

Easton Courier

What Would I Do Without My AC?

By Larissa Lytwyn

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Warm and humid weather finally arrived last week, providing a much-needed hiatus from a succession of rain-chilled days. At first, I was thrilled. Like most people, I adore the heat. However, my adoration ebbs when indoor temperatures soar well above 80 degrees.

By mid-week, my cozy apartment was downright stifling. I'm one of those odd characters who can't sleep unless I have at least one blanket covering my shoulders. Imagine, then, the challenge I endured.

Open windows and whirring fans provided little comfort, so I decided it was time to buy an air-conditioner.

When I mentioned my plan to my father, he instantly said he'd get me one.

"Oh, you don't have to," I said. "I'm planning to save, somehow, to buy a unit myself. Now, I admit, being a 20-something living in Fairfield County on a modest salary is not easy.

But I was determined to buy an air conditioner myself.

I didn't really get a chance, though, because two days later my father called.

"Can I come over?" he asked. "I have something for you."

I took a sip of ice water and repositioned myself yet again in front of the fan, seeking rather elusive comfort.

"You didn't," I said, my voice tinged with unabashed glee.

Two hours later my father pressed the "on" button. The unit droned deliciously.

"It's not too loud, is it?" he asked worriedly.

"No!" I laughed. "Not at all. It's fantastic. It really is."

Although the rainy weather has returned, I know the heat will inevitably return, and this time, I'll be prepared.

I was thinking about how important air conditioning had become in my life when I listened to Board of Finance members discuss the importance of bringing a proposal to install a \$565,000 air conditioning unit into Samuel Staples Elementary School to a Town Meeting.

I agree that public input is crucial. There is \$627,000 in a contingency fund left over from the \$31.5 million approved for the Staples project.

It's a lot of money. In light of the narrowly passed 2006-07 budget and the Region 9 Board of Education request for \$1.3 million to complete the Joel Barlow High School building project, this meeting could give residents a chance to speak out in a way they may not have been able to before.

Through the unique Town Meeting format, residents will have the opportunity to have their say in a way that is more interactive than pressing a lever in a voting booth.

Residents can ask questions and hopefully get the answers they're looking for.

Some Board of Finance members are worried that the numbers presented by School Building Committee Co-Chairman Steve Rowland are not "hard" enough.

I honestly don't have an opinion on this one way or another. Like the Board of Finance concluded, it is ultimately up to residents to make their decision.

One thing I thought was interesting, however, was when several people talked about the "old days" before air conditioning was all around us.

We take so much for granted, be it air conditioning in our cars and homes or technology that allows us to conduct a conversation entirely online through instant messaging.

A few summers ago, the Easton Historical Society conducted a weeklong summer camp for students at the Adams Schoolhouse, circa 1850.

The camp was difficult, however, because of the heat.

One camp group even sought refuge in the air-chilled Easton Public Library one day because the heat was oppressive.

I can't help but think about how it was when children were actually going to school at the Adams Schoolhouse.

They went in the summer and winter because they helped their families plant in the spring and harvest in the fall.

Perhaps, because they had never been exposed to air conditioning, they had no idea what it felt like.

I suppose it's impossible to go backwards. Air conditioning is something that is necessary, in many cases, for maintaining health.

Children and the elderly are often more sensitive to the heat. Ironically, a lot of elderly people grew up without air conditioning and still don't have it, and they're doing fine.

But today, just like most people use computers and telephones, most people use air conditioning. Most of my school classrooms were air-conditioned.

I think it would be wonderful for Staples to get air conditioning, and I hope that down the road a similar initiative might bring it to Helen Keller Middle School.