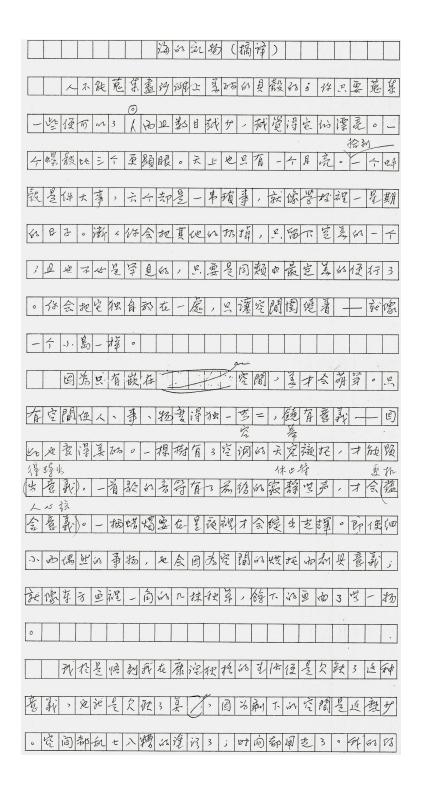
《Our Cluttered Lives (From *Gifts from the Sea*)》 By Anne Morrow Lindbergh

One cannot collect all the beautiful shells on the beach. One can collect only a few, and they are beautiful if they are few. One moon shell is more impressive than three. There is only moon in the sky. One double-sunrise is an event; six are a succession, like a week of school -days. Gradually one discards and keeps just the perfect specimen; not necessarily a rare shell, but a perfect one of its kind. One sets it apart by itself, ringed around by space – like the island.

For it is only framed in space that only beauty blooms. Only in space are events and objects and people unique and significant – and therefore beautiful. A tree has significance if one sees it against the empty face of sky. A note in music gains significance from the silence on either side. A candle flowers in the space of night. Even small and casual things take on significance if they are washed in space, like a few autumn grasses in one corner of an Oriental painting, the rest of the page bare.

My life in Connecticut, I begin to realize, lacks this quality of significance and therefore of beauty, because there is so little empty space. The space is scribbled on; the time has been filled.



There are so few empty pages in my engagement pad, or empty hours in the day, or empty rooms in my life in which to stand alone and find myself. Too many activities, and people, and things. Too many worthy activities, valuable things, and interesting people. For it is not merely the trivial which clutters our lives but the important as well. We can have a surfeit of treasures – an excess of shells, where one or two would be significant.

