

Rick Blum

The New Regime

Silence echoes around the house like a cat rubbing your leg demanding to be noticed. The quiet is interrupted only by the dog awakening to a young mother pushing a stroller, or a delivery truck on its daily rounds. Otherwise, the loudest noise is the ringing in my ears.

Clutter is noticeably absent as if melted away by a warm spring rain. No need to dodge a boxed-up television in the hallway Or stacks of sundry clothes and cosmetics piled outside the laundry room door. Even the kitchen table can be seen again, Unencumbered by purses the size of potato sacks, and bags of recent purchases waiting to be redistributed to whichever place might be their ultimate destination, usually the bathroom.

The washing machine lies unexpectedly empty, no longer harboring a stash of wet clothes waiting for days to be transferred to the dryer, which itself now churns away only during waking hours, not at two in the morning when the all-done buzzer can be mistaken for my alarm clock's urgent plea to put aside dreams for the real world of work.

The refrigerator is not stuffed with bottles of water of various sizes and shapes, boasting purity and health benefits not contemplated just a decade ago. The few containers of leftovers date back only a week or so, not long enough to have turned an unfamiliar color . . . or smell usually associated with swamps. Yet, even in its scarcity, there seems to be more than enough food to throw together three squares a day for a week.

In the family room, the TV beckons anyone who enters to press the remote's on-button, so it can fill the day and nighttime void with never ending adventures of young people looking for love, stardom or just a new look. Instead, it has to settle for just a few evening hours of Countdown and Bill Moyers' Journal, and maybe an occasional basketball game.

Yes, the girls are back at school and the house is quiet again.

I think I'll give them a call.

Rick Blum is a freelance writer based in Carlisle, MA. He was a regular humorist for the local town paper for more than 15 years, and has been a frequent contributor to business and professional magazines since the late 80's.