

# Man's Best Friend -- His Chair

It's been said that man's best friend is his dog. More realistically, it's his chair — for here is a four-legged friend that never has to be walked; a friend that waits silently for the master of the household to approach, sit down, relax — and perhaps rock or recline.

Even though man has probably found it necessary to sit down ever since he learned to stand up, it is surprising how much variety has been achieved in the design of the chair — a piece of furniture which must, after all, accommodate the seated human figure, whether an Egyptian pharaoh or an American astronaut.

The variety of the chair is beautifully illustrated in a current exhibition titled "Please Be Seated" that the American Federation of Arts is traveling to museums through the country. It was first shown in Washington, D. C. at the Smithsonian Institution's Arts and Industries Building, and the Smithsonian itself contributed some of the examples of chairs from 2000 B. C. to 2000 A. D. included in the AFA exhibit organized "to increase the appreciation of good design in the familiar objects of everyday life."

Not always has the chair been beautiful. But functional, yes. Take, for example, the rocker.

Retired sea captains used to strap a keg of Madeira to the seat of their rocking chairs — not to insure a handy supply but rather to mature the wine. Because Madeira benefits by heat and motion it was customary in the old days to load it in the hold of vessels bound for India. Moreover, a cask of Madeira slung in a cradle used to be kept in shipping offices, and passersby were expected to give the cradle a shove so as to keep the wine always in motion. Remembering these practices, the wise old captains hit upon the happy expedient of maturing their Madeira as they were taking their ease.

Theodore Roosevelt was partial to rockers, as many passages in his writings attest. President William Howard Taft found them well suited to his ample contours, too. More recently the late President John F. Kennedy kept — and used — a rocking chair in his office as a therapeutic device for his injured back, while Lyndon Johnson had one to retire to when confronted by tough and tricky problems of state.

Down home in Texas, though, former President Johnson's favorite chair appears to be the recliner in which he has been pictured chatting with such famed visitors as the heart transplant pioneer, Dr. Christian Bernard — with little Lyn at his feet.

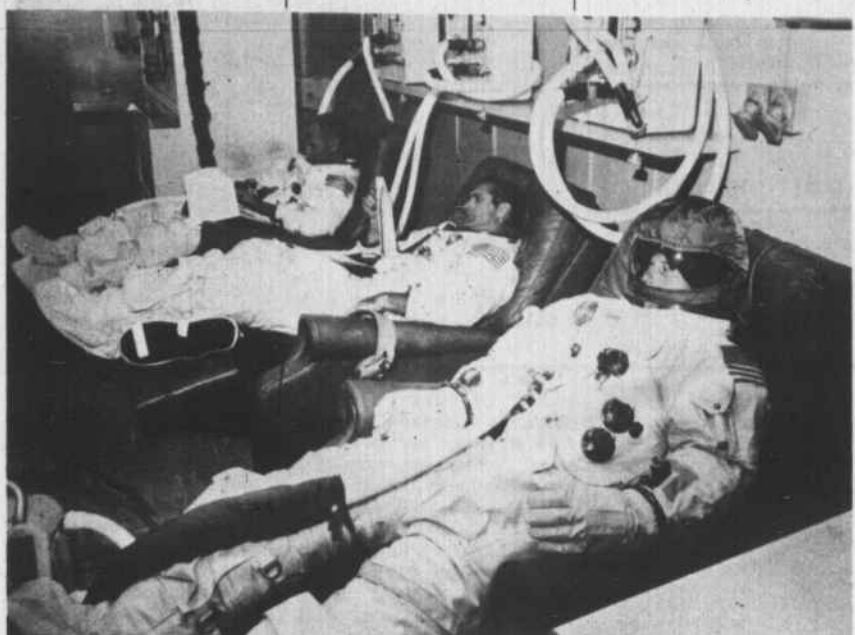
U Thant is another whose favorite retreat is a recliner. After some of the fiery and heated sessions at the United Nations, the secretary-general says he stretches out in his chair to relax and unwind.

