



pam&amber
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schlegel

mother❖daughter **march**

Pam and Amber Schlegel make their living by helping people with their problems – often getting bitten and stung in the process. As pest control experts, this mother and daughter team has seen things that would make your skin crawl.

For 16 years, Pam's Pest Control Service has been serving Fort Collins and effectively ridding residents of unwanted creatures. As a licensed practitioner, Pam focuses on residential jobs.

Pam's interest in the pest control business started in 1985 in Arizona. The man who came and regularly sprayed her house for pests mentioned he was looking for someone who wasn't afraid of scorpions and spiders.

"I was raised on cattle ranches in Colorado with two older brothers," Pam explained. "I couldn't have any fears."

She agreed to work for him and destiny took over from there.

In 1991, Pam was working for a pest control company when divorce left her a single mom, looking for a way to support herself and Amber. The pest control company she worked for encouraged her to get her license. She did, eventually opening her own business and taking her one-woman show on the road.

Amber came on board when she was in high school. She worked during the summers and helped out when needed. For the past three years, she has worked full-time with her mother.

Pam and Amber live and work together and describe their relationship as strong.

"I respect her, especially now that I am working with her," Amber said. "I don't know how she did it by herself for nine years. I have a great life because she worked hard for me. She is awesome."

Pam said that since they started working together, their relationship has gotten even better.

"It is such a change from when she was in junior high," she said. "It was so funny because Amber didn't like me to pick her up in the pest control truck. 'Can you go home and get the other truck?' she'd say."

It seemed that where ever they went, if people found out what Pam did, they would always ask questions and Amber would get embarrassed. She wished her mom would stop talking about her work.

"Now it's funny," Pam said, "because when we go somewhere and someone asks what we do and we say pest control, I just sit back and watch her. She just sits there and starts talking."

Amber chimed in, "Everywhere I go, I talk about pest control and I think, 'Oh, geez. I am turning into my mother.'"

When asked what type of insect they would compare themselves to, each had a different answer.

Pam said she is most like a praying mantis because they are pretty much single women and they bite the head right off of a man if they don't like what he is doing. Amber said she is most like a hornet because they are feisty and all over the place.

Both mom and daughter love the challenge and variety involved in their work. Donned in their company uniform – jeans and a t-shirt – they have encountered spiders, birds, ants, mice, cockroaches, snakes and hornets. And every day brings a new experience.

"A lot people think we just walk around with spray cans and squirt here and there," Amber said.

"You really have to do an inspection to find out where the problem is coming from," Pam added.

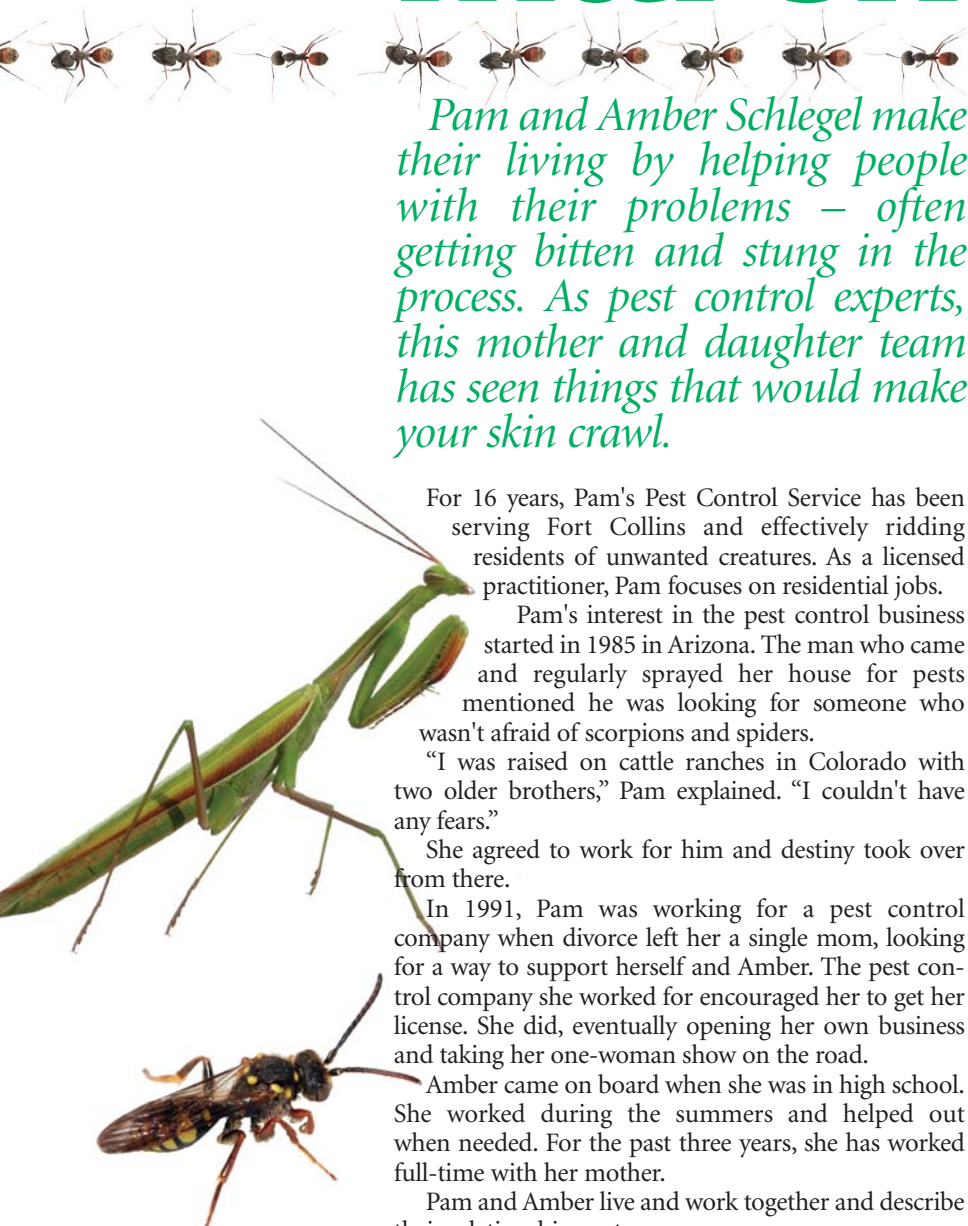
Both women agreed that hornets are probably the scariest pests they have to deal with. Each summer, they estimate they have about 400 calls to remove hornet's nests. They have seen nests that are 2½ feet across and 4 feet deep. Amber admits that her mom is braver than she when it comes to these stinging insects. Sometimes, she takes refuge in the truck while her mom finishes the job.

