

five
questions
with

Alan Brill, champion of the clean toilet seat

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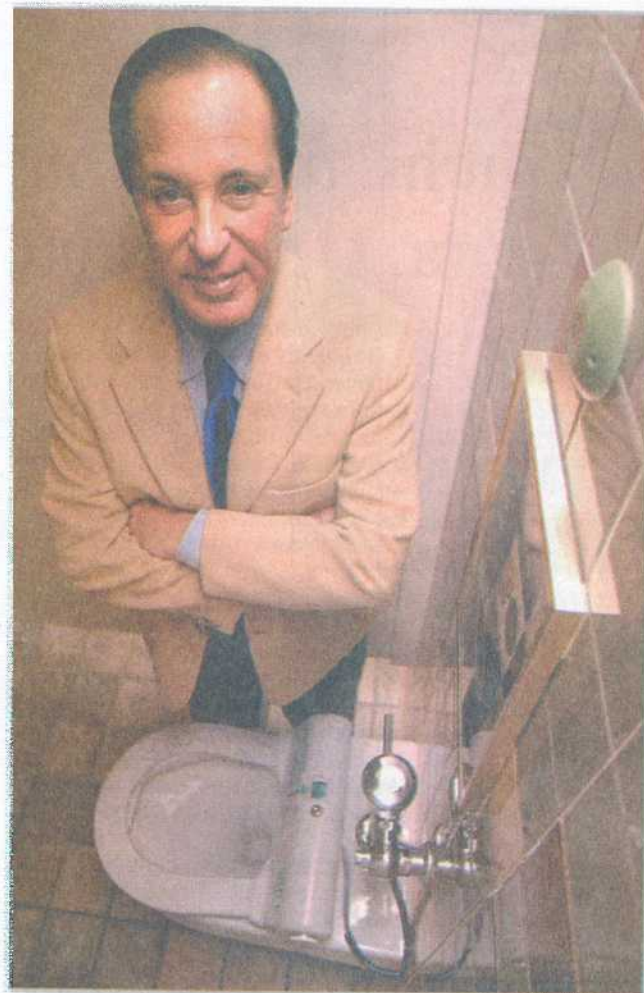
ALAN BRILL IS A CLEAN-TOILET-SEAT FANATIC. The president and chief executive officer of Brill Hygienic Products Inc., Brill is responsible for the cellophane-covered toilet seats in the ladies' rooms at Mohegan Sun, the world's second largest casino.

Men have options in public restrooms. Women don't. It's sit, squat, or try to emulate Olga Korbut in an effort to keep bottom from touching porcelain. But at Mohegan Sun, all toilets in the public ladies' rooms are equipped with a device that rotates clean plastic around the top of the seats with the wave of a hand, making for a sanitary sit-down every time.

The used plastic rotates into an isolated compartment, where it is sliced with a razor blade, preventing reuse.

Brill's Delray Beach, Fla.-based company has been hawking the seats for 15 years. They are also used at Rhode Island's jai alai fronton and dog track, at the New Orleans and Oklahoma City airports, and at high-end stores and in some physicians' offices. The Gridlock Grille on Colman Street in New London has them. About 37,000 toilets nationwide are equipped with the device.

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TIM MARTIN / The Day

■ Alan Brill and a toilet equipped with his disposable plastic seat covers at the Mohegan Sun.

Five Questions ...

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Success hasn't stopped Brill, who declined to give his age, from tinkering with his invention. He recently created a motion-sensor technology, replacing the old push-button method.

Brill was in New York City recently talking to Saks Fifth Avenue, which is putting the seats in its Manhattan store's restrooms. He took some time to answer five questions.

Q: Really, how dirty are toilet seats? It seems like other body parts would be filthier than a backside.

A: Public toilets are filthy. People sweat and their perspiration, when you sit on a seat, transfers to the seat itself. They sweat in their private area. Why do you think jock itch is so popular? Gold Bond sells a lot of jock itch today, for both men and women. ... In this environment, no one wants to sit on a public toilet. Really, someone ought to write a book or teach a course: Toilet Training For Adults.

Q: Why do you think the public has been so accepting of these seats? Newcomers to the casino always remark on how novel the plastic-coated seats are, and how happy they are to use them.

A: Do you realize that when you go in a stall and come out, and touch the door, you're touching the same knob that other people have who haven't washed their hands? You're touching everyone else's germs and bacteria. Would you use someone else's toothbrush? Of course not. So why put your private parts on a public toilet seat?

Q: How did you dream up the idea?

A: My dad came to this country from Russia, and all of his life, he never sat on a toilet seat. He used a bowl instead, and that amazed me. When he was growing up, they didn't have toilet seats. And my mother trained me never to sit on a public toilet seat. She made me so neurotic, sometimes I wouldn't leave home until I used the toilet. So I figured, it would be a great idea to create something where people don't have to sit on a public toilet seat.

Q: But where did the actual concept of the rotating plastic come from?

A: Well, the idea had been around. They had something similar in Europe 20 years ago. But there, you had to push a button, and ours are hands-free. It saves a woman one minute every trip to the bathroom. They used to put paper all over the seat or use those paper seat covers, but they are thin and porous and the moisture and bacteria would seep through. Do you know why those paper covers are so thin? Because you have to flush them away. With this, you get a fresh seat every time. It's the ultimate seat for women.

Q: Why not offer them for men?

A: Men can get to be very expensive. More men now are using stalls for number one. They want privacy and they don't want to stand at a urinal. But when they use a stall, they don't lift the seat, so they make a mess. At high-volume locations, we give the equipment away for free, and charge them for the plastic. It would be expensive to do men. We don't recommend them.