

January 19, 2005

"The Sounds of Nature"

If there is one perfect word to describe my first day of hearing so far, it's this -- unbelievable!!

Earlier this afternoon a friend and I went for a walk along a quiet road near my apartment complex. During our walk I heard many wonderful sounds including my own footsteps in the snow, a snow blower, one person talking to another across the street, birds singing (which brought me to tears)...and traffic!!

For the first 10 minutes of being outside I noticed a quiet "tap," "tap," "tap" underneath my feet at which time I was told that it was the sound of my footsteps in the snow! As we walked, I continued to be mesmerized by this sound because it was so calming and rhythmical! At one point I became so preoccupied in thought that I completely forgot about my friend who was kind enough to be my "ears" for the day.

Every time I walked onto a patch of dry, powdery snow, I could hear a softer, but more pronounced "tapping" sound. The more snow there was, the louder the sound. The less snow there was the quieter... Again I was told that this was the sound of my footsteps in the snow.

Ever since losing my hearing I've never been a fan of snow because of how difficult it made outdoor travel for me as a totally blind person, but today I fell in love with it! I even had a passing thought about how exciting the next big snowfall would be! Who would have thought?

As my friend and I continued our walk, I began to hear a constant high pitched sound that seemed to get louder and softer, louder and softer. Sometimes the sound I heard would be lower pitched but would still have the same quality of repetitively getting louder or softer. What do you know? It was the sound of traffic -- something I have been unable to hear for the past 10 years!!

As I listened more closely, I began to notice sound patterns which made it recognizable to me. For example, when a car approached me, I could hear it getting louder and louder until it was replaced by a higher pitched sound that slowly trailed off into a low pitched hum. When cars were coming from the opposite direction (i.e. from behind me), I heard a high pitched sound that gradually became louder and then faded into a lower pitch until I could hear it no longer. Amazing!!

To my surprise, I could hear volume and tone differences in cars as they passed me. For example, some cars sounded higher in pitch than others. I don't know for certain, but I took that to mean there are tonal and/or volume differences from one car engine to another. Some were very, very loud!

As cars passed from in front and behind me, I could hear patches of snow underneath their tires. The more snow there was on the road, the louder and more consistent the sound.

To my surprise (on a quiet road), I could tell where cars were in relation to me. Cars that were louder were closest to me while those lanes away were softer.

As we continued our walk, I heard voices but could not tell where they were coming from. My friend told me that two women were talking to each other on the side of the road. I couldn't understand what they were saying, but I could *hear* them!! (And to think yesterday I was delighted at being able to hear a person's voice at an arm's distance from me!)

Towards the end of our walk, I heard a steady, persistent high pitched sound that I knew was somewhere in the distance, but could not tell where. To be quite honest I found the sound to be quite annoying and asked my friend what it was. She told me it was a snow blower. No wonder! Once I knew what it was, I smiled, grit my teeth and stood there for a few minutes to absorb the sound.

To my delight, our walk ended with the most beautiful sound I've ever heard...birds singing! After hearing what sounded like a high pitched repetitive "cheep, cheep, cheep." "Cheep, cheep, cheep" and being told that it was a bird; I stood there and cried over a sound I had not heard in close to 20 years. I listened and cried. Listened and cried. Listened and cried. How great Thou art, how sweet the sound!!

Thank you my dear Lord for the wonderful gift of sound you have given me!! Thanks to this gift, I am no longer a person who is a part of the environment. The environment is now a part of me.

With every precious sound I hear, I will think of You and praise Your name in the Highest.

Lisa