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The Hall of Fame – For Cockroaches

By Wendy Crooks

THERE ARE SOME THINGS you just have to see to believe. A little “museum” located in Plano is one of those things. Who would have guessed that Plano is home to The Cockroach Hall of Fame Museum? For obvious reasons, it has been called quirky, interesting, off the wall and bizarre, but the curator of the museum, Michael Bohdan, is still having fun with it.

Mr. Bohdan doesn't have to worry about squashing out the competition. It seems that while the artifacts are plentiful, not many people are interested in opening their own Cockroach Museum. In fact, besides a few Natural Science Museums, Mr. Bohdan stands alone in his quest to display the creepy crawly critters. And the Natural Science Museum displays certainly aren't as intricately done as those in The Cockroach Hall of Fame Museum.

So how did this all begin? Mr. Bohdan

has been a pest control specialist, a.k.a. exterminator, for 30 years. In the mid-80s, Mr. Bohdan orchestrated a publicity stunt to boost his pest control business. It started as a local contest in search of the largest cockroach in Dallas. The winner would take home \$1,000 and so the antics began. You might wonder, how large is the largest Dallas cockroach? It is generally about two inches but that day it was a much smaller 1½ inches. “The winner was just the biggest one brought in that day,” said Mr. Bohdan.

In 1986, Mr. Bohdan had an 18-minute appearance on the *Tonight Show with Johnny Carson* that would change his life forever. He had his cockroach on a leash and millions of people watched this peculiar display. He was quickly offered a job with Combat insecticide and a five-year contract as their representative. The first year he looked for the largest cockroach in Texas and the second year he was in



Liberoachi (above) & the Cockroach King (below)
photos by Chris Fritchie

search of the largest cockroach in the United States. In the third year, Mr. Bohdan traveled across the globe on the quest to find the largest cockroach in the world. During the fourth and fifth years, he went around the country looking for the “best dressed” cockroach. After the contests were over, Combat was going to dispose of the displays that were entered in the contests. Although the cockroaches were already lifeless, Mr. Bohdan resurrected them in a new home, the storefront of his pest control company. “There was a lot of work that went into some of those displays. I hated to see them go to waste,” said Mr. Bohdan.

Now located at 2231 W. 15th Street in Plano, The Cockroach Hall of Fame Museum is interesting but certainly not huge. Mr. Bohdan calls it a “micro” museum but it still draws big attention.

"Now with the Internet, people from all over the world have come to see the display," said Mr. Bohdan. "Someone from New Zealand came by not too long ago." This quirky little museum draws about 6,000 people a year! Why not? Who wouldn't want to see one of America's most feared and despised creatures dressed up as "Liberoache" or "Marilyn Monroach?" Some of the other exhibits include a beach scene complete with sunbathing cockroaches, Ross Peroach and Santa roach and his roachdeer. One of the big winners came from a very clever inventor. Being that the competition was being sponsored by Combat, the inventor made the "Com-Bates Roach Motel" with a frightening depiction of the Bates Motel from the movie *Psycho* that even included "Mother" roach peering through the window. The attention to detail that the artists put into the models is disturbing if you think about it too long. You really do have to see it to believe it.

At age 60, Michael "Cockroach Dundee" Bohdan is a self-acclaimed "one man band." He totes a fedora hat adorned with 4-inch Madagascar Hissing Cockroaches that he assures died "of natural causes." He has worked 75-80 hours a week for more than 25 years. In the morning he gets rid of the nasty varmints and in the afternoon he shows them off in their finest. He has killed hundreds of thousands of cockroaches, but he's still finds them interesting.

"I think that any insect that can exist from the pre-dinosaur era has to know what they're doing, so maybe I can learn from them," Mr. Bohdan says with admiration. Despite his interest in the cockroach, he admits that he's had a love-hate relationship with them for years. "I love them in my museum but I hate them in my customers' homes."

Somehow Mr. Bohdan has managed to stretch his 18 minutes of fame from the *Tonight Show* to work the Hollywood circuit. He has found himself appearing on *The Joan Rivers Show*, *Regis & Kathie Lee*, *Shopping Smart*, *Animal Planet*, *Hour*



Magazine with Gary Collins, CNN Headline News, The Donnie & Marie Show and The View. And while his own micro-museum isn't the Smithsonian, he did help the Smithsonian Institution with a cockroach exhibit of their own. AP, UPI, Reuters, CNN, NBC, ABC, CBS, FOX and BBC have all quoted him. Locally he can be heard on KRLD and KLIF radio giving pest control tips.

About eight years ago, he published a book entitled, "What's Buggin' You? Michael Bohdan's Guide to Home Pest Control." In the book he gives tips on do-it-yourself pest control. He stresses how to eliminate the critters the safest way. He also demonstrates how to use low toxic organic techniques and how to exterminate them the hard core way.

Like a cockroach ready to scurry, Mr. Bohdan is looking toward retirement. He's hoping that in the next two years he will do just that. His two adult children are not interested in running the cockroach museum so the question remains, are the displays once again in danger of discard? Not if Mr. Bohdan has anything to say about it. "I plan to

auction off the museum on eBay. I figure, why not? They're selling everything on eBay these days," he said.

Looking much further ahead, Cockroach Dundee is certain of one thing. "I definitely want to be cremated. I really don't want the bugs and the roaches having the last laugh!"

You may want to see the museum for a good laugh or you might really need some answers about bug control. Either way, Mr. Bohdan, the bug expert or Mr. Bohdan, "Cockroach Dundee" will cater to what's bugging you – about bugs. If you decide to make the short trip to The Pest Shop and The Cockroach Hall of Fame Museum, you might even decide you like cockroaches. Well, perhaps that might be a stretch, but one thing is for sure, you won't take a shoe to one without at least thinking about Liberoache or one of his cohorts! After all, according to Cockroach Dundee, "The only good cockroach is a dead cockroach!"

Wendy Crooks is a freelance writer living in Plano.