"It's scary," Amber said, "You have to first watch their flight pattern – watch where they are coming in and out of. Then mom sprays a side, I spray a side and we just spray them and drown them until the nest starts to fall apart. Then we whack it and run."

She and Pam both laughed at the thought of it.

While hornets are the scariest, their most memorable job dealt with cockroaches. They were called to a home and when they arrived, the people said they didn't need their help any more because they didn't have a problem.

"We could see the cockroaches crawling around in the daytime," Amber said. "We told this woman she had



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to let us come in there. Finally we get in there and start spraying and there are just thousands of them coming out of every crack and crevice, dropping from the ceiling on to us. It got really gross.”

They agreed that creepy-crawlies landing on them or finding spiders in their hair is all just part of the job. So are stings and bites. Pam said she has scars from black widow spider bites all over her legs. She thinks she has built up immunity to the poison. Most people get flu-like symptoms, but she just gets an occasional headache or stomachache.

Pam and Amber feel they make a great team because they both take pride in their work and they share in the same goal – they want to make the customers happy.

“Sometimes people call and they are in hysterics over nothing,” Amber said. “So I talk to them and calm them down.”

Many times they are able to offer a short-term solution to the problem until they can go to the house. Because of her many years of experience, Pam knows a lot of home remedies and shared one for controlling ants.

“Get some talcum powder, and put it down along the baseboard where the ants are coming in,” she said. “They will not cross it. It will keep them out until we can get there.”

Other suggestions included mixing moth ball flakes and clay cat litter and sprinkling it around the perimeter of the house to keep snakes away for three to four months. A sprinkle of cayenne pepper will keep squirrels out of certain areas.

Pam said she excited about the direction the pest control industry is headed in terms of the chemicals used.

“We used to really have the dangerous chemicals, but most of those are gone now,” she said. “The chemicals we use now are much safer for people and pets. It is slowly evolving to the organics, which I am excited about because that is the way I always wanted to go.”

It is obvious Pam has a soft spot for certain insects and will go out of her way to help them as well. She has been called to homes to get rid of hornets, only to find the insects were actually honey bees. Instead of spraying the nest, she will call a beekeeper to

come and take the bees away.

Pam and Amber know they are the minority in the pest control world. There are not a lot of women who actually work out in the field. But being women in a male-dominated field has some advantages.

“Most of the time it is a woman who is home when we come to do a job,” Pam said. “The husband is at work and the kids are at school. I think women feel more comfortable having a woman enter their house.”

Pam and Amber work hard, but they do take time to play. Pam loves to ride her Harley and go to motorcycle rallies. Amber likes to go to movies, play darts and play pool. She also wants her mom's Harley someday.

When asked what they want people to know about them, Amber chimed right in and said, “A mother and daughter can work together and still be sane. I don't think I'd want to do anything else. I complain sometimes, but who wouldn't if they were being chased by hornets?” ❀



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