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Holland Lake Lodge Expansion

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When I first came to the Holland Lake Lodge area back in 1975, it didn't impress me much. Sure it was kinda pretty, but what drew me there were the mountains hiding behind the big ridge to the east in the Bob Marshall Wilderness. I was 18 and had just hired on as a guide and packer for the outfitter who leased the barn and corrals behind the lodge.

Yesterday, nearly five decades later, I came back for a look around. There was the old barn where Frank Jette and Smokey Mills would often be waiting with cold six-packs when we returned from the wild country, ready to trade for stories of mule wrecks and big bull elk. The corrals are long gone but I can still see those barefoot Nelson kids, always weaseling around through the mules and horses, then licking on the salt block and drinking from the stock tank before heading back home to the lodge.

Through the trees I walked towards the lake. Arnica and Oregon Grape grew here and there under the old Douglas Firs. A nuthatch spiraled up the bark of one towards the gathering storm clouds above. Change was in the air.

This place has seen change before. For the native folks who knew this land, the existing lodge and development were big changes. Surely this little elbow of land into the lake was a favorite camping place. Maybe stories were told around the campfire of adventures into those mountains to the east. Perhaps honor songs were sung in thanks to the plants, birds, water and other medicines here.

What a place once was and what it may become is on the mind of many Montanans these days. The fast changes we all see bring new questions asking for new answers. Unbridled capitalism built America, but is it sustainable in its current form? How do we create a healthy economy that doesn't take too much too fast, where quality of life isn't measured by more money and more stuff, and where bigger does not always mean better? What is the true cost of mega development and mega resorts to local communities? What is the true cost to our children and to the earth?

At the lakeshore I paused near the water and listened close to what this special place was saying. I didn't know how to hear it back in 1975, but the message is clear now: Keep It Simple.