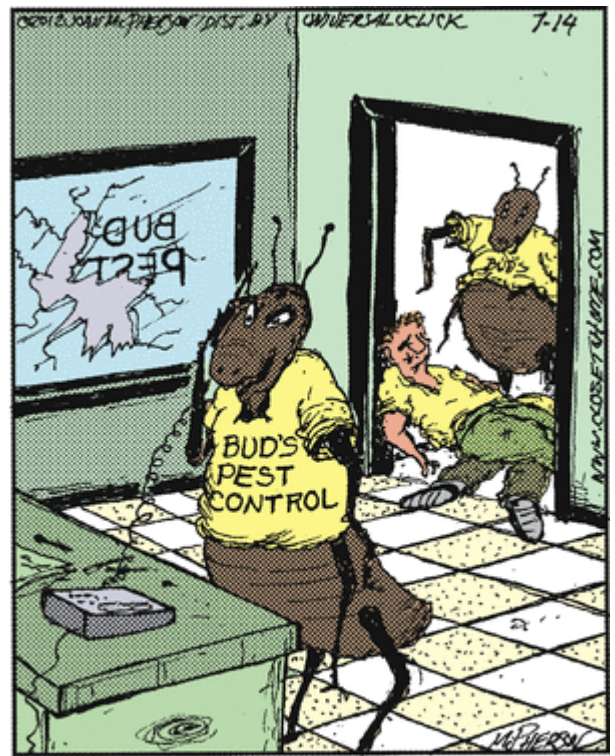


BEYOND THE FRINGEFAN

[#500] **BEYOND THE FRINGEFAN** is distressed at the swath of death and hardship caused by the pandemic of the past several months; disgusted by the brutality and bigotry displayed by people in charge of this country and its subsidiary units both historically and recently; and frightened by the recent civil unrest stemming from both of those. Given all that, it may be fairly minor in the general global and national scheme of things, but he is now attempting to deal with an infestation of bedbugs at the N.Y. Cadre (1088 East 40th Street, Brooklyn, New York 11210 (☎(718)



"Why yes, this is Bud of Bud's Pest Control. We'll be glad to take care of your ant problem, Mrs. Reibling."

NY-CADRE; ☒↔☒ nycadre [at] acedsl [dot] com; ⚡http://www [dot] nycadre [dot] org)). All of the above have made it rather difficult for him to think of anything festive to do to commemorate his 500th consecutively numbered apazine, so he apologizes to any readers who were expecting brass bands and ticker-tape parades. Nonetheless, this is **Beyond the Fringefan** #500, for readers of **APA-NYU** Volume 18, #5 (e-APA-NYU #176) and other unintended entomologists, published June 2020 as a combined production of Quick Brown Fox Press and Syscrash Consulting, both subsidiaries of **HIGAMAJIG**. Cartoon above from *Close to Home* by John McPherson, 14 July 2012. All uncredited material copyright ©2020 by Marc S. Glasser. Member fwa.

GOOD NIGHT, SLEEP TIGHT, AND DON'T LET THE—OH, CRAP: We've had termites at the Cadre, and we've had ants, and we've had drain flies every summer, but I've never felt as overwhelmed (in my home, anyway) as by the news that I have bedbugs. As far as we know, they're in my room only (UPDATE: we've found a couple in Donna's room too), but we can't prove it. I have no way to tell how they got there or how long ago; there was no evidence of my having been bitten at any point up to that evening.

Ethan discovered them while we were eating take-out in my room the Sunday before my last week of work; they were clustered on the side of the bed that I don't sleep on, mostly on a couple of pillows, with a few on the bed frame and the back of the old record cabinets next to the bed. We immediately took a few specimens using Scotch tape and imprisoned them in a zip-lock bag to show Terminix (whom we're already paying to deal with termites and household pests); then, based on advice found on the Internet, we stripped all the bedding, washed everything in maximally hot water, and put the pillows,

two at a time, in the clothes dryer on maximum heat for an hour. (We left all but two of the pillows in plastic bags in the basement to minimize re-infestation.) I was not happy.

It was 10 days before we could get anyone from Terminix to come by; he confirmed that they were indeed bedbugs, and refused to come in the house, instead calling an “inspector,” José, who showed up the next day.

Bedbugs live in bedding, but they feed on blood, so they bite people. Some people have massive reactions to the bites, but others may not even notice them or may get just a bit of an itch for a day. (Apparently I’m in the latter group; but Ethan seems to have suffered worse just from manhandling all my bedding down to the basement than I did from sleeping in the bed.) But one bite’s worth of blood can sustain a bug for up to a year, so it’s practically impossible to starve them to death. And once they’re in a piece of furniture, they nest and lay eggs, giving rise to another generation. About the only thing that will kill them is extremes of temperature. (That’s not entirely true. Rubbing alcohol sprayed directly on a bedbug will kill it in seconds. There are other substances that will do it, too. But you can’t saturate a mattress with alcohol.) So getting rid of bedbugs is a lengthy and labor-intensive process.

Now, here’s where it gets a good deal more frustrating: we’ve gotten conflicting answers from different people we’ve consulted on questions like just how much of the house needs to be treated, and just how much Stuff needs to be packed up and sterilized.



