

VILLAGE VIEW

ANDREA LEONARD

Dog Days are here. That doesn't mean we'll suffer from unrelieved humidity from now until Labor Day, but it does mean there will be plenty of days in the remaining weeks of July and August when the combination of high temperatures and dew-points will make us less than comfortable.

Since few of us can spend most of our time at the beach, what can we do to keep cool? There are alternatives to immersing our bodies in cool water; there are methods of combatting the muggies that are surprisingly effective.

Lacking airconditioning (which is probably the most expensive cooling equipment ever invented) the most efficient devices are fans to keep the air in motion: the cooler the air being circulated, the better you'll feel. Keeping cool night air inside the house begins with closing doors and windows early in the morning, and lowering shades and closing draperies to keep out both sun and heat.

Since electric lights emit a lot of heat and cooking raises temperatures, plan to read by the light from a north window and, if you must cook, set up your charcoal grill in the yard, or use your electric frying pan in the garage, carport, or on the patio.

Just as a well-insulated house helps prevent heat-loss in winter, insulation delays heat intrusion in summer. Exactly the same principles apply in either season except for reversing the arrangement of shades and draperies; shut the sun out in summer and let in all you can in winter.

By mid-afternoon, on those days that can only be described as sweltering, inside temperatures will probably have risen to within five or six degrees of that outdoors. Once the sun has moved into the western sky, however, there's usually a breeze from the southwest, here on the Cape, and that means it's coming off the cool waters of Vineyard Sound. Opening doors and windows at that time will change the air, and even as it replaces the cooler air you've kept trapped in the house most of the day, it will in turn be cooled by walls, ceilings, floors, and furnishings.

Once the sun sets, the ground gives up its heat rapidly; temperatures of evening air drop quickly. This is when fans do their best work. For efficient cooling second only to air conditioning, an attic fan is the machine of choice, but it can't do as good a job as it might unless it's used judiciously.

Opening all doors and windows and running the attic fan will accomplish little. A rush of cool air will be sucked directly to the fan from the nearest air-port leaving the rest of the house much the same temperature. To cool the entire interior with an attic fan (and, incidentally to pump hot air from the attic itself) close windows and outside doors near the fan. Open those farthest away from it.

Whether yours is a ranch house with a ceiling fan in a hallway or a two story house with the fan mounted over a stairway, to get the best effects run the fan system so cool air is drawn into your living areas early in the evening. Once the evening air has penetrated every corner, cooled all interior

surfaces and contents, it's time to readjust windows and doors.

Close them in living areas and open them in bedrooms. It may be best, in your own house, to let the fan do its work on one room at a time. Only through experimentation with various patterns of open and shut air intakes can you work out the best method for using your attic fan to give you the most relief.

If an attic fan isn't standard equipment in your house, a large window fan can be nearly as satisfactory. For best results it should be installed to fit snugly in the window opening. Little is achieved if the fan is bringing cool air into the room from spaces around its own frame and blowing it right back out the window. You want to move the air through as long a path as possible.

Be sure, too, the window fan is blowing hot air **out** the window. When the hot interior air is exhausted by the fan, a vacuum is created, and as any schoolboy can tell you, nature hates a vacuum and goes immediately to work to fill it. Outside air will flow into the house more quickly to make you feel comfortable sooner if the hot air is sucked out.

Small fans on pedestals work the same way to cool a single room. For best results, place the fan on a table in front of an open window. Adjust the distance between the fan and the window frame so you can feel the "disc" of the air being moved at the edges of the window. Open one other window in the room, preferably directly opposite that where the fan is running.

At first you may doubt that this arrangement is achieving much to cool **YOU** off because you don't feel any breeze rushing past your ears. Given 15 or 20 minutes to do its work, however, you'll soon realize the entire room, and everything in it, is much cooler.

All these air-moving principles work well if you have a fan.

If you follow these suggestions, chances are good that by bedtime you can switch off the fan and enjoy a good night's sleep, free from drafts, and surrounded by delightfully cool fresh air. They apply, however, only when the outside air is cooler than that inside your house.

What can you do to cool off during the day, supposing you can't get to the beach for one good reason or another?

It's a real scorcher, and you're gasping. You've made sure you're getting enough liquid to replace that lost in

perspiration, eaten lightly, and taken a lukewarm shower, but there's little relief, and the day stretches ahead with long hours until sunset. What's the answer?

Go down cellar. Take a good book or a pile of magazines you've been meaning to read. Bring some unanswered correspondence. Set up a card table and a comfortable chair. Work on your budget. Balance your check book. Whittle down that pile of mending that's accumulated. Reorganize your sewing basket. Clean up the work bench, sort out all the nuts, bolts and screws, and put them in small jars where you'll be able to find easily what you need next time you want to repair something around the house. Sort through all those boxes of old Christmas ornaments, and discard the ones too bedraggled for future use.

The cellar, you'll find, is the coolest place to be. Down below the ground's surface, the earth holds a temperature close to 60° all year round. The hot outside air doesn't circulate there, and the sun's rays don't penetrate to warm the concrete walls. It's a lovely spot to spend the day. If, after you've cooled off, you wonder if you wouldn't be just as comfortable outside, climb the stairs and step into the heat, just to see. You'll soon retreat gratefully to the cave-like depths.

Cavemen, early in the history of human life, found living inside the earth cooler in summer and warmer in winter. Maybe they were a lot smarter than we've given them credit for being.