

TECHNOLOGY

Happy Home Life, Year 2000

Dustproof, lit to match your mood, and loaded with labor-saving gadgets, America's "home of tomorrow" sounds almost too good to be true.

► IT IS THE YEAR 2000.

Mr. and Mrs. John Smith, Sr., prospering citizens of a prosperous America, have decided on a suitable wedding present for John, Jr.

They did not have to look far. The solution was simplicity itself. They are going to let the boy have his old room in the Smith home, for keeps.

No, Junior and his bride do not plan to live with his parents. Perish the thought.

The room is detachable and readily transportable, as are all the rooms in this "home of tomorrow." It has its own thermoelectric heating, cooling and lighting system built right into the walls. All in all, it will give Junior a nice start toward a home of his own.

Interlocking room units that can be buckled onto a house as the family expands, then unbuckled and presented to the occupants when they grow up and leave home, may be in common use some 40 years from now.

The prediction comes from Chris J. Witting, vice president in charge of the consumer products group at Westinghouse Electric Corporation, Pittsburgh, Pa.

Mr. Witting took a long, optimistic look at the future and forecast many advances that may make home life in 2000 vastly different than it is today.

In a special "health room," for instance, the family will benefit year round from sun baths. Ultraviolet rays from wall panels will provide midwinter tans.

Stapladders and power mowers can be sold to the nearest antique shop. The house will have an exterior finish that never needs repainting. The grass will just stop growing when it reaches a predetermined height.

When a guest arrives at the front door, he will be seen from inside the house on a closed circuit TV set. If you decide to let him in, push a button and the door will slide back into the wall. Meanwhile, an "air curtain" over the open doorway will keep hot or cold air from coming in with him.

Built-in panel lighting will be used not only to light a room, but to change the mood for different occasions. The lighting can be toned down for a quiet dinner party or brightened for bigger, more festive social functions.

Outdoors, "gracious living" will be made somewhat more gracious than it is for today's suburbanites. Electronic wands will keep the bugs out of the yard. Heating elements attached to trees and outer walls will make the yard usable on chilly evenings. No patio will be complete without electroluminescent panels that heat, cool and light the area.

Home entertainment will be plentiful.

Radio sets the size of a matchbox will be high in quality.

Two tiny wireless pellets, placed in the ears, will give each member of the family a portable, personalized high-fidelity stereo speaker system. Other speakers will be built into curtains and drapes.

Television will be in wide use, not only as an entertainment medium, but for home education as well. Receivers will be designed to blend with architecture and furnishings. Sets will take shapes and forms far different from today's cabinets.

Mr. Witting noted that viewer reaction to televised political debates and Presidential press conference shows increasing interest in public affairs. By 2000, we may be seeing not only our own Congress in action, but the French Chamber of Deputies or the Congress of New Delhi as well. "There would be world-wide discussions between these bodies, and such proceedings could be carried 'live' either on closed circuit systems or right into our homes," he said.

Mr. Witting also believes there will be increased emphasis on the language, history and philosophies of other countries, particularly for businessmen who want to stay in business.

School work, he said, probably will be supplemented by central libraries that send

on request programmed courses to closed circuit home radio sets.

Executives will conduct more of their business affairs at home. Some will take part in televised conferences "from such points as Hong Kong, London, Paris, Rome . . . almost any place in the civilized world."

Businessmen will dictate letters and reports to computers that transmit the message directly to its destination.

A cordless telephone will be used in homes, automobiles and airplanes. In the house, this talented instrument will be able to start dinners, take recorded messages, open doors, or order groceries at a preset time.

Clothing worn during travel will feature lapel dials that can be adjusted to increase or decrease the output of thermoelectric temperature controls built into the garments.

Clothing will be washed and dried by ultrasonic energy. Closets will include equipment to clean suits and dresses. Hang them up at night, and they will be cleaned, pressed and ready to wear the next morning.

The housecleaning problem will be all but whipped. Pollen and dust will be filtered from incoming air. Wall and ceiling panels will provide heat without dust or soot.

Shoes will be cleaned automatically by door mats with automatic air streams. Miniature devices enclosed in window shades will clean windows ultrasonically when the shades are raised and lowered. Dishes and glasses will be cleaned on storage shelves.

Thermoelectric compartments also will handle cooking and refrigeration. Cooking containers will be disposable. Recipes will be flashed on a special TV screen, along with a photo of the way the dish should look when it is ready to eat.

Taking matters a step further, and looking briefly into the 21st century, Mr. Witting predicted some additional developments between the year 2000 and the year 2050.

Weather conditions, he said, will be controlled.

Automobiles will create their own gravity-free field as they move, using air jets to control height, direction and speed. The power will come from high-frequency radio waves, beamed from transmitting towers. Riders may talk to friends in distant states on solar-powered telephones. The sound waves will be bounced from circling satellites.

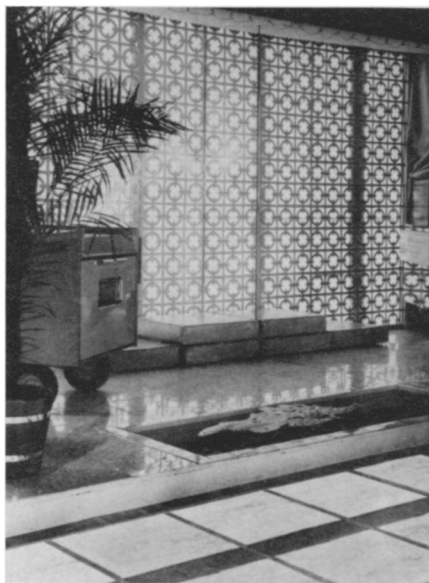
Commuters will be whisked through giant tunnels at speeds up to 500 miles per hour in cylinder-shaped vehicles driven by electromagnetism.

Shoppers will save wear and tear on their feet. They will be traveling on moving sidewalks.

If a man feels like taking off, he can literally take off. He can carry his own lightweight helicopter, with collapsible blades, in a small, neat case on his back.

• Science News Letter, 81:314 May 19, 1962

The sodium content of drinking water may interfere with low-salt diets.



BRIGHT WALL—Cool-to-touch lighting panels, allowing walls, floors and ceilings to be "turned on" like light bulbs, are expected to be used widely in future homes.