(David Farley for *The New Breed*, 18 March 1991)

José explained Terminix’s procedures: we needed to get all clothing, drapes, and everything made of fabric out of the two stories of the house, and seal it away in plastic bags or bins in the basement (or garage). We needed to vacuum everything and get the filled vacuum-cleaner bags sealed and out of the house immediately. (He left a printed sheet with further details.) Terminix would then send a team to treat the whole house, steam-cleaning all the furniture and upholstery, and then reinspect after two weeks. If the inspection turned up any evidence of live bugs, Terminix would repeat the whole process, until everyone was satisfied that the bugs were gone. Then we could wash and dry, batch by batch, step by step, inch by inch, everything that had been stashed away, and bring it up (or in) and return it where it belonged.

Well, great. But (1) can we get by with access to nothing made of fabric but what we’re actually wearing, for two weeks, or four, or six, or however many it takes until the bugs are all certified gone? You need to shower and change clothes *sometime*. And (2) how much work is it to package *all* the clothing (etc.) in our rooms, and is there enough space in the basement and garage to hold all those bags and bins?

The answer to (1) is sure; we’ve all traveled and lived out of a suitcase for a week or two. We have a washer and dryer. It won’t be fun, but it will be survivable. (2) was more problematic; it’d be full-time work for weeks to pack everything, including the stuff in the back of our closets that hasn’t seen the light of day in years. I was depressed.

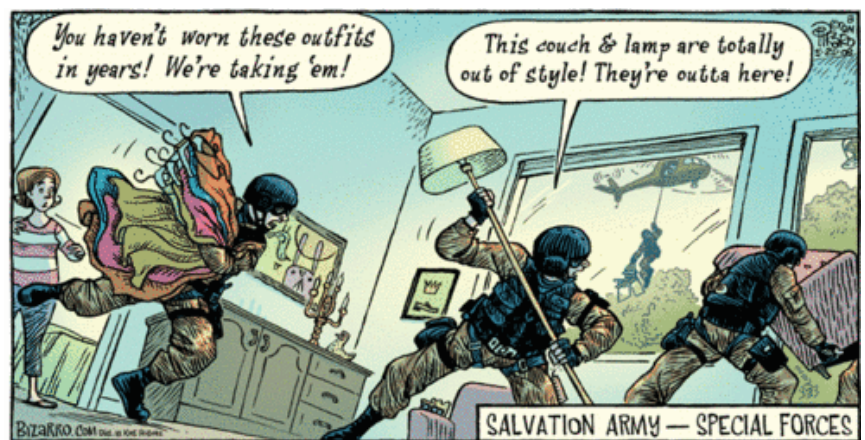
I asked José if we needed to pack up all the books and papers in our rooms as well—that would make it such an insuperable task that we might as well burn the house down. He said no, that definitely would not be necessary; just the fabrics.

José said that he was not officially permitted to plug a company other than the one he was working for, but unofficially he thought we might want to contact a group called Bed Bug Prep, that (for a price of course) would come and do all that packing and moving for us. I noticed that the company's website made not one but several references to the "opportunity" for decluttering your house presented by the necessity of packing for bedbug removal; perhaps this should have been a red flag. But I called, and the next day, Cecilia and Anthony came by to reconnoiter for an estimate. They seemed astounded at the number of books in our rooms. Cecilia insisted that it was necessary to pack and move all the books, despite the total absence of anything to that effect in the checklist José had left, and despite José's explicit assurances. (She called José's phone and left a message for him to call her and discuss this discrepancy.) Even after I informed her that we'd been culling and giving away books for at least five years in an attempt to declutter, she spent quite some time trying to tell us how great it would be for us to get rid of all those books that we weren't going to read again. She finally said that she thought it would be impossible for them to do the job if we didn't start getting rid of significant numbers of books; they'd need too many bins and there wouldn't be any room to put them. We thanked them and sent them on their way.

José called back a few days later and said that despite what he'd said earlier, Cecilia was the prep expert, and if she said we needed to pack all the books and papers, then that was what we needed to do. I was very depressed.

Subsequently, I looked online and found many different instruction sheets on preparation for bedbug removal, some from sources such as the Environmental Protection Administration and some state university extension departments that seem trustworthy and don't have a financial interest in selling us more treatment than we need. They all agree that we need to get all fabrics sealed away and out of the affected area (and either wash them in maximally hot water or run them through a maximally hot dryer for half an hour before bringing them back in), and move all furniture several inches from the walls and vacuum everything thoroughly (and get the full vacuum bags sealed and out of the house without delay). We've also contacted other exterminators (including a local one rated A+ by the Better Business Bureau) that offered to do one floor of the house at a time.

So maybe we don't have to pack up everything in the kitchen, living room, and dining room just yet. It's still a huge task. There's enough Stuff, largely paper and books, in boxes piled up in each of the upstairs rooms to make it impossible to move the furniture away from the walls. The furniture itself is full enough to make it hard to move. I have at least 500 old LPs, 200 half-century-old reel-to-reel tapes, hundreds of audio cassettes, and dozens of VHS cassettes—my plan had been to start sorting through these in my copious leisure time after retiring, but now, well.... The LPs are now in plastic-lined boxes in the basement, and I've trashed half the tapes. I'm feeling overwhelmed.



