

Positively Speaking

By Mark Wilson

01/09/09

Listening Point

Sigurd Olson, the great naturalist and inspiring writer, with strong Hayward connections, had a cabin in northern Minnesota, which he affectionately dubbed, "Listening Point."

In 1956, after a long search for the perfect "get-away" spot, Sig happened upon the property one day, and instantly knew had found a treasure. A farm, seven miles south of Ely, had been condemned to make way for the airport. Seeing the land with eyes of the soul, Sig bought it, and built a rustic cabin where *"we could just move in, spend a few hours, a night or two, or if in the mood, even a week, an outpost away from the phone and interruptions."*

Surrounded by the breathtaking beauty of pristine nature, this place, overlooking Burntside Lake, served as a special "get-away" for Sig and his dear wife, Elizabeth. The 36 acres of property included a small beach, a quiet cove, and a prominent westward point of glaciated greenstone.

The name "Listening Point" came in 1958 when their son, Bob and daughter-in-law, Yvonne, arrived for a visit from the Middle East, where Bob served as a Foreign Service officer. As Yvonne explored the property with her father-in-law and heard him explain the depth of meaning this place held for him, she was struck with a profound insight.

The diplomatic community in Africa referred to certain places as "Listening Posts." A Listening Post was where one could hear and discern the truth of the matter about various issues. It was a way of getting the "pulse beat" along the northern coast. The key is in the "hearing" and not in the "telling." True listening brings understanding.

"This place is a Listening Post for the wilderness!" she remarked.

Thus, "Listening Point" became the name of their special northwoods retreat from that time forward, as well as the title of Sig's second book (which happens to be my favorite.)

In the book, Sigurd noted: *"I named this place Listening Point because only when one comes to listen; only when one is aware and still, can things be seen and heard. Everyone has a listening-point somewhere. It does not have to be in the north or close to the wilderness, but some place of quiet where the universe can be contemplated with awe....The adventures that have been mine can be known by anyone."*

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Dear reader – Do you have a Listening Point? Can you carve out some time to get away into the stillness of nature and listen? Too often, we cram our lives full of busy activity and do not allow breathing space for our souls. Our society is afflicted with “hurry sickness”, much to our detriment.

“We live in a very tense society, observed Helen Hayes, “We are pulled apart... and we all need to learn how to pull ourselves together.... I think that at least part of the answer lies in solitude.”

As a minister of the Gospel, I believe that God wants to speak truth, grace and peace to every human heart. His voice, however, almost always comes as a whisper. You won't be able to hear the voice if your life is jammed with noisy bustle. We are created for stillness and solitude.

“Be still and know that I am God.” (Psalm 46:10)

“In quietness and trust is your strength.” (Isaiah 30:15)

“Everybody needs beauty as well as bread, places to play in and pray in, where nature may heal and give strength to body and soul.” -- John Muir

“True silence is the rest of the mind, and is to the spirit what sleep is to the body, nourishment and refreshment.” -- William Penn

Stop! Slow down! Find your Listening Point and you will be able to hear yourself think.

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