

enough, the sewers have their own variety: white leviathans. Usually found on the inside walls of old brick manholes, these sebaceous, corpulent mutants' milky complexion really raises my short hairs. And the thing with roaches is, you don't usually just see a solitary bug, but whole seething broods. At a downtown location, we were popping the top on a sewer chamber. Not just opening the manhole cover, but digging down and using a crane to raise the entire concrete roof slab. Mind you, this is at an intersection with a restaurant on every corner, each with a disposal unit chumming the sewers with roach chow. At first, nothing seemed amiss as the lid jarred loose and sun began spilling into the chamber. But as the lid was pulled to the side, the crew cocked their heads. Something was odd about the chamber walls. Maybe it was the texture, or maybe it was the cumulative aura radiating from 100,000 insects. Anyway, when the crane dropped the lid to one side, the jolt started a stampede. Completely carpeted in "water bugs," the walls surged outward. A blanket of roaches spread from the hole like a death shadow, jolting a spasm of panic into onlookers. Civilians literally screamed, running for the nearest open doorway and scrambling onto car hoods. Workers cursed, jumping onto excavators and lamp posts like elephants fleeing mice. And I don't need to tell you where the roaches disappeared. While many funneled down catch basins back into the sewer, a huge number seized the opportunity and made for the restaurants, fluidly slipping under the doors by the thousands. The restauranteurs can be thankful it wasn't yet lunch hour. *Zagat's* raves notwithstanding, the memory of that delightful event will find me seeking repast elsewhere.

What boggles me is the fact that people actually go down *into* the pipe. Over Houston Street, I had to watch these poor sons-of-bitches spend hours on their knees in a 4'0" x 2'8" brick sewer. Yeah, they wore chest waders and knee pads, and sandbags pretty much pooled the sewage upstream where a pump sent the effluent through a fire hose on a by-pass of the work zone. The sewer had just been cleaned, so what made these grunts' job hard wasn't wallowing in filth. They were guniting. Guniting is a process whereby the existing pipe is coated on the inside with a cementous mixture shot from a gun. To get the concrete to stick, you have to cover the inside of the pipe with chicken wire. You have to drag rolls of wire, a drill, and an extension cord down a narrow manhole, crawl with this stuff tucked in your armpits down a pipe, drill holes into the brick, insert fasteners, and hook the new wire section into the fasteners. Imagine doing all that in an egg-shaped crawl space that also has lights strung along the side. It's like trying to wallpaper the inside of a refrigerator as you're loaded with a case of beer and the door is closed. Finally, they have to shoot and trowel the concrete while backing out. Funny, but the crew didn't find crouching in a dank pipe all day much of a hardship, maybe because their back problems had yet to set

Half of the solid waste produced in New York City is paper. This paper trash is the single largest export through the Port of New York. New York City tax payers spend one million dollars each day to collect and dispose of more than 27,000 tons of garbage. The average New Yorker throws out four pounds of trash a day.