

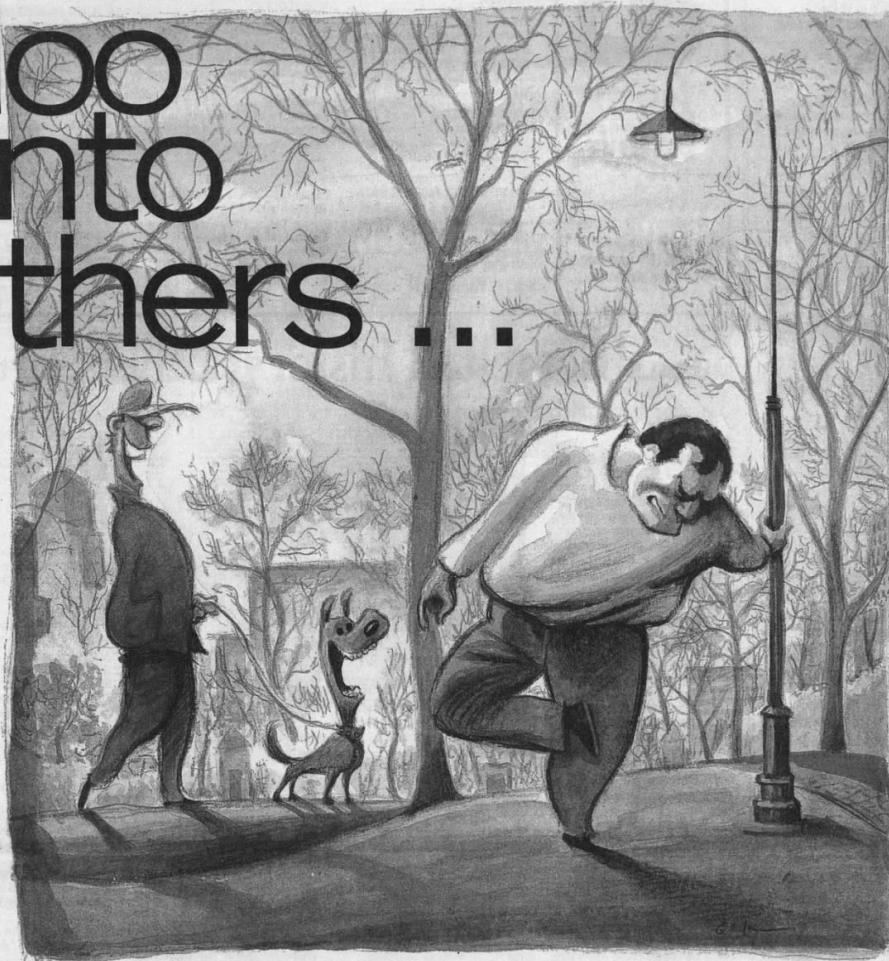
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 6, 1999

Send comments and tips through e-mail to:
baylife@tampatrib.com
JUDY HILL, Senior Editor/News, (813) 259-7812
BayLife fax, (813) 259-7676

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THE TAMPA TRIBUNE

doo unto others ...



DAVID O'KEEFE/Tribune illustration

There is more bark than bite in "pooper-scooper" ordinances designed to keep sidewalks clean in St. Petersburg and Tampa.

By CARLOS MONCADA
of The Tampa Tribune

W ST. PETERSBURG
e have all stepped over it, around it and, yes, even in it.

It is patently offensive, of course. But its placement can make it worse: smack in the middle of a city sidewalk, in our favorite park, even in our own front yards.

We are speaking here, of course, of Fido feces, the dung dropped on private property or public land and rights of way by dogs, and left there by their owners.

Few things ruin a nice trip to the park, a game of catch with the kids or a stroll down a quaint street more than a misstep into dog waste.

It's such a nuisance — as well as a possible health hazard — that

St. Petersburg and Tampa both have enacted laws that require people to pick up after their animals on property other than their own.

But in both cities, these "pooper-scooper" laws are dogged by enforcement difficulties because a police officer or code enforcement inspector must witness a violation.

"An officer has to see a dog pooping," says Bill Daniel, St. Petersburg police spokesman. "The chance of that happening is extremely remote."

While violators can be fined up to \$500 and jailed up to 60 days, police say they cannot recall ever having issued a dog-dung citation, even though there's plenty of evidence lying around.

Just stroll along Coffee Pot Boulevard in northeast St. Petersburg,

for instance, and you'll likely see dog feces under or near most palm trees planted along the popular scenic walkway.

On the rare occasion when a dog is caught in the act, the usual procedure is to give the owner a warning — sometimes more than once.

"Most people you talk to definitely want to abide by the law," says Mike Roberts, a community police officer assigned to three neighborhoods in northeast St. Petersburg. "So once you warn them or educate them, most of them comply."

Many people who visit St. Petersburg's parks are from outside the city and don't know about the

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Entrepreneurs step into void, hope to clean up

By CARLOS MONCADA
of The Tampa Tribune

ST. PETERSBURG — So, you think your job stinks?

Try standing in the shoes of people who make it their business to pick up what most of us would rather not go near.

Yes, there are those who will scoop poop — willingly — from the yards of dog owners. For a price.

Armed with little more than a shovel and plastic trash bags, these entrepreneurs are being hired by white-collar professionals, single parents and others with busy schedules, or folks who simply don't want to do the dirty work themselves.

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