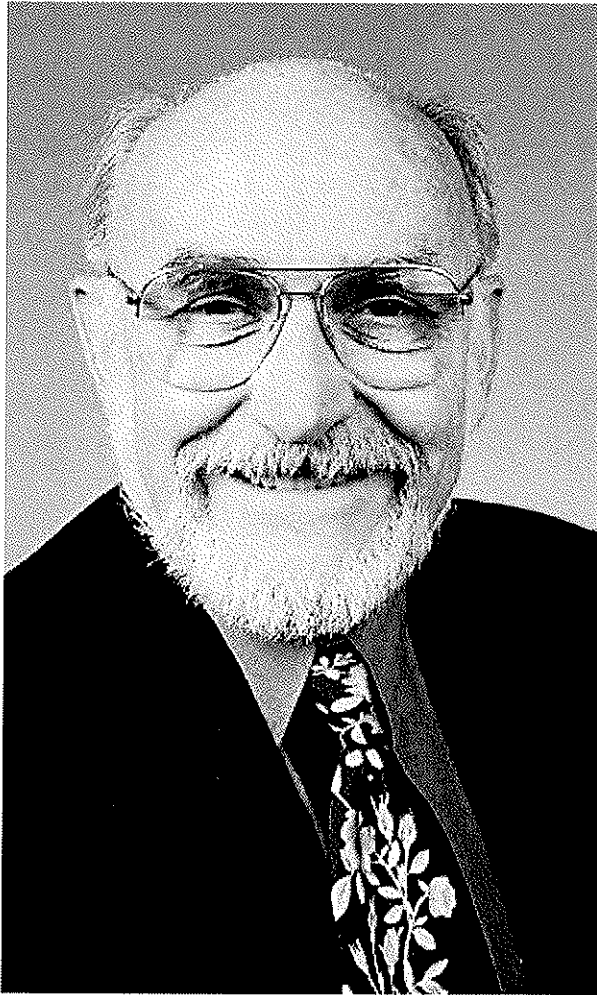


# Commentary



## **Why do women take so long ?**

Why do women take so long ? Bill Hall The Lewiston Tribune

My wife and I were touring an art museum when we discovered that art wasn't the most remarkable aspect of the building. The most memorable part of the building was the restrooms.

We were in a Spanish museum when we both needed a bathroom and we were gratified to learn that the Spanish people have that same need from time to time. So I went to el baño for hombres and she headed for el baño for mujeres.

It was half an hour before I saw her again. Though we were in an otherwise modern and well-organized collection of art, it had the classic failure of public amenities for females

from an earlier era - not enough stalls for women by comparison with the ample number of porcelain facilities routinely provided for men.

Oh sure, some men will insist the whole thing is the fault of women. They require a seating arrangement in every instance whereas males mostly have standing room only. And we don't spend a lot of time fussing in the mirror with our hopeless faces.

It's like the management chose to punish women for making the mistake of being born in a mode that requires longer restroom use. Thus a public washroom for men will serve far more customers in a given time than a restroom of the same size for women.

That day in Spain, I finally found my wife still standing in a long line of women who had been supplied with only a precious few spaces. They had hardly any facilities at all. It was almost uncanny.

But that was not the most remarkable aspect of the museum's neglect of females. The institution in question is the Queen Sofia Museum in Madrid. It is named after the current queen of Spain. And you would think that a queen of all people would understand a shortage of thrones.

The museum is the home of what many regard as Pablo Picasso's most dramatic painting, a huge canvas representing the bombing of the city of Guernica during the Spanish Civil War. One part of the scene shows a woman, her face contorted, screaming as bombs rain down on the townspeople.

Appropriately enough, women approaching that biffy line in which my wife waited had similar expressions on their faces as they realized they were in for another unreasonable wait in a building designed by another thoughtless male architect without a clue as to female needs.

I suppose I sympathize with women in this matter because I was one of those kids who had a father who never seemed to need a bathroom while driving and consequently would rarely stop the car long enough for children with less control. The most frustrating days of my childhood involved enduring the sight of bathrooms flashing by as Ironbladder Hall - not feeling our pain - raced on down the road.

Architects in recent years have done better by women in providing for them in new public buildings, including sports stadiums and theaters - partly because there are far more females in the building design profession today. And any male colleague who doesn't want his blueprints mangled wouldn't dare deny the needs of women.

However, my wife - my queen - reminds me that airports are still among the worst offenders in allowing the female restrooms to be overwhelmed by customers. She's right, of course. As a male, I hardly ever have to wait for a turn. But she hardly ever avoids standing in line. We don't have enough thrones in this country either.

When we drive south a couple hundred miles to visit family, you better believe that, at our age, we know where the rest stops are. And most are designed to serve women well. However, there is one truck stop/convenience store that we have to depend on that has a men's room with two positions and a women's room with one - plus of course, a line of women waiting their turn.

However, if a woman, looking panicky, complains, they point her toward two movable outhouses out back in the parking lot.

Maybe airports should try that. No waiting in line, ladies. Just use the portable units out on the tarmac.

Someday the airports will do better. Someday they will add a huge restroom for females in the center of the complex. And when they do, they should name it after Queen Sofia.

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