

# Mom captured essence of visit from grandkids

My mother died a few days ago. We all just returned from a trip to her home in New Hampshire to celebrate her life, taking turns telling stories and reading her poetry. I just didn't have a column in me this week, but I thought I might share with you one of Mom's essays for New Hampshire Public Radio. Those of you with grandchildren (Mom left six) and those who aspire to future grandparenthood might particularly appreciate it.



OPINION  
**BARRY FAGIN**  
Contributing columnist

## EXHALING

by Lois Roisman

"There's a rhythm to summer for grandparents in the Upper Valley. I call it Inhale/Exhale. At a certain point in July or August, you inhale and the house in which you'd comfortably rattled all year becomes tight with children and grandchildren — hundreds of them. When you think you can't hold your breath another second, they get in their cars and leave, and you exhale, slowly.

"But it takes more than an exhale to reclaim a grandma's life. I'm halfway through a very long reclamation list. Thus far I've:

- Returned the library books (with a little contribution for wear and tear)

- Taken the rug with the vomit on it to the cleaners ('But I love chocolate ice cream and lemonade')

- Retrieved the grapes and half-eaten apples from under the furniture ('No, I want a whole one')

- Rerolled the toilet paper

- Stored the dinosaur cookie cutters back on the top shelf (I still can't make them cut clean. Maybe next year)

- Melted the Cherry Garcia and poured it down the drain (we can't live under the same roof without uniting)

- Burned the Barney tape (Yeeses!)

- Vacuumed the Oreo crumbs from under the sofa cushions — I don't know how they got there, since the kids were only to eat them outside or in the kitchen

- And I unsuccessfully tried to find the source of that smell!

- A pretty good start, but it's hardly made a dent in the list. This afternoon I must do the following:

- Restraining the clothesline (Don't ask)

- Comb the upper meadow for two forks to the everyday set (I don't want the children to be satisfied with plastic at picnics)

- Find four tops to the red, pink (That's

- Zoe's favorite color), purple and black magic markers

- Find the three of spades and the six of diamonds (Max beat me playing Fish)

- Locate the smallest block in the set of 10 stacking blocks (It's the Rhode Island of stacking blocks)

- Find the three ball and that triangle thing for the pool table (Max is precocious at pool)

- Take down Zoe's paper chain over the dining room doors (Okay, I'll keep it up for awhile)

- Mail the photos to Great Grandma Sylvia and all the children

- Delete Winnie the Pooh from the My Favorites chart on my computer

- Wipe the grape jelly from all wooden furniture arms

- Call the plumber

- Pay bills with friendly notes of apology

- Hang Anna's wildflowers upside down in the basement to dry

- Reorganize the costume trunk and dryclean the tutu (Lily fancies herself a ballerina — she pliets while eating soft ice cream with sprinkles)

- Mail forgotten stuff

- Choose six representative works of art from the 85 samples left behind (Erica's terrific at drawing dragons, Zoe prefers mermaids)

- Vacuum the car

- Shampoo the car

- Oh, well. Take the car to be cleaned, inside and out

- Cut the sticky stuff out of the dog's hair

- Send e-mail to all the grandchildren so they'll have it when they get home.

- Count the days til the next visit.

- Find the source of that smell!

- Tough work, but it's all gotta be done before I can reclaim my territory.

- I have a fantasy that drives me. When I've done it all, when every squished grape has been retrieved, when the two of spades is safely in the pack, when all the magic markers are cozy under their caps, I will sit on the patio in my rocking chair, a tall glass of cranapple juice by my side, and blow bubbles with the last of the soap bubble liquid.

- What a way to exhale!"

Good-bye, Mom. And thank you.

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