(Bizarro by Dan Piraro, 25 May 2008)

We enlisted the help of Lisa Braun, who acts as a decluttering consultant (among other things) for her living. She was immensely helpful in getting us to part with several cubic yards of crap that were taking up space in the basement and garage, providing us with some staging room, though I'm still not

convinced we won't need to rent a storage locker for at least several months. She also helped us sort through old clothing; two or three trash-bag-fuls have now been trashed, and ten or twelve trash-bag-fuls have gone into charity donation boxes. But eventually we ran out of low-hanging fruit; it would be impossible to make snap judgments about the rest of the Stuff, and the longer we took to sort it, the longer we had to put up with the bugs. It came down to just packing up plastic storage bins and seeing how many we could fit in the garage and basement.

Speaking of putting up with the bugs, I'd have climbed the walls and clung to the ceiling by now without Ethan's yeoman service. He's been here every week (even as he's begun working at his new job), taking apart my bed, vacuuming, spraying insecticides on the various pieces, and putting them in allegedly bedbug-proof plastic encasements he's ordered. After two or three weekends of this, the bugs have all but stopped waking me up at night, which is a Good Thing, but the ghods only know for how long we've gotten them contained. I know that once the treatment has been completed, I'm getting rid of the bed entirely—it's at least 30 years old—and buying a new one.

At press time, this is still a Work in Progress; I've packed dozens of bins of Stuff, and filled up and discarded many trash bags' worth, and there's still no room in my room to move the furniture away from the walls. I guess the title of the work will be "How I Spent My Summer."

Oh, just by the way, I got tested on 6 June (they had facilities set up at South Shore High School about a mile east of here), and as of that date, I did not have COVID-19. No clue, of course, whether I might have had it prior to then or since then.

Also by the way, someone at AllianceBernstein, probably wearing hazmat gear, went into the office I hadn't inhabited since February and allegedly boxed up everything of importance there. The box (it's a big moving-style box) was dropped off at the Cadre about a week after my last day of work, but by then we were being hysterical about the bedbugs, and I haven't actually opened it yet, so if anything crucial is missing, I won't know for at least another month.

FRINGE RECEPTION: Comments on APA-NYU, Volume 18, #4 (e-APA-NYU #175)

DOCTOR ORBIT vs. THE APPELCALYPSO
 (Charles Belov): (¢cover) As you've now been reminded (last month and this), you did a couple more cow covers after that one. (I've just scanned a bunch more covers in, and there don't seem to be any more by you from the subsequent year.) /*/ (¢me) I have not seen "sando" used for "sandwich," and will not be upset if I never do. I'm not fond of "resto" for "restaurant," either. (Or is that still strictly a Briticism?) But as an old, cis, straight (are those two redundant?), white male who doesn't like sports, I'm reconciled to having no relevance

whatever to popular culture. /*/ "Little Men's hasn't been around for years." Oh. Thanks for the update. Did the group officially dissolve, or fade away for lack of interest? /*/ The gouging that



(Broom-Hilda by Russell Myers, 7 January 2020)

the delivery services perpetrate upon the restaurants received a brief flurry of attention here a few weeks ago (but then was buried in the attention to police abuse and the protests thereon). We adjusted our ordering habits

accordingly. I hear the delivery services moderated their gouging a bit since then.

JAMISON, TAKE e-LETTER (Mark L. Blackman):
 /*/ (¢APA-NEWS) “Thank you for saying ‘normality’ instead of ‘normalcy.’” I prefer the word “normality,” but dictionaries have been defining “normalcy” as a synonym of it since 1857—despite the popular belief that presidential candidate Warren G. Harding coined it in 1920—so I can’t fault anyone for using it. /*/ (¢self) People who ingest Hydroxychloroquine as a COVID-19 cure or preventive are called Hydroxymorons. /*/ (¢me) “Are companies anxious to see quarterly reports that show how badly they’re doing?” The reports I was proofing

were not about individual companies but about the portfolios (of stocks or bonds) managed by my company. Relative performance is the name of the game: there are good times and bad times for all securities markets. But if the market segment the portfolio invests in is doing poorly (as measured by a “benchmark” average such as the Dow or the S&P 500), but the portfolio is doing *less* poorly, it counts as a win for the portfolio manager. (And no, the portfolios did not always chalk up good relative performance either. The reports would then discuss what went wrong. If a portfolio, like a baseball team, did rotten for too long, it might suddenly get a new manager.)



(Dilbert by Scott Adams, 11 October 2005)

So the wish list still includes a vaccine for COVID-19; but as we’ve seen lately, we also need one for bigotry, and one for stupidity would be nice too. Right now, though, the quest for a bug-free home is taking a lot more of my time, energy, and attention than I can deal with. I’m hoping that *something* will look a bit more hopeful in *any* of these areas by the next time I blather in print. Try to keep yourselves sane and safe, everyone.

>Portions of the preceding wish their past experience at debugging were still applicable.<