

The Sounds of Life

By Gail Kauranen Jones

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“Transitions: The Gifts of Change”

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“There is a community of the spirit. Join it, and feel the delight of walking in the noisy street and being the noise. Drink all your passion, and be a disgrace. Close both eyes to see with the other eye.”

--Rumi

Living on a cul-de-sac where children actually play in the street, and hearing the noise of traffic nearby on routes 1 and 97, is an engaging experience for my son and me after spending mostly quiet years on a more pastoral setting.

“I can tell if a car is speeding by,” my son comments, excited to track the sounds of life moving around us.

Recalling the many snow and ice storms when I felt house-bound and isolated in the more secluded setting of my former home, I am relieved now to see neighbors coming and going. One stopped over to introduce herself and offered my son the use of her basketball hoop. Another neighbor’s daughter rang our bell to inform my son which school bus to take. The next evening she came over with a plate of fresh baked brownies, still hot from the oven. Care and kindness are steps away, reminding me that we do not necessarily have to join something to build a sense of community. Every interaction where we treat one another with respect, honoring each other’s part in the whole of life, enlivens us.

Hearing a car door open, a bike bell ring, and children laughing in spontaneous play enhances my sense of vibrancy. The quiet that soothes my soul and connects me to wisdom greater than my own is always accessible, whether I am curled up in bed reading a book, listening to music, attending church, walking Crane’s Beach or participating in an ABT yoga class.

In my other home from which I just moved, I used its sacred space, particularly my backyard studio which was surrounded by gardens and meadow views, to gain an extra sense of peace. Much of my time there, especially these past seven years post-divorce

and through the deaths of both my parents, was spent in an inward reflective mode, healing from much loss. In earlier years, the home helped me nurture my children and their friends through backyard swim classes, barbecues, and cross country skiing on our property followed by hot chocolate and a fire. My daughter's prom and graduation pictures were always taken poolside, amidst flowers in bloom.

Now, the purpose for a home is different for my family's changing needs. It is both a nest, from which to center and nourish our souls, and a launching pad, as each of us—my son, my daughter and I—are increasing our sense of freedom.

There are also clearer internal boundaries about what type of energy is allowed to enter our home. Kindness, compassion, and respect are at the top of my list, along with increased joy and contentment. Laughter and silliness are welcome guests as well after all the seriousness of "being strong" through adversity.

More entertaining is part of my dream for living abundantly in this new home, even with all the extra noise of teen sleepovers in the basement, my son's new "cave." The house's sweet entrance, a curved walkway of tiny white crushed stones and granite steps, entices visitors. Even our nine-year-old Shiatsu gets an added bonus living here: there is a dog house in the backyard.

Tucked in a circle among five other homes, our new house reminds me that we are all connected in this journey of life. Just as quiet can strengthen our core and privacy is valuable, the sounds of life—the people and the traffic—heighten our sense of unity.

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