

Sounds of The Rude World

In 1862 American songwriter Stephen Foster wrote “Beautiful Dreamer”, the first two lines are....”*Beautiful dreamer, wake unto me, Starlight and dewdrops are waiting for thee; Sounds of the rude world, heard in the day, Lull’d by the moonlight have all passed away!*”. Sounds of the rude world.... In 1862? How utterly shocked Foster would be to hear the sounds of the 21st Century. We are way beyond rude in 2022. Recently I biked over a small bridge at Mercer Slough (near Seattle), an abundant, beautiful clean wetland sparkling with florescent green water plants. As I paused on the arched bridge to take in the beauty of the slough, the angry, deafening roar of the freeway behind me made me think about the stress of modern living compared to the pastoral rural life of 18th century North America. Generally, mankind lived quietly with nature before the Industrial Revolution of the 19th century. Now, as Neil Young has written, “Mother Nature is on the run” from the assault by human industrial development. All the shootings and conflict in the news today leads me to speculate that the stress of living in a hyper developed and connected world is not good for human happiness. I suspect we are losing it.... going bonkers.

As a comparative life experience to my now city life, I had the luck of growing up on a ranch along Tenderfoot Valley road in the 50’s and 60’s which was certainly part of the unfolding industrial revolution (John Deere tractors, etc.), and yet it was not oppressive. After lunch around 2:00pm I always got sleepy so I would stop the tractor, turn it off, put my feet up on the engine cowling, pull my beat-up cowboy hat over by eyes, and nod off for 15 minutes. No noise, quiet, peaceful, another world. Rounding up the cattle on The Divide was even better, no noise for as far as the ear can hear. Just spacing out and pretending a Nez Perce hunting party is traversing the top of the butte. Spending a summer in the Upper Imnaha basin on horseback for the Forest Service was the same, just the clip clop sound of Pet and the pack horse. Again, a quiet nap after lunch in the shade of a tree below Hawkins Pass while the hobbled horses had lunch.

When Jefferson, Adams, and Franklin lived in Europe they all remarked on the woeful state of their cities. Europe’s cities were filthy, smelly, noisy, and crowded. However, most folks lived in the country, which was generally quiet. Humans have spent many thousands of years living at a modest, low pressure pace, and not under the oppressive, relentless, hour by hour assault of modern

technological living. Perhaps humans evolved to need a slower pace of life with quiet respites easily at hand. Perhaps our ancient DNA is rebelling and unwilling to change to accept the modern industrial world. Well, at least my DNA is rebelling.

Roger Hockett grew up in Wallowa County and is retired in Newcastle, Wa. He is a Navy veteran, a graduate of both the university of Oregon and Oregon State University, and spent a life designing and manufacturing commercial furniture.