



## Thank heavens for modern loos

**Elisabeth Lee, 30, TODAY sub-editor**

To leaf through this book is to take a stroll down Singapore's memory lane. Some photos are a game of spot-the-difference. Others are a stark reminder of what, and who, we've lost.

Sifting through the pictures, this one of a kampung toilet submitted by **Karen Young** stood out. Looking at it triggered neither fond nostalgia nor the ache of a keenly-felt loss, but a sense of sheer relief. It made me want to fall on my knees and thank the good HDB for the indoor plumbing in my flat.

Singapore has come a long way, and nothing has come further than the state of our loos.

Imagine waking up in the middle of a moonless night with a sudden urge to use the loo, groping your way outside, fumbling for a kerosene lamp and a handful of newspapers (yep, no four-ply toilet paper then, either), and then squatting. Think of the horrors lurking in the shadows. Notice the massive gap between wall and roof — this loo was definitely not python-proof. It could have been worse, I guess, but not much.

Now, we have indoor plumbing, electricity and our bathrooms are sometimes even en suite. Imagine that. Yes, we still have our problems. Sometimes you have to squat, and sometimes there's no soap in the dispenser — but at least we're indoors and it's well-lit.

So, if you're reading this, sniffing a little and feeling a little wistful, and Barbra Streisand is crooning *The Way We Were* in your head, take a look at the outhouse. And think twice.