



Karen Anderson

## If you plan to remodel your bathroom, don't follow the lead of the AHBD

*awards for such things? Club columnist Karen Anderson says it's true.*

Almost every homeowner I know has invested in a bathroom remodel, achieving a practical, comfortable, attractive bathroom environment. So why are the bathrooms in most hotels so abysmally designed?

I found the answer to this eternal question in, of all places, a hotel – one of those nondescript convention hotels with the ugly patterned carpeting, the dim lighting, the slow elevators, and the banquet staff in ill-fitting vests and trousers.

I was there for a nondescript convention. I had stepped out of the cavernous ballroom where we were being bored to death by a PowerPoint presentation. Across the hall from us, there was another meeting in progress. Obviously they weren't having PowerPoints read to them, bullet by bullet. Even with the doors closed, you could hear wild laughter, cheers and applause.

The stanchion outside the ballroom held a small sign with the words "AHBD Annual Awards Ceremony."

What on earth was the AHBD? As another gale of laughter rocked the room, I cracked open the door and peeked inside.

At the front of the room, a man was holding aloft a gleaming trophy that looked oddly like a gold-plated shower head.

"Next year," he said, "let's go for all mirrors, no doors, and voice controls. We can do it if we try!"

What? I thought. Then I found myself face-to-face with an angry-looking woman.

"This is a private event," she hissed, and closed the door in my face. Oops.

After my meeting dragged to its end and my colleagues dashed for the cocktail lounge, I just had to take another look at the AHBD meeting. The room was deserted, and hotel staff was cleaning up. I picked up a printed program

and here's what it said: "Association of Hotel Bathroom Designers Annual Awards Ceremony," followed by these very unusual awards:

### The Big Reach Award

To NBA Associates for establishing new standards requiring that all toilet paper holders be placed more than one arm's length from the toilet seat.

### The Bad Apple Award

To Elegante Concepts for design of an unlabeled, spherical shower control with only two settings: frigid and boiling.

### The Sanctimonious Communications Award

To Public Relations International for the creation of little signs printed in soy ink on recycled soap wrappers that guilt-trip guests into re-using sodden towels even though the bathroom has no towel bars.

### The Enduring Excellence Award

To Mysterious Design for patenting more than a dozen ways to hide a hair dryer.

### The Big Surprise Award

To Shrink Wrap Concepts for the design of bath towels that wouldn't fit around a size 2 fashion model

### The Mirage Award

To Sub Tub Specialties, for their new 4-inch-deep, water-saving bathtubs.

### The Mirage Honorable Mention

To Blackout, Startle & Snarl for the motion-sensing timer that switches on the bathroom light when the guest walks in, then turns off the light while she is soaking in the 4"-deep bathtub.

Stunned, I went to the front desk and asked the hotel convention manager what he knew about the AHBD.

"Oh," he said. "They told us it stands for Association for Housing and Building Design. Very clever people. They can always find the hair dryers, no matter where we hide them. But ..." he lowered his voice to a whisper, "They sure do use a lot of towels."

