



I've got six Kohler faucets in my master bathroom. They all leak if not tightly cinched, but they are very nicely designed with wooden knobs impervious to water. Expensive to buy and expensive to fix. In that same bathroom sits my favorite appliance, above left. It looks just like any other toilet except for the control panel attached to the seat. Such toilets are ubiquitous in Japan and practically unknown in America. Kohler, still design-happy, wants me to replace mine with its \$3,000 "Hatbox" model, above right, which doesn't look like a toilet at all and can't do anything except flush. No thanks. Several years ago Dana Parsons of the Los Angeles Times wrote a column about my toilet. It was never published. Times editors judged it unfit for a family newspaper, but I rescued it and here it is. — Jackson Sellers

Dana's Shit-Canned Story

By DANA PARSONS, *Los Angeles Times* Columnist

Some things shouldn't be discussed in the newspaper, and this is probably one of them.

But if you could just see the self-satisfaction — no, the joy — on the face of my colleague, Jackson Sellers, you'd know why I'm telling you. Besides, it just might change your life. Picture a 10-year-old boy with a new train set, and you get some idea of how Sellers has been acting recently.

Our in-house computer expert, Sellers, 69, hasn't said a word about com-

puters in several weeks. Instead, he's been telling anyone who wants to know (and some who probably don't) about his new toy, installed at his home on New Year's Day. For the luckiest among us, he provides a schemata of the thing.

In polite society, I guess it's called a bidet. The manufacturer calls it a "personal hygiene system." Sellers calls it "the best damn thing I've bought in a long time."

We're talking, of course, about a device attached to your toilet that, with the press of a couple buttons, handles the necessary and important business of, uh, well, you know Finish your business, and push a button. A retractable spigot from inside the toilet sends a nice, warm rinse (at least 80 degrees) upwards and thoroughly cleans the, uh, area for a minute or so. Press another button and a nice, warm blast of drying air completes the process.

The ol' one-two, as it were.

Needless to say, the toilet seat is also climate-controlled throughout.

An old Kentuckian, Sellers says he didn't know such things existed until a trip to his wife's homeland of Japan in the fall of 1999. There, both in hotels and private homes, such devices are common. When Sellers finally said good-bye to his sister-in-law, he says, he also "bid a fond farewell to her toilet."

Once you've tried it, Sellers says, doing your duty is almost a pleasure.

When he and his wife returned from another trip to Japan last fall, Sellers took the plunge. He found a firm in Orange, NuBidet, and ordered one.

Things haven't been the same since. He was only too happy to talk about it this week in his office.

"I cannot stand to go to the toilet here in this plant now," he says. "When I do, it seems nastier than ever because I know I have this toilet at home that will really do the job."

Naturally, I high-tailed it to Orange to talk with Michael Tsukuda, the general manager of NuBidet. He acknowledges the American public may be slow in learning what Sellers already knows and says his company has no interest in being "pioneers" in the field. Ideally, someone else will do that and his company and others will then go after their share of the market.

Tsukuda says his company has sold between 50 and 100 devices a year since going into business in 1999. The public's reaction at trade shows, he says, typically falls into one of two categories: they either think it's a toy and ask if Tsukuda is serious or "they don't say anything; it's too personal a matter."

Put me in the latter category.

Sellers, however, doesn't know why people would be sheepish in discussing the subject. Then, again, he was in the Navy.

Tsukuda says almost all new or remodeled homes in Japan feature the

device. Above his desk is a map of Orange County and, without asking him, I can just imagine what he's thinking.

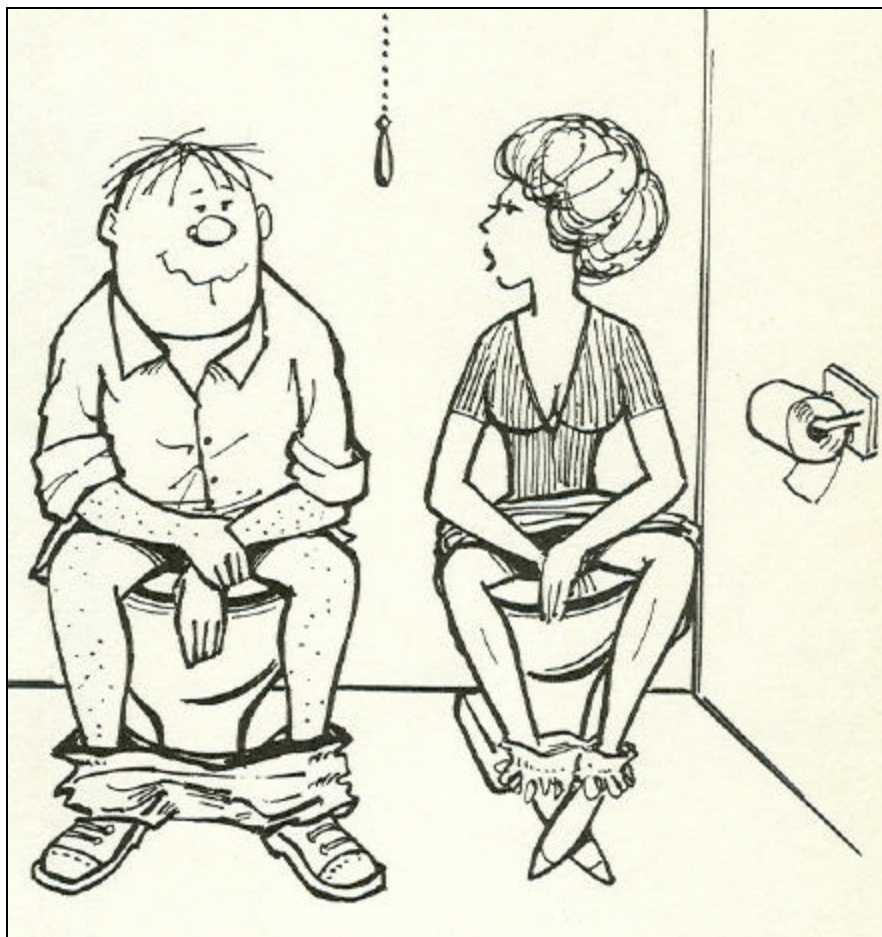
Sellers insists his new bathroom aid has nothing to do with status. It's all about functionality and the best eight hundred bucks he ever spent.

"I'm a country boy," he says, "and I started out with outhouses and corn-cobs and Sears Roebuck catalogs. I never saw toilet paper as much of an improvement."

I won't romanticize matters by saying that Sellers spent his life in search of perfection. Let's just say perfection, at least in this vital aspect of everyday life, found him.

Ever the country gentleman, Sellers invited me to his house for a demonstration. Uh, no thanks, I said.

He just smiled that Cheshire cat smile, as if knowing he still had a very special secret all to himself.



Together to the End

One fancy Japanese toilet may not be enough for Jackson and Yoshi. Jackson is thinking of buying another for their 40th wedding anniversary, but it won't be a Kohler "Hatbox."