

We all like some luxury in our lives. Unfortunately, many people in the world have all too little. Others have far too much. There should be a balance of work, pleasures, responsibilities, and material goods. Attaining such a balance, I believe, helps make a satisfying life. Of course, there is a lot of disagreement about just what constitutes luxury. For some people, it is money and everything it can purchase. For others, it may be leisure time to pursue some interest. Avoidance of unpleasantness may be enough to keep some of us feeling that life is good.

I have a long list of luxuries that I enjoy. Here are just a few.

1. New socks. When one spends a lot of time out of doors in all kinds of weather, there isn't anything that compares to the feeling of a new pair of socks on tired, chilly feet.

2. Good bread. I am certainly happy that I am not one of those unlucky folks who cannot tolerate gluten. I love whole grain bread, either home baked or made in some of the excellent small bakeries that we have available.

3. A hot shower. We don't have a fancy bathroom, but our water is nice and hot, the soap smells like mint, and my bath towel has the fragrance of the fresh air in which it dried after coming from the washing machine. When one is dirty from hard, physical work, nothing feels better than a hot shower.

4. The view from our windows. I never get tired of sitting at the table, looking out to the east, west, or north. There is always something different to see. Just now, as dusk descends, I can see the cattle moving north through the pasture, heading for the place where they like to spend the night. Looking north, I see some deer up on the ridge on the Speicher hill. Looking west, I notice the fading color in the sky where the sun just went down. And if I look out in these same directions tomorrow, or next week, or next year, what I see will change each time, sometimes dramatically.

5. A cat on my lap. Right now, the three cats have each claimed a comfortable chair. Since we have only three comfortable chairs, that means that luxury, for me, does not necessarily mean the best seat in the

cabin. Muzzy is asleep on a piece of sheepskin in one rocking chair, Raymond is curled up in the blue rocker, and Foxy is nestled in the wool rug in the old Morris chair. But, if one of them were in my lap, I could be sitting in one of those chairs. And, I would have the additional pleasure of listening to a quiet purr from a contented feline.

6. A good book. We have plenty of books of our own, and I read many of them over and over. Others are reference or educational volumes that we consult when we need information. But, I also feel that one of the greatest luxuries I enjoy regularly is a trip to the library. I come home from an hour in the library with a bag (or sometimes two) filled with books. They usually vary a great deal. I look at the new books first to see if anything on that shelf attracts me. Then, I pick out some novels and some nonfiction, and I have enough to keep me going for another week. I enjoy many activities, but daily reading is necessary for me, and it constitutes one of the greatest luxuries I enjoy.

7. Writing and receiving letters. I don't think there is any substitute for a hand written letter. I keep in contact with a few people via e-mail, but those quickly written messages can't compare with finding a letter from a friend when I go to the mailbox. I have a couple of regular correspondents, and we explore all kinds of topics. We write about our daily lives, explore ideas, tell each other about travels, books, people, experiences, and much more. Writing a letter invites contemplation. Messages over the internet are certainly useful and even valuable at times, but, by their nature, they are seldom as satisfying as sending or receiving a hand written letter.

8. Warm clothes in winter. The old saying, that many people pooh-pooh, that there is no bad weather, just bad clothes, isn't far from the truth. I can understand why so many people dislike winter when I see what they wear. I like a hand knit stocking cap, mittens, and socks, long underwear, wool sweaters, and good boots and jackets. Then, it is not uncomfortable at all to be outside during the winter. I haven't been a child for many decades, but I still fling myself headlong into snowdrifts more than once each winter. There is an inherent exhilaration in that process.

9. Quiet. Our Quaker silences at Meeting are one of the joys and satisfactions of my life. We are surrounded so much of the time by noise and action that just sitting still for an hour and allowing our thoughts to drift to everything or nothing is a true luxury.

10. The absence of a television set. This fact in our lives is probably responsible for the enjoyment of many of the luxuries I have named. Our evenings are quiet ones with books and peaceful conversations providing all the stimulation we need. Bombardment by advertising, inane programs, and just plain noise far outweigh the enjoyment we might get from some worthwhile television offerings.

Looking over this list, I understand that I have a life chock full of luxuries. And, there are many more, pleasures we take for granted and rarely think about. Perhaps, we should make a habit of looking around, seeing what we have to enjoy, and saying to ourselves, in the words of Kurt Vonnegut, "what could be nicer than this?"