

## THE KITCHEN

by JAMES COLLINS

In the 1950's the kitchen was the center of my home, the heart, the very pulse of the family. Open 24/7, everything of importance to the family was done here. Every meal, every meeting, every chastisement and every laugh originated here. The day started well before sun rise and the kettle was always heating on the gas stove. Steam rose in the corner where the stove sat and permeated all the rooms of the apartment carrying the aromas of toast, bacon, fried eggs and coffee to those still groggy from lack of sleep. The kitchen had a life of its own and schedules had to be met.

Breakfast was from 6:00 to 7:30 AM as dad who held three jobs went out to work and mom who prepared all the meals got the kids out to school and I went to college.

We lived on the top floor of a five story apartment building in the Bronx. In those days there was no dishwasher, no washing machine and no dryer. Well no machine that is – mom did two of these chores and used the clothesline on the roof to dry the clothes. Kids came home for lunch each day and that schedule was a mandate.

My schedule was keyed to the rest of the family. The college day ended and I got back about 5:00 after a two hour part time job. Before and after supper the younger kids used the kitchen for study. Mom would prepare supper while quizzing them on their lessons. After supper (about 6:00PM), I went to bed and slept till 11:00 PM. From then on the kitchen was mine. Tea and pie or cookies competed with Calculus and Physics textbooks for table space. There was no TV to distract you but a small Philco radio, playing music while resting on the refrigerator, was my companion until homework and studies ended between 2:00 or 3:00 AM. Again the schedule drove everything. I had to quit at 3:00 AM to go back to bed until 7:00AM and the day started all over again. The kitchen never closed and sixty years

later in my house, in those of my siblings, and in those of all my children, the kitchens hum with excitement. Love and laughter always have a home in all our kitchens.

**THE END**