



The Most Beautiful Sunset in the World

I received a last-minute request to take care of my little nephew while his parents attended their annual bowling banquet. Normally I would have been delighted to sit for my sister, however this night I needed for myself to do some quick and dirty revisions to the Budget Report form to meet next day's printing deadline.

It was almost dinner time when he came running in, his face aglow with the excitement of a new and joyous discovery.

"Oh, Uncle Jim, you've got to come and see!" he called, slamming the front door behind him. "It's the most beautiful sunset in the world!"

Glancing up from the kitchen table where I had a cluttered mess of paperwork, I saw the muddy jeans, the wind-blown hair, and the grimy little hands of an eight-year-old tightly clutching a baseball glove.

"Don't come in here with all that dirt," I scolded. "Get washed up and then we'll look at your sunset. And don't just wipe the dirt on the towel, either."

The joyful anticipation quickly faded from the eager young face as he headed for the bathroom to obey. I felt a brief twinge of guilt as I hurriedly put the finishing touches on the Budget Report form.

When he returned, the table had been cleared, the form completed. Traces of dirt still circled the freshly-scrubbed forehead, but muddy jeans had been replaced by clean ones and hands had been carefully washed.

"That's much better," I said. "Now we can take a look at your sunset."

The glitter of excitement quickly returned to his blue eyes as he grabbed me by the hand and eagerly pulled me to the door. "Hurry before it's gone."

But we were already too late. The vivid hues had melted into the dusk and there remained just a vague shadow of the most beautiful sunset in the world.

"Sunsets don't last very long, Uncle Jim," he whispered disappointedly as he returned to the kitchen where I had been so busy.

The Budget Report suddenly didn't seem so important anymore as I sat there watching the afterglow of the sunset gently fade into the darkness. In my own selfish preoccupation with my work, I had allowed a rare opportunity to slip by – the chance to share a small child's wonder. These are fleeting moments that should be pounced upon, devoured, and the memories hoarded forever.

This moment was gone now, but I know there will be a next time. And next time I'll remember that sunsets don't last very long.

—Jim Bennett August, 1983 Chapter Newsletter