

## What Sunsets Are Teaching Me

*By Liz Gibbons*

We have lived in several homes that faced west, and I often enjoyed the beautiful sunsets viewed through our living room windows. When I was selecting a condo at Windsor Gardens I chose one facing east so that I could experiment with growing pots of herbs and trays of greens in the lanai and in the east facing window. I soon realized that I missed seeing the sunset.

I attribute my love of sunsets to my childhood when my family would occasionally camp for a few days at Indiana Dunes State Park located on the southern shore of Lake Michigan. I was probably nine to twelve years old.

After supper my parents, brother, and I would walk from the campground to the park's hotel area which overlooked the lake. My parents would find an empty park bench facing west to sit on while my brother and I played in the sand. As the sun began to sink low on the horizon I usually joined my parents on the bench. The rays from the sun seemed to dance in the air leaving their undulating reflections on the water, and I could hear the sound of the lake's gentle waves along the shore. If there were clouds on the horizon the sun's rays bouncing off the clouds provided a changing panorama of pink, rose, mauve, yellow and gold. As the sun sank lower the colors became more intense, and at one point there seemed to be a moment of absolute stillness, as if a transition was taking place. As the colors began to fade and dusk descended my father lighted our Coleman lantern to illuminate our path back to the campground.

Being a child I did not have the experience or knowledge to describe this experience other than "it was neat" or "it was pretty." But now if I observe a sunset, I stop what I am doing and sit quietly watching it unfold. It is like a meditation. I become focused on the present moment and feel a oneness with everything surrounding me.

When I remember to access that same state in my everyday life and am totally present to the task at hand, I seem to accomplish more, and it flows more smoothly and effortlessly. But, unfortunately, the old familiar pattern of mind chatter or thoughts of what I want to do next, too often remain my usual default position.

As a society we are taught and encouraged to do, to produce, and to accomplish. Too often this leads to exhaustion. I believe our natural state is the state of being, not doing. It is the state of being fully present in each moment. This puts us in harmony with the energy source of the Universe which I believe is designed to flow to us freely, easily, and abundantly so that we can experience the fullness of life. These are some of the truths that sunsets have been teaching me.