Today's recliners are a far cry from the original, credited to the Englishman William Morris, but actually patented here by J. T. Hammit in 1852. Seventeen years later when the Morris chair appeared, it was clumsy and gothic in its design, unlike modern models which react instantly to the lightest touch, and many of which rock as well as recline to TV and nap positions.

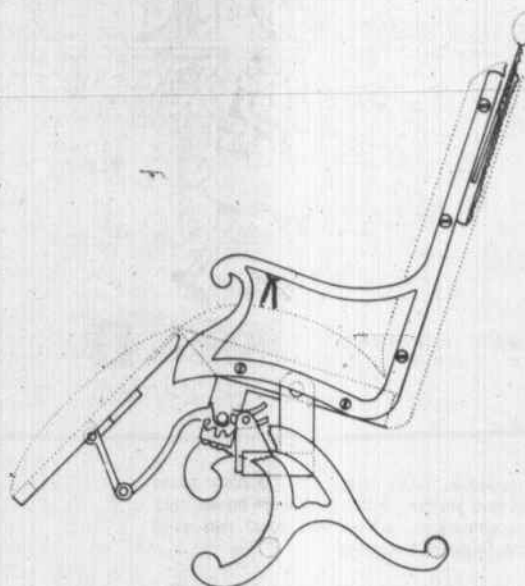
The Berkline Corporation, which specializes in recliners, has just created one which forecasts the 21st century. It is cocoonlike in contour, and has a power hood that slides into position to insure privacy as one watches television, listens to stereo or talks on its built-in telephone. Berkline's "Futurama" chair isn't yet on the market, but even today's recliners are involved with the space age. For example, NASA astro-

nauts relax prior to flight tests in recliners that help them adjust to the feet-up, head-back position they'll assume in their spacecraft.

So man-in-space has something in common with man-at-home. Comfort is the quality that both seek in seating. And comfort is what man always has sought: the comfort of a favorite chair in which to rest, relax — and perhaps to recline.



NASA astronauts Al Bean (left), Dick Gordon and Charles Conrad relax in test center suit room prior to start of Crew Compartment Fit and Function Test of Apollo Spacecraft 104, slated for third manned flight. The astronauts are lounging in Berkline recliners.



Though the Englishman William Morris is credited with the first reclining chair, he actually did not design the chair bearing his name. Nor was it the first. J. T. Hammit designed this reclining chair patented in the U. S. on December 7, 1852—17 years before the "Morris Chair" appeared in England. It is perhaps fitting, however, that the author of "The Earthly Paradise" be associated with what has been described as "celestial seating!"



Pretty TWA hostess Linda Huff is literally sitting in the 21st century as she tests Berkline's "Futurama" chair—a prototype for future home furnishings. The cocoon-like recliner upholstered in Masland Duran's "Delta" vinyl has such built-in conveniences as television, stereo and telephone.

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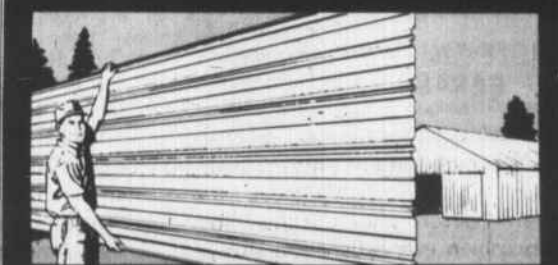
The gold-encrusted original of this elaborate chair was made for the Princess Sitanon of the 18th dynasty in Egypt, circa 1400 B.C. Carvings on the back are representations of protective spirits. Produced in Cairo at the time the Princess' tomb was excavated, the replica was lent by the Baker Furniture Museum to the American Federation of Arts for the AFA's traveling exhibit of chairs from 2000 B.C. to 2000 A.D. titled "Please Be Seated."



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