

Listening to the sounds of silence in the night

Strange sounds in the night are soothing, writes Ted Brown



TED BROWN
Column

It's pretty much a given that once one passes that 60-year milestone, most of us experience some insomnia.

At one time I used to curse it, laying there staring at the ceiling, but with age comes a certain amount of practicality, and I've mellowed out.

You see, laying awake in the dark can make one more aware of the sounds around you.

For example, off in the distance I can hear the hourly chiming of the three clocks downstairs.

And they all have distinct sounds. The grandfather clock has a high-pitched ring, while the two wall clocks are more mellow. And one of the wall clocks strikes on the half hour.

Hearing them is really quite soothing, and I'm aware of the time.

There is a battery clock on the mantle in our bedroom that quietly ticks every second.

By listening to it, and the sound of my pulse in my ears, I can check my pulse rate without opening my eyes.

The floorboards in the old house talk to me as well. When someone walks on the floor, I know exactly where he or she are in the house.

Of course, when I was a kid I was creeped out by the sound of the stairwell steps.

They'd creak as we went to bed, then about a half hour later I'd hear them 'uncreak' which

sounded like someone walking up the stairs. The house also creaks after a windy day.

Our furnace has a unique sound. When the burner starts up, about 30 seconds later, there is a 'plink' in the ductwork.

I know it's caused by the ductwork expanding with the heat, and it confirms that the heat is on.

Years ago I had a similar sound in the ducts that sounded like something had climbed on top.

After several days trying to determine the cause, I discovered a half-full gallon of paint sitting next the register was heating up, making the lid go 'plink.'

I can hear the water pump starting and stopping down in the basement. The pump provides water for both houses on the farm, and when my dad was living in the other house, I'd hear the pump start up in the middle of the night when he flushed the toilet. It was a great way to keep tabs on him.

After he died, there was a short time the house was vacant, and I noticed the pump cycled every 30 minutes or so.

It turned out to be a tap dripping at the vacant house.

You know, I've been listening to the sounds of silence in the old farmhouse since my birth. I liken it to being a baby in the womb, surrounded with sounds that give a sense of security and comfort.

The old house, with all its sounds, character and idiosyncrasies, is really my sanctuary.

My grandfather lived alone in our farmhouse for two years after my great-grandmother died.

He told stories of living alone, and hearing the travellers or gypsies pass through as they used the farm lane as a short-cut to the next concession.

In the sheer darkness, (remember, there was no hydro in the 1920s), he'd hear them go by, their ponies' hooves plunking on the wooden bridge down the lane.

But he never saw them. When I was a kid, that story made the hair on the back of my neck stand on end - imagining some unseen people that close, yet we couldn't see them.

I'm much older now, and with that age comes a realization those are simply the sounds of silence in the night.

And as I lay in the sanctuary of my old house, those sounds give me great peace.

- Ted Brown is a freelance columnist with the IFP. He can be reached at tedbit@hotmail.com.

THE WAY WE WERE



Esqueusing Historical Society

A rare example of an Art Moderne commercial building in Halton Hills, this 1949 photo shows Arthur Scott Motors at the corner of Queen and Guelph streets. Popular from the 1920s through the 1940s, Art Moderne incorporated smooth, rounded wall surfaces, a flat roof, with emphasis on the horizontal. The automotive history of the building continues today, housing Maxx Tires and Lube. The building is listed on the Halton Hills Heritage register. Text courtesy of Heritage Halton Hills.

15 years of Liberal corruption and financial ruin

To the editor:

Poor old Premier Kathleen Wynne. Her new choice of an attack mode directed against Doug Ford is to portray him as "taking us a step backwards"!

Sorry to say though that's exactly where we need to go to begin cleaning up the 15-year-old Liberal corruption and finan-

cial ruin we've endured under the McGuinty/Wynne governance.

To top it all off the Liberals have put us much further in the red with their latest vote-buying budget that takes the \$318 billion debt up to an insane \$400 billion.

Here's something else we're already getting for the \$318 billion debt.

A 22-year-old submits a

prescription and is told sorry the plan doesn't cover that drug. More of that to come!

Now it's our turn to take 'em all out and Ford's the one to do it! Andrea Horvath should knock off replicating Wynne's methods and instead help us purge the Liberals.

The NDP could at least be a tough opposition.

Rupert Cameron

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