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Reports From Our Pandemic-Era Bedroom, Where 'Air Conditioner Privilege' Lives

BY JOSEPH WILSON

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Amidst record-breaking heat (<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/bradlyns-blog-record-arctic-heat-1.5629867>) this summer across Canada, the lack of air conditioning in our house became exhausting.

We used to spend our summer days alternating between the neighbourhood splash pads, the wading pools and the sprinkler in our back yard. Nights were spent arranging fans around windows with millimetre-level precision in an effort to harness the cool, elusive night air.

So in July we got an air conditioner for our master bedroom.

If you want a cool activity, play with a bag of ice — read here (<https://www.cbc.ca/parents/play/view/12-ways-to-turn-a-bag-of-ice-into-the-best-toy-ever>) to find out the many ways to do just that!

It felt like it took approximately 18 hours to wrangle the unit into our window, with towels and T-shirts stuffed into the gaps around it. When we finally switched it on, it felt like the bedroom itself breathed a sigh of relief, relaxing as the cool air flowed like spring water.

But any gift from the gods, as many a Greek parable will tell you, brings new problems. File this under the category of “be careful what you wish for.”

The air conditioning unit has turned our bedroom into the most popular place in the house.

I am writing this article from said bedroom beneath a life-preserving flood of cool air. My youngest daughter is also here, bouncing on our bed to the rhythm of a song she made up. Another daughter is curled up in the corner reading a book and yet another is using my cell phone to make a video in a genre she calls “going crazy.”

"A ping-pong table is certainly not as comfortable as a full desk, yet the basement was thankfully free of children. I miss that."

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didn't take long for my daughters to realize how much more comfortable it was in the cool master bedroom than it was in the rest of the house. And my wife and I couldn't deny them the pleasure of a comfortable room. We had what you might call 'air-conditioner privilege' and sharing it with our kids was a moral imperative.

During the long months of the pandemic lockdown when we were homeschooling the children, my only refuge was a corner of the ping-pong table in our basement where the temperature was mercifully cool and the Wi-Fi was strong. I would write, take Zoom meetings and dash off emails in our cavernous, cinder-block basement.

A ping-pong table is certainly not as comfortable as a full desk, yet the basement was thankfully free of children. I miss that.

Air-Conditioned Disputes

The air conditioner has also led to disputes with my wife.

She has an internal body temperature, I am sure, that is a full ten degrees lower than mine. Every evening, without fail, she says, to no one in particular, “it's cooling off nicely,” while my daughters and I are shedding perspiration like a waterfall.

"When they hear the whine of the A/C fan start up, they float into our room like currents on the cool air."

When she tucks the girls in at night she puts their fan on level one, and when I come in to say goodnight I invariably crank it up to three.

Keeping the air conditioner on all night makes the bedroom too cold for her liking. Plus it means we can't hear the kids if they cry out during the night. So there is a window of two to three hours before we go to sleep when I run the air conditioner in our bedroom with the hopes it will sufficiently cool the space to a comfortable temperature, for both me and her.

No A/C? Try this tasty recipe for strawberry and cream popsicles — get it here (<https://www.cbc.ca/parents/food/view/frozen-summer-treat-strawberries-and-cream-popsicles>).

This, naturally, attracts the kids to our room at the very hour they are supposed to be falling asleep.

When they hear the whine of the A/C fan start up, they float into our room like currents on the cool air. So, we pile up on our bed and read *Asterix* comics and compliment the cold air like it's a debonair guest we've invited for dinner and don't want to offend.

If I'm honest, however, most of the time I love the magnetic pull the air conditioner exerts from our bedroom. It's not very conducive to getting any work done, but it squeezes our family into an intimate embrace, united by cold air in a single room against the hostility of the sweaty, virus-infested world outside.

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