

Peace in the Concrete Jungle?

by John C. Gifford, CBPM, NCTMB - Owner, Motionwise®

"So sorry you have to return to the concrete jungle," said the clerk at the gas station on my return trip from northern Michigan. While living for a year in a one-room cabin in the mountains of Great Barrington, Massachusetts, I wrote some thoughts down that arose in me upon hearing the phrase, "We need to get back to nature." The entry ended with, "Nature is not something to return to, it is something from which we cannot escape, and one more question for those who seek solitude in the forest... where will you find peace when you are not in the company of trees?"

Fast-forward twenty-one years. With my nephew Luke, I have traveled deep into the Amazon jungles of South America; in the Smokey Mountains I have experienced "icicle hiking," a rare phenomenon where billions of tiny icicles are blown off the trees and you sink in two feet with each step on the trail (the ice glistening through the forest, the sound of icicles moving, and the feeling of your body pushing through the crystals is unforgettable). I have watched the morning steam rise from the Lake in the Clouds of the Porcupine Mountains. Is it "external nature" that fills

me with awe and reverence or is it the reconnection to a part of my "internal nature" that I most long for that is revealed in those experiences? What is most at work here, the outer space or its impact on my cherished inner space? Sometimes what we love most about an experience or a person are the feelings that arise in us in their presence.

Last night while walking, the sound of a street light took me back in time to my grandfather's farm when I was eight years old. As I would wait outside for him to come home, the hum of a single pole light would keep me company. Now, over thirty years later, the same sound was triggering vivid memories of life with my grandparents. I cannot remember a time in my life when I felt so loved and so free as I did in their presence.

That walk acted like a time machine, taking me back to feelings I have so desperately needed to feel again. Nepal? Alaska? Ireland? All incredible I'm sure, and on my list of places to see, and yet, last night I would not have given up the asphalt and streetlights for the lot. Till next time,

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Photo by Darlene Czech

John Gifford has performed over 30,000 sessions as an approved provider of sports massage and a unique style of bodywork called Bonnie Prudden Myotherapy® and Exercise Therapy. His mission as a clinician, lecturer, consultant, and author is to empower people to lead more active, successful, and fulfilling lives through the reduction and prevention of their muscular pain and tension.

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