

from out-house to up-market ... the toilet in transition

BY AMY MINDELL

Toileting came out of nature and into the proverbial water closet thousands of years ago when King Minos of Crete enjoyed the first flushing device in recorded history at his famed palace around 1700 B.C.

But evidence of sanitation systems was found in the ancient Stone Age village of Skara Brae in Scotland well before the flush toilet. Excavations show that the prosperous Scottish farmers had bathrooms with a drain leading to a communal sewer running under the main passageway of the village about 3200 B.C. Rudimentary drainage systems and toilets were in use in parts of Pakistan and India even earlier, starting in 4000 B.C.

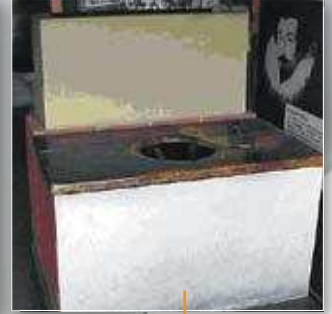
Citizens of ancient Rome used simple outhouses placed directly over running waters that poured into the Tiber River around 800 B.C. The Chinese also had indoor plumbing, but only for royalty, evidenced by the discovery of a stone-carved flush toilet found in a tomb of a Western Han Dynasty king, circa 206 B.C. The Chinese loo, designed with armrests and styled like a throne,

featured water flushed from pipes.

Though urban legend has it that a man named "Crapper" invented the first modern toilet in the mid-1800s, London plumber Thomas Crapper actually had nothing to do with its creation. He did, however, patent a number of bathroom-related inventions and was the first to display his bathroom wares in a showroom, so that when customers needed a new item for their water closet they would immediately think of his products.

Actually, the first modern flush toilet is credited to a different Brit, Sir John Harrington, who was said to have invented it for his godmother, Queen Elizabeth I, in 1596. However his fellow Londoners found the invention foolish and useless, so Harrington canned the idea.

For the last 100 years, the biggest advancement in toilet technology was the use of indoor plumbing and reduction of outhouses, latrines and chamber pots. But all of that is changing as Japanese companies are now producing some of the most high-tech



toilets in the world. The Neorest 600 by TOTO Ltd., arguably one of the most advanced, promises to "transform your bath space into the ultimate spa experience." The sleek, tankless Neorest, starting at \$5,678, earns its premium price tag by taking the toilet experience to a whole new level.

As a user approaches the Neorest 600, the lid automatically opens and a seat warmer activates. After taking care of business, the user may engage the bidet-like Washlet, which provides a choice of front and/or back spray of aerated warm water followed by an optional spray massage. A warm-air dryer kicks on when the Washlet completes its task. As the user stands up, an air purifier springs into action. When the user steps away, the lid closes and the toilet flushes itself, using just the necessary amount of water to empty the bowl.

Considered so up-market, the Neorest 600 has gone Hollywood, featured among the cache of coveted products in the movie "The Joneses," starring Demi Moore and David Duchovny. 🍷

Clockwise from top left: A simple outhouse in ancient Rome; remains of an ancient toilet in Sri Lanka; a replica of the Sir John Harrington design; the state-of-the-art Neorest 600.