

# The Reality of Quietude

## At a peaceful mountain cabin

My family has a cabin in the Uintas, on the North Slope off Hwy 150. It's a great base camp surrounded by a fantastic play area. The thing I like best about it is the quietude; it is an incredibly peaceful spot.

It's particularly serene during winter, when snow piles deep and hangs from the pine boughs. On a recent late-winter morning I snow-shoed up the hill above the cabin. Even with the snowshoes, I plunged knee-deep into powder with each step. The snowfield was unblemished and incredibly beautiful, glistening as the sun tried to break through clouds that had dropped a couple inches of snow overnight. The air was perfectly quiet except for the occasional cries of blue jays somewhere below.



I often enjoy similar tranquility sitting on the cabin's porch on a summer evening, after a day spent fishing the nearby lakes, the sky afire to the west.

The kids are always busy, riding snowmobiles during winter and ATVs during summer, stoking the fire in the wood stove, making smores, playing card games.. Making happy sounds that do not diminish the quietude. This is big country and it can absorb happy sounds.

I enjoy the snow machines. On my recent trip we followed a road along a ridgeline to a viewpoint overlooking the entire area. The scene was postcard perfect: a beautiful forest protecting a cluster of cabins.

The feeling is entirely different on Hwy 150, just a short distance away. That highway is an extremely popular route for adventurers. In winter it is groomed for snowmobiles and dozens of machines will be operating there on any given weekend. The highway provides access to a multitude of summer attractions: campgrounds, lakes and trails, and is always buzzing with excited activity. It is fun but it lacks quietude.

I'm tempted not to watch the news when I spend time at the cabin, even though we're on the power grid and we have TV, a microwave oven, hot water and other niceties. I enjoy

escaping, at least for a time, the problems of our modern world. Does that mean I'm hiding from reality?

Reality, for so many people, is traffic jams and smog and neighborhoods trying to live with the violence that comes from gang activity and drug deals. I understand that those things are real, are part of our world, and we need to be aware of them and try to deal with them.

But my snow-covered forest is also real, is also part of this world. When I have the chance I like to go there, to choose that reality. When I can, I choose the deep powder and the laughter of children making smores in the wood-burning stove.

I'm glad there are still places full of beauty and serenity. Glad my children can enjoy these pleasant realities