



# LIFE IN THE FINGER LAKES



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Lifestyle

## Find a Quiet Place in the Finger Lakes

Spring 2009

by Carol White Llewellyn

In Bloomfield, an A-frame house stands nestled among tall trees and evergreens. Except for the mailbox, you might drive past without noticing its presence. The solitude of its location serves Eric Moon and Jan McKie well. Eric is a professional voiceover talent, and Jan is a former graphic artist turned entrepreneur. They both work from home, and the concept of The Quiet Place is their brainchild.

The Quiet Place opened in April 2000 as one secluded getaway cabin conveniently located near Cumming Nature Center, Bristol Mountain, Grimes Glen and several wonderful restaurants and wine trails. Today, there are eight cabins and cottages scattered throughout the Finger Lakes, each one designated as The Quiet Place. The cabins range in size from one to four bedrooms, with the largest accommodating up to eight people.

### Serenity is inspirational

A life-size scarecrow greets me from a lawn chair as I step onto their deck. "He keeps visitors away who don't belong here," grins Jan. "They think he's a person, and leave."

Eric laughs, "My neighbors keep saying, 'Eric, I saw you out on the deck and you're looking a little peaked these days.'"

Inside, serenity fills their chalet-style home, which overlooks a large pond surrounded by trees and wildlife. I can see how the solitude would be inspirational to Eric in his creation of ads and voiceovers for a broad range of clients, including Time Warner, the Doan Family of Dealerships and Rowe Photo, Video and Audio.

"I've done ads for agencies, radio, TV and production houses all over the world. Sometimes I create the whole ad from concept to finish, other times I send a voice file and the client adds the bells and whistles."

### Pampering from a distance

Originally from California, Eric moved east when his ex-wife proposed opening a bed and breakfast near her family in Attica.

"I knew Attica wouldn't work, so we looked around until we found The Iris Farm in Pumpkin Hook, northeast of Farmington." They bought the farm, restored it, and opened a bed and breakfast. After five years of playing hostess, Eric's ex-wife tired of the B-and-B and left.

"Shortly after that, I met Jan," he recalls. "She was a graphic artist and my pet sitter."

So where did inspiration come for Jan and Eric to start The Quiet Place? Eric explains, "Having done a B-and-B, I knew pampering from a distance would be more to our liking. One Friday, our neighbor told us that a nearby house was up for auction. We looked at it and agreed to buy it, if we could get it for the right price. The following Monday, the attorney and I were the only two at the auction, so our bid was accepted and we closed 30 days later. Jan became the owner of the first Quiet Place."

"It took us six months to remodel, and since it first opened, our business has grown steadily," Jan proudly shares.

According to Eric, the seven other properties were never something they sought out. "We started with one and didn't really go looking for additional properties," he says. "Their owners just find us. They call and say, 'Hey, we think we have a Quiet Place.' All of our properties are quiet places, and in fact, the entire Finger Lakes Region is. People come here for peaceful activities like hiking, fishing, canoeing, cross-country skiing and wine tasting."

### **A growing business, thanks to the Web**

After The Quiet Place took off, Jan gave up her successful graphic arts business, where she worked with groups such as the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra, Garth Fagan Dance and the Rochester Broadway Theatre League, to manage the growing business.

"I love running it," Jan smiles. "Every day feels like Saturday."

While much of their business is repeat or word-of-mouth, they credit the Internet with the steady growth. "Forty percent of our business comes from search engines. Google 'quiet place' and we come up in the top spot," notes Eric.

"The recession hasn't hurt us. In this economy, people want to get away. We're nearby and four-season, so business for the original Quiet Place is up 5 to 7 percent over last year. For the group, it's up 159 percent."

Look on their website, [www.thequietplace.com](http://www.thequietplace.com), and you'll find eight lovely watercolors depicting Quiet Place properties painted by renowned local artist Cindy Harris of Harris Studios. The watercolors convey the sense of peace and solitude Quiet Place patrons enjoy.

"I love painting them," admits Cindy, who also happens to be the couple's neighbor. "I try to show the individuality of each place while maintaining a consistent style among all the paintings. I like to show the splendor of the Finger Lakes and the beauty that's in our own backyard."

While the website includes pictures and amenities of each property, the addresses are intentionally omitted. Eric explains, "That's so our guests will have total privacy. We want them to feel pampered from the moment they arrive until they leave."

### **Guests come to work, play, propose**

It's no wonder many of their guests are repeat visitors. Jan delights in the special details. Guests arrive to find calming music playing softly, lights glowing, and a light scent of something welcoming in the air. The closets are stocked with assorted CDs, board games and books, candles are scattered throughout and, in most of the properties, a Jacuzzi or hot tub beckons. The hearths are well-supplied with firewood.

When asked about their primary clientele, Jan shared, "They're couples, or parents who just want a break from the kids and pets. We get a lot of individuals too; some are writers or grad students working on dissertations."

She went on, "We had one man from New York City who wanted to propose to his girlfriend here. He had only one day, but the ring wasn't ready in time, so the jeweler overnighted it to us. The man slipped out early the next morning and picked the ring up from us. The couple went off to spend the day together, and he proposed!"

Curious about The Quiet Place experience, I called Mike Linehan, president and CEO of the Yates Chamber of Commerce, who had originally told me of the getaways.

"I got a gift certificate from a friend. I'd never heard of The Quiet Place before and was surprised how busy they were, even though they're miles from anywhere. It was hard to get reservations.

"On the way, we picked up some wine and steaks to grill, and when we got there, I was blown away by the natural beauty!" Mike enthused. "It had every creature comfort. We put on some jazz CDs, pulled out board games we found in a trunk, had some wine, and used the hot tub. The whole place was so peaceful and incredibly well done in a comfortable way that it felt like home. We didn't want to leave!"

### **Better than the Caribbean**

Not only are the Quiet Place accommodations for getaways, birthday and anniversary celebrations, but the guest book pages are scattered with glowing entries from newlyweds who have spent their honeymoon there. Business people also find escape in the solitude.

Jonna Martin, president and founder of Advance Me Associates and president of the Rochester chapter of the National Association of Women Business Owners, and her husband, Jeff Renelt, a senior financial advisor at Merrill Lynch, found themselves in need of a well-deserved vacation.

"Last year, we rented a house in St. John and really loved having a separate, private place where we could spend time together. This year, we didn't want to venture far, but wanted to be out of our normal element, so we booked The Quiet Place: Candlewood Cottage," explained Jonna.

"It was really well-appointed and the property was magnificent! One night we enjoyed just sitting in the hot tub gazing up at the stars. We discovered some hiking trails we'd have never known about, and we felt like we'd really gone away, even though we were so close."

That sense of discovery is what The Quiet Place is really about: an opportunity to get away to a pampering, but private spot in the heart of the Finger Lakes, where you can reconnect with nature or someone special.

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