

WHY ARE THERE FIVE TOILETS ON THE CLUBHOUSE LAWN?

Consider the toilet: that porcelain foundation of domestic hygiene, some might say the very foundation of domestic bliss itself. And yet such an unsung hero. It toils in obscurity, behind closed doors, tucked away in privacy and seclusion, dutifully caring for some of our most intimate needs. A stolid, reliable machine it goes largely unremarked day to day, its small magic, its ability to make things we prefer not to dwell upon disappear, taken for granted.

Taken for granted, that is, until things go wrong.

When the toilet rebels it make us suffer. No longer whisked away to the nether regions of sewer or septic by that reassuring flush, we are forced to confront the reality of our biological nature ... often all over the bathroom floor. Even when the toilet merely misbehaves it commands our attention. Listening with concern, we hear it gurgle and whisper at odd moments. We know, we just know, that sound of running water is the sound of money tinkling down the drain.

These, at least, were my thoughts as I looked in passing upon a line of 5 toilets, surprisingly stranded like porcelain ducks on the back lawn of the club, on a January day not long ago. What had these toilets had done, I wondered, to cause someone to roust them from their customary obscurity?

I decided to find out.

I sent an email asking about the toilets to Bob Jones, the club's House and Grounds Coordinator. Bob very helpfully pointed out that he was not the man responsible. He suggested I contact Vern Lhotzky, the club's Vice Commodore.

I was quite surprised to learn that the Vice Commodore (the title sounds very executive level, you must admit) would be directly dealing with toilet replacement. I asked Vern about this when we spoke by phone. Turns out, the Vice Commodore is a very hands on position, responsible for, as Vern put it, "everything above high tide." That's a lot of real estate. The buildings, the grounds, the tenant, and of course the plumbing. Despite having been a club member for only a year and a half, Vern tells me he has had his share of plumbing adventures. The A-frame required plumbing repair and remediation after flooding due to septic issues. And then there are the porcelain ducks I had seen in January.

According to the internet, a middling toilet leak wastes 250 gallons a day. That's almost a cubic meter, which, at Saltspring prices for water, is around \$2.40 per day. That's \$72.00 a month, \$873.00 a year, per leaky toilet. According to Vern, three of the club's five toilets were leaking, two of them quite badly. One suffered from cracked porcelain. Vern said that he had priced out repair for the toilets, and learned the bill would be \$1600.00. He also priced out new toilets, and the cost for replacement came in at \$1500.00 for all five fixtures. For the club's Board, the conclusion was obvious: replace the toilets.

The decision to replace seems obvious from a dollar saving perspective, but it does so primarily because both Vern Lhotzky and Club House Booking Manager Bill Ostwald volunteered to do the work themselves. Bill spent about 4 hours replacing the outside toilets. Vern spent 5 hours on the three inside. The job also required Vern to make three trips to the big island for the toilets and supplies. Peter Grove lent a hand by volunteering himself and his truck to help Vern dispose of the old fixtures.

And so now I, and hopefully you as well, Dear Reader, know why, and thanks to whom, we shall enjoy shining new seats of ease upon which to rest easy indeed, able to take for granted that small magic performed with each flush. Rest easy, that is, if we ignore the potential for roots in the sewer pipes, and overflowing septic tanks. But we must leave the consideration of back flow preventers and septic replacement (both things, Vern tells me, are on the club's horizon) for another day.

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