



NOTE! You are viewing the **text only** version of this site. For increased functionality and easier navigation, we recommend the **cascading style sheets** version. You can download Web browsers with style sheets support from [Netscape](#), [Microsoft](#), or [Opera Software](#). Opera is the smallest download.

FEBRUARY 6 - 12, 2003 -- HELTER SHELTER

They Break the Mold

Tales from the home inspectors' convention

By Walter Jowers

A couple weeks back, I went to Inspection World, the yearly convention of the American Society of Home Inspectors (ASHI). I went because it was in Orlando in January, and I could break even on the trip if I just stood up for 90 minutes and explained everything I know about writing home inspection reports. I did it, I liked it and now I want a new job. Attention employers: If you can set me up in a place where the weather is stuck at 65 degrees and sunny, and all I have to buy is food, I will cheerfully talk on any subject for 90 minutes a day.

Like so many conventions, the ASHI convention had a big hall full of vendors. If an inspecting man needed a fancy flashlight, a collapsible ladder or a fill-in-the-blanks reporting system sure to baffle anybody who tries to read it, the vendors could hook him up.

The hot product, though, was Deadly Toxic Mold. Of course, vendors weren't selling actual mold. Mold is everywhere--in your house, in your car and on your pets and pillowcases. The mold supply is way higher than the demand, so mold is free, except when it comes to blue cheese, and that's only because it's tasty mold.

No, the vendors were selling gizmos, gadgets and methods that would let an inspecting man cash in on the *fear* of mold. If you haven't already heard--and I hope you haven't--a few unfortunate folks got sick from massive mold growth in their houses, then collected tens of millions of

dollars in court. Once those combination horror/get-rich-quick stories found their way onto TV magazine shows, entrepreneurial types realized that there's easy money in the mold-testing business. Take an air sample, take a swab or just look around. You'll always find some mold.

Anyhow, the hottest mold booth at the ASHI convention was the one manned by the women who came to be known as the Mold Babes. They rode up every day in a silver Mercedes droptop, wearing strappy little bondage sandals, diaphanous miniskirts, peekaboo tops that barely contained their value-added girlparts, and bull's-eye-red lipstick. Although I can't prove it scientifically, I had indications that each of them was coated with some kind of potent pheromone wax. Bless their hearts and other parts, they were very helpful, making sure to lean over toward the conventioners, so they could make good eye contact and raise the possibility of their strained upper garments not quite holding. Those women drew a lot of traffic.

As far as I was concerned, the main attraction was at the other end of the hall. That's where I found Mold Dog, a perky little black-and-white terrier that spent all day proving he could find a can full of mold.

Mold Dog's trainer, Bill Whitstine, ran the Mold Dog show. On the floor of his booth, Whitstine set up a contraption that looked like a chandelier made out of dowels. It had six arms, each with a can at the end. Whitstine took the can of mold, put it on the chandelier rig, then spun the thing like a roulette wheel. On Whitstine's command, Mold Dog would attack the mold can. Although Mold Dog's performance was flawless, I couldn't help thinking, *That can could be fulla bacon.*

I was in the mood for some science, so I went back to the other end of the hall and got in line at the Mold Babe booth. While the Mold Babes were preoccupied with their customers, and the customers were busy trying to look down the Mold Babes' shirts, I picked up one of their displays--a petri dish full of *Stachybotrys*, the Deadly Toxic Mold that has made the most money for trial lawyers. I took a little dab of the harmful Stachy and rubbed it behind my right ear.

I know, some of you are thinking, *How did you know it was Stachybotrys?* Well, I didn't. It could have been something from the sauce tray at a Chinese restaurant. I just know what the label said. Besides, if you can't trust the Mold Babes, who can you trust?

I eased back down to the Mold Dog booth, and while he was between can chases, I knelt down beside him. Well, don't you know, the little sumbitch ran over to my right side, jumped up and gave me an enthusiastic ear job.

"How much for Mold Dog?" I asked, convinced he was the real deal.

"Twelve thousand five hundred dollars," Whitstine said. "That includes us training two handlers to work with him."

As soon as I heard the price, all I could think about was Mold Dog running out in front of a car, getting snake-bit or going after the mold in the Jowers garbage disposal. Then I considered the worst-case scenario: I buy Mold Dog and take him home with me. Wife Brenda meets me at the door and says, "Whatcha got there, Wally?"

"Mold Dog," I say. "Only cost me twelve-five. Guy who sold him to me says I can turn a profit in two weeks. I put him on the credit card."

Right about then, I think Brenda would've decided she'd rather have the insurance money than me. And there I would've been--outlived by my Mold Dog.

Visit Walter Jowers' Web site at www.housesenseinc.com, or e-mail him at wjowers@nashvillescene.com.

*All content is © 1995-2001 Nashville Scene unless otherwise noted.
Best viewed in IE 3.01+ or Navigator 4.04+ at 800x600+ resolution*

[Home](#) | [City Pages](#) | [LA Weekly](#)
[OC Weekly](#) | [Seattle Weekly](#) | [Village Voice](#)