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## We All Live in a Quiet Neighborhood

We live in a quiet neighborhood. Most days when I go outside, I hear only the wind, if there is wind that day, a small plane going over 1,500 feet up, a jet plane much higher, a railroad train a quarter mile away, cars and trucks on the freeway at some distance, cars and trucks on closer roads, motorcycles, and closer, lawnmowers, edgers and trimmers, snow blowers, leaf blowers, carpet cleaners, airless paint sprayers, pressure washers, electric sanders, cut off saws, other rotary saws, and air conditioners.

Hydraulic jack hammers mounted on track hoes break volcanic bedrock to clear for building foundations for houses and apartment buildings, usually at least a block from here, since everything closer is already built on, but the very large hydraulic jackhammer breaking-rock noise carries a long way, through stone, through soil, through air.

My nearest neighbor set up a woodshop in his garage. His garage opens toward my house. I'll try to see him out and around and I'll strike up a conversation and hope to convince him that golf at some far-from-here course is a more interesting and health-building way to use time than noisy, dusty, woodshop work. I'm reclusive most of the time, primarily because I practice my music (so far, alone), write, and work on my website. I'm not likely to see him out and around, though if the woodshop noise becomes dominant enough, I will find time to walk next door and talk to him about golf, fishing, hunting, wildlife photography, all the interesting hobbies available to a modern, financially-enabled man. Best hobbies, of course are ones where a man takes his dogs along for their exercise, for companionship that strengthens the human and best friend bond and leaves nothing at home to bark and bark and bark for loneliness and abandonment the entire day through.

I don't understand why this house we live in contains sound well but is diddly for excluding sound. I hear even a quiet outdoor conversation across the street and down one house, though I usually can't make out the individual words. I've attempted to understand why I hear them but they don't hear me. (I've checked and found sound does not carry as easily from inside the house out). After researching online and finding nothing that explains the sound situation here, I accepted what I think of as something strange about acoustics and as something I know is without understanding why. I won't invest additional time in trying to understand why it is, because understanding it will take more of my time, might not be achievable in any case, and won't enable me to change it.

I don't own this house. The use of this house is a gift from a friend, who bought it that we might have shelter from the storm as long as we need it. I surmise this house's odd relationship with sound is characteristic of this type of house, all the houses in this area, even all houses everywhere. It is relevant to me because I do all my work at home, work best in a quiet place inside, and require quiet for my music, especially when I record.

Today, and for some days past and some days into the future, two men remove the front porch of this house and build a new porch. They work noisily, with power tools, with much hammering and other noises of construction. While they work, I practice some of my songs, trying to strengthen my ability to work despite distractions. Several times, I put my guitar on its stand and work on this essay. Earlier this morning, I rapidly satisfied my need to identify sounds coming from their work and walked away from viewing their work area.

I hear something now that sounds like a large blowtorch. I trust the working men's sensibility enough (It surely would gain them nothing to burn the house down. Is this not so?) that I proceed with my own work of writing and of practicing music. The blowtorch sound, whatever it is (not a blowtorch, I'm sure, am I not?) will stop. I don't feel excessive heat.

I would like a quiet day. I feel the need to get on with my work, and I am calm about all the noises around me (mostly calm. Usually calm. Comparatively calm. {Compared to exactly what?}), probably mostly because I must be. The unnecessary noise will be there. I can fight all the noise coming to my ears by harboring rising resentment. Rising resentment does not lead me to do or think well and productively. Rising resentment exhausts me while achieving nothing.

I can go someplace with Laura for lunch.

Going somewhere with Laura for lunch would use a large portion of my energy for today.

Laura and I often go someplace for lunch. There is no quiet restaurant in Bend that I know about.

Even going someplace noisy can fulfill our need to get away for a while and impresses me once again that, though where we live is noisy, our neighborhood, this house, my work area, is relatively quiet. Realizing that by being in incessantly, very noisy places for a while ( during lunch; getting there and back {My goodness, how many cars are there right around us? in this town-city? in the world? How many trucks?}) makes it essential to sustain and express my gratitude for the measure of quietude we have at home. We do have some quietude at home. Between noisy work and noisy events, we do achieve quietude.

Sometimes I want to get more writing and music done, so I stay home. I don't go to lunch or to the park. Like today.

Me oh my, many airplanes fly over my head in our sky this morning.

More airplanes fly over us every day than have done in our twenty years here, in Bend, Oregon, maybe because the economy is robust now for most who are affluent enough to own planes and to take them out of their hangars to enjoy a noisy summer in the sky above the land.

I think there are no noise restrictions on aircraft. I think there has been very little effort to make airplanes quiet. I think it would be easily possible to make them and other machines much quieter.

The addition of the front-porch work to the day creates a lesson in powers and priorities for me. Am I going to muster creative energy, step above the busy sounds of industrial culture around me and achieve something of beauty and usefulness, or am I going to allow the distracting culture to distract me and use most of my energy? Guess. Whatever you guess will be right part of the time.

Deciding not to be heavily distracted by noise doesn't mean I accept noise as a necessary part of modern culture. It isn't necessary. Noise can be engineered out of machines, but noise free hasn't been of enough importance in this culture to work toward with intentional design. Most engineers aren't stupid, but engineers and the rest of the design-work force haven't realized or accepted into their work strong positive value for high quality of existence for breathers of air, for hearers of machine noise, for partakers of and participants with the earth and our soil, though designing these values into machines might mean even more for all life than high profits from lazily designed, money-oriented work.

Even designers need sustainable, pleasing environment. Designers often have children and grandchildren who need a sustainable, pleasing environment. Why should we and our children and grandchildren live in an ugly world when a pleasant-to-live-in, beautiful world is as easy to achieve and more pleasant to live toward and within? What is our goal for our lives, for the places and the environment where we live?

We are all designers. We designed what surrounds us. If we didn't actively build it, we accepted it. We accepted more negative forces and atmosphere than we needed to accept. By accepting more negative forces and atmosphere, we have allowed design for our shared world that can be less than pleasant, that is becoming less pleasant, is becoming dangerous to live in, on, or near.

We aren't helpless. We can change our environment by changing ourselves, by moving toward more quietude in our own existence, by making less noise, by using less that makes noise, by using less that makes noise to bring into existence, by spreading the value for quietude at every opportunity, through our actions, through our words, through our expressed values. By changing toward those positive values, we create a higher quality of existence, in ourselves and around us.