

Brief Lives/Cheryl Morrison  
**LOOKING FOR TROUBLE**

"... If health inspector Fred Einerman still has a healthy appetite at the end of a day, it's no thanks to the sights he sees..."

FRED EINERMAN'S MORNING OFTEN BEGINS with a pre-dawn visit to one of those dreary depots where street food vendors store their pushcarts and pretzels, stew their onions, and skewer their shish kebabs. He's not there from hunger; what he's looking for is dirty cooking implements, insufficient refrigeration, rat droppings, and other hazards to public health.

Einerman, 31, is an inspector for the New York City Health Department. His job takes him in and out of restaurant kitchens all over the city, and, if he still has a healthy appetite at the end of a day, it's no thanks to the sights he generally sees on the job.

"The worst thing I ever saw was a guy mixing a batch of tuna fish with his hands, all the way up to his armpits," he says. "There must have been 100 pounds of tuna fish. It really turned my stomach." What Einerman did about it was condemn the tuna and cite the restaurant for "excessive handling" of the food. Condemning food means discarding it after treating it with motor oil or some equally unappetizing additive to make sure no one can eat it. The citation means Einerman will return in a couple of weeks.

"When I come back, I don't expect to see those violations," says Einerman. He inspects day camps, beauty parlors, and water supplies, as well as restaurants and vendors, and, if the violations haven't been corrected by the time of his second visit, he orders the management to appear at a hearing, where a fine can be levied, and he adds the establishment's name to the restaurant-violations list for publication.

When Einerman finds a serious immediate threat to health—something like rats in the cutlery drawer—he shuts the place down on the spot. If a pushcart food vendor can't produce a license, he has the vendor's cart confiscated by the police.

Einerman, a beefy six-footer, is offered everything from knuckle sandwiches to \$20 bribes by people who want to avoid bad publicity, fines, shut-

downs, or expensive repair bills. "Sometimes it can get very hairy. I'm for working in teams, because there are too many things going on that can tarnish a good inspector's name. If you're working alone, it's your word against theirs if they say you asked for a bribe." And a partner also provides an extra pair of eyes. "You might overlook something that someone else will see."

When, off duty, he visits a restaurant and finds its cleanliness wanting, Einerman complains to the management without disclosing that he's an inspector. Sometimes he follows up at work with a suggestion that one of his colleagues pay an official visit to the restaurant. He wishes the public would do likewise. "People should take a second look at what they're eating," he contends, "and if they see something they don't like, they should report it. I've been trying to get people to be aware of what goes on and what their rights are. How many people would ask to see the latest inspection report before they order a meal in a restaurant? That's your right, you know."

**Watching what you eat: Fred Einerman.**



Although he and his wife enjoy dining out on weekends, Einerman admits that he's "always wondering what's going on in the kitchen." Even in their Tower Manhattan home, he says, he was "extremely paranoid" about cleanliness in the kitchen for the first six months after he took his job.

Einerman, a second-generation New Yorker, earned a degree in education and psychology from Richmond College, intending to become a teacher. But by the time he finished school, teachers were being laid off and there were no permanent jobs to be found.

For a few years, he drifted from job to job, living with his parents and not needing much money. He photographed weddings for a while; he tried selling. One day he heard about an impending civil-service test for the job of "environmental health technician," and he took the test because it "sounded interesting." At the time he was unhappily selling matchbook-cover ads. But when he didn't hear about his test results after a few weeks, he forgot about them and continued his quest for satisfying work.

Eventually he went to work in the Consumer Affairs Department. He liked his job, which included office management and purchasing, but he feared he would lose it when the city administration changed. Just after he began worrying, he got a letter about the civil-service test he'd taken four years earlier. He'd passed. A week later, in September of 1978, he became a health inspector.

Einerman says he plans a career in the Health Department, even though he describes his present salary as so low he's ashamed to disclose it. (A department spokesman says the average annual salary for the 100 inspectors is \$14,000.)

"There's a big misconception about city employees—that they're lazy, they lay around a lot, they goof off on the job," says Einerman. "That's not me. I like to do the job to the fullest. And I'm doing a job that I know needs to be done."