

# The Sound of Silence

*George W. Kindschi, MD*

It is 2 AM. I am awake. I rise from my warm bed and stare into the darkness. The house is quiet except for the soft hum of the furnace fan and the ticking of the grandfather clock.

If I go outside, whether in winter or in summer, it is peaceful. In winter there is rarely any sound save the crunch of my feet on the snow. The black ceiling is studded with a million stars winking knowingly at me. I wink back. As I walk down the lane, the peacefulness is nearly overpowering. The whole world is asleep but I am awake and I am hearing the sound of silence.

In summer, when I take the same walk, I occasionally hear the distant hooting of an owl or the stirring of creatures of the night; the possum, the raccoon, the turkey, and whitetail deer. Unlike winter, the air is soft with the aroma of moist soil, of things growing, of life itself, and I hear the sound of silence.

A philosopher once said, "I think, therefore, I am." I prefer the reverse, "I am, therefore, I can think." In the middle of the night I can think, I can read, I can take a flight of fancy without encumbrances. No television, no telephone, and no interruptions with the mundane facets of daily living. It is a time of peace not unlike

childhood before the realization of responsibility. It is an oasis in the desert of real life. It can be a time of introspection or a time of exploration. However, this time of night is fleeting. It passes too quickly and reality is only minutes away.

It is now 3 AM and my golden hour is soon over. It has become apparent to me that my time is a treasure not to be wasted but to be spent; spent doing what is right, noble, and satisfying. Helping others, whether through medical practice, service clubs, churches, serving your country, or any other community participation should be paramount since, when we make another's life better, we are in reality making our own lives better.

Soon, the sun will rise and another day will begin. What of this day? Will I make a difference in a life? To a patient? To a child? To my spouse? To a grandchild? To anyone? Does it matter? It matters to me.

The coffee is brewing; the new day awaits. The sound of silence is replaced by the sound of the daily routine. Life goes on and it carries us with it. Yet, I will always remember and treasure those early morning hours, those hours of the sound of silence.

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