

## THE FLY GUY

Lee Goff, Ph.D., is the primary consultant for the Pink Palace's "CSI: Crime Scene Insects" exhibit and is the world's best-known forensic entomologist. Though he began his career as a marine biologist and not-so-successful folk singer in Hawaii, he stumbled into bug studies and focused his research on the application of entomology to criminal investigations. He's a consultant for the popular TV series *CSI*, and a number of episodes were taken directly from his book *A Fly for the Prosecution*. On February 17th, Goff will deliver a lecture at the Pink Palace on the life cycle of insects and how that relates to solving crimes, especially murder.

*Flyer: People have a hard time thinking about death, let alone decomposition, let alone the idea of insects. What is it that attracts people to exhibits like "Crime Scene Insects"?*

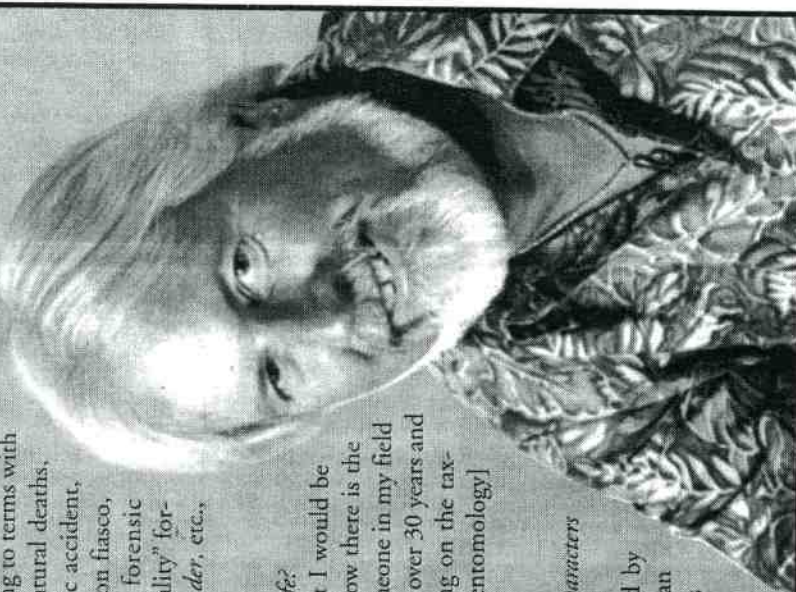
**Lee Goff:** Even though people seem to have difficulty coming to terms with their own mortality, the deaths of others, particularly unnatural deaths, seem to have an attraction/repulsion effect. Take any traffic accident, for example. Certainly, recent trials, such as the O.J. Simpson fiasco, have served to make the general public aware of the forensic sciences. Combine this with the current fascination with "reality" formats and the popularity of shows such as *CSI*, *Six Feet Under*, etc., and it's not too surprising.

*So, does your occupation have repercussions in your romantic life?*

When I first began, mentioning what I did guaranteed that I would be left completely alone at parties. At times that was useful. Now there is the exact opposite [reaction]. The general impression is that someone in my field does not have a romantic life. Actually, I've been married for over 30 years and my wife is amazingly tolerant. When we met, I was working on the taxonomy of larval trombiculid mites chiggers — so [forensic entomology] may be a step up.

*Is it weird to turn on an episode of CSI and see a character or characters that are based on you?*

I'm told there are some similarities to the character played by William Petersen and my own personality. It's nice to see an entomologist portrayed as someone who actually accomplishes something, [not] someone with a net running off a cliff while chasing a butterfly. ■



to unsolved crimes. And even if they aren't on the scene of a crime, they certainly get there before the cops show up. Flies can catch the whiff of a corpse a mile away, and the scent is irresistible to them.

Over the past 20 years, thanks to rapid advancement in the field of forensic entomology, flies and other insects have found their way into courtrooms as star witnesses for both for the prosecution and for the defense. "CSI: Crime Scene Insects," a touring exhibit on display at the Pink Palace through May 8th, takes a long, gnarly look into the world of beetles, maggots, flies, and other squirmy crawlers that pay postmortem visits to our bodies and provides information on how scientists use entomology to help police solve crimes.

"With all of the technology we have we can still use something as simple as insects to solve a crime," says John Good, president of Exhibit Q, the California-based exhibit design and development company responsible for creating "CSI." "Twenty years ago we used to wash off all of the insect evidence, but not any more."

According to Good, there are more than 500 species of insects that visit dead bodies, and scientists acquainted with the habits and life cycle of these insects can determine a near-exact time of death. They can also determine if a body has been moved from one location to another and whether or not illicit substances were involved.

One case study profiled in "Crime Scene Insects" involves a drug deal gone wrong and a body that is moved 24 hours later. Forensic entomologists knew the body had been moved because there were two types of maggots in the body. The older maggots were from flies that are typically found indoors, but the body was discovered outdoors.

"We have a fly hatchery here so we'll go through the whole process of hatching flies," Good says. "You'd be surprised. A lot of people don't know that maggots come from flies laying eggs. Some people think they are already in people or animals and when you die they come out."

"Some people are a little timid about some of the