

Time Out

By Karel Murray

I wasn't sure I could do it... sit still and do nothing. Forced to leave my computer behind (a command from my husband) I felt isolated and disconnected. Not checking my e-mail five times a day had become an ingrained habit. My fingers phantom urgings to strike a computer key almost hurt.

What in the world was I going to do if not work? That panicked thought alone was the primary reason for taking a vacation to Lake Tahoe, Nevada. Trees, squirrels, water – nature abounded in this perfect retreat from an overloaded schedule. Just the place to indulge in a personal time out. And there unfolded the problem... how to turn off my brain and simply absorb the beauty that would unfold us.

The winding road rising 2,000 feet or more to Virginia City focused my thoughts on nausea reduction – a reaction of terror as I looked out of my window to view a sheer cliff inches from my side of the car. Primal fear clawed and overrode any thoughts of business. Who cared about beauty when clutching to survival instincts? I swear my husband enjoyed every harrowing minute.

During a short respite, I visited an isolated Indian jewelry store. The selection of colorful stones mesmerized me. Visions of the old west dreamily danced through my mind of soft spoken ladies walking along the boardwalk, nodding politely to the men folk lounging in their rockers against a store front. The clattering of stage coach wheels and the noise of raucous children running down the dirt street seemed to materialize out of the hot summer air...

Then the attack began.

A large bee swooped and dove around my head and hands, tracking me from counter to counter and eventually chasing me out into the dusty street. Recalling the history of gun fights between western adversaries, I began to wonder where the corral for my last stand was located. All I found was a porta-potty conveniently located near the store. Flailing arms and shoulder jerks only seemed to increase the persistent bee's interest in me. Hiding in the public toilet incensed the insect. The bouncing of its body off hot plastic panels sounded like hail. I lunged out of that echo chamber, raced to our car, yanked open the door and slammed down the lock, praying that the bee wouldn't be proficient in accessing the vehicle. With multifaceted eyes, it stared at me through the window. Rick looked on with amusement and pulled out onto the deserted western street.

The determined predator clung onto the passenger door mirror until aero dynamics and a 65 mile an hour speed pulled off it's grip and sucked it away into the void behind the car. My cry of triumph still echoes in the rocky canyon. I was beginning to enjoy this vacation. A pioneer adventuring into the unknown wilderness... yeah...that's me!

Bring it on.... Wait a minute – what's this about cannibalism?

California will never be the same to me after our visit to the Donner State Park. The oldest institutional movie known to man taught me about the trials and tribulations endured by the Donner party as they crossed the mountains we had so glibly driven over. I wondered how they decided which relative they would eat first? And I thought I had decisions to make. Standing at the site where one young man weathered a winter alone in a stick hut brought my life into perspective. My struggles to juggle an ever increasing schedule was nothing compared to a fight for one's life. I left that place in reverent silence.

By the time we reached Lake Tahoe, the disconnect process was in full force... and that's when I saw it...the startling blue color cutting a path through green verdant hills - serenity on earth. Quiet prevailed. Even the birds tittered softly as if respecting our need for solitude and reflection. A solitary resident padded his canoe along the shoreline proving that the "real world" existed somewhere else.

Whoa – so this is what a mental time out feels like? No sense of urgency and pure indulgence of all five senses...

Smelling the pines

Hearing soft waves lapping on the dock

Seeing clouds dip ponderously on mountain tops

Tasting freshly brewed coffee

Touching my husband's hand as we enjoy the beauty together...

I learned a personal time out need not take place in an exotic location. It's simply an opportunity to revisit and reinforce my personal values...

If I value my health, I must take care of all of me – mental and physical.

If I value happiness, I need to look up from my work and appreciate what I have now.

If I value a future with my husband in a motor home... well that's another discussion.

Time out...It's your choice. Just don't wait to long...

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