

SAVING ENERGY BRINGS PEOPLE “TOGETHER”

It was a sunny afternoon, in the mid May, very warm for this time of year. I was sitting at the camping table, trying to learn for an exam and as well torched to catch some brown skin colour.

Suddenly, I heard loud voices inside the house. My mum was desperately looking for my sister and me. In fear, she called her husband asking for his help by finding their two daughters. I heard a loud crying coming from upper room. The younger sister got terrified from voices becoming audible looking for her. The mother found her and tried to explain her that some ecologic catastrophe happened and we should stay in house. I just managed to hear only separate word as “nuclear plant”, “catastrophe”, “radiation cloud”, “above Maribor”. I was not able to connect the words to understand the meaning, but due to reaction of my parents, it did not look promising. My mother managed to find me as well and pulled me inside the house, muttering that the sun is poisoning. My sister was screaming and father tried to find TV channel with some news. However, to be even more frightened, the electricity went out. The father said some words that were not appropriate to be heard in public, and mum got an expression of whiteface. It seems I was the only one calm person. Outside the sun started to switch its power off. The time for supper was slowly approaching, therefore the sister’s cry intensify by every minute. I strained my brains in order to find solutions for calming down my sister. My parents were occupied with finding out what happened and providing some solution in this desperate situation. I started to run up in the first floor and down in the basement, until there was still some sun light available. In rooms upstairs, I managed to find some woollen blankets. In the basement, I was doing my best and found some wooden sticks. I continued my race up and down for collecting some food from the refrigerator and in the garden. Then I remember that I was almost forgotten to look for the most essential thing, needed in the darkness. My brains were working like a steam machine resulting in sweating all over my face. My race all over in the house became even more fanatic. After half an hour, I still did not manage to complete my mission. I decided to capitulate, and take care for the sister’s cry since it could not be listen any more. I bend to her and whisper to her ear. The crying stopped immediately and the smile glove all over her face. She moved her head showing a gesture of agreeing about tonight’s mission. The mission “calm –down” the sister was completed; therefore I was able to focus on my parents. “Hey”, I said, “let us have barbeque evening, since it is a weekend and we should enjoy it”. “I and my sister will prepare the sausages and you please take care of fuel alcohol.” My mother whisper that it is not save to be outside, but I calmly replied that there is no need. “We can seat at the table and have barbeques using a fondue pot”. My father just smiled and instantly went to basement collecting the needed energy power for fondue. The dinner passed in a quit atmosphere, each of us lost in its own thoughts. After dinner, my sister and I left our parents and went to my rooms, because it was bigger. I left my sister in room, giving her instructions. I continue with my unfinished business. After half an hour panic running up and down, my mother stopped me asking, “Are you looking this?” I grasp it, gave my mother a big kiss on her hollow-cheek and run away. I just made a quick “pit-stop” in my sister’s room and then equipped with all necessary things, I joined my sister in a big and colourful shelter in the middle of my room. I must admit, she done a great job that even the Indians would envy her. We comfortable lay down, holding each other by hands. I started to read her favourable book.

The next morning, we still were out of electricity, but we were surprisingly calm down. We went out in a shining morning. The neighbours started to gather and to talk to each other. This was a nice picture, indicating that the past disagreements between the neighbours disappeared. Then suddenly my mother cried out “Please neighbours join us in our garden!” Some neighbours looked surprised, but at the end, we have a whole garden full of people. By looking at the crowd in our garden, it seems they relax and enjoy the moments, as one can conclude due to expressions on neighbours’ faces. However, this was just a tactic, used to prevent panic by children. The parents stared to structure themselves into groups, each of them having its own mission. The men mostly take care for searching the power, for things used for repairing and improvising, searching for news and above all, to get some instructions how to behave in this situation. The mothers organised themselves in a way to take care for small children, to preserve panic, and to be responsible for food and drinks, especially to find a way to prepare it. This was a special challenge, since the electricity was used as a power for cooking and baking in all our kitchens. We children seem to be the most happy among all, because we have many companions to play with. The day passed by in needed arrangements for surviving the day. We enjoy the food, as prepared by using the ancient way of food heat-treatment. In the evening, we gathered around the fire. The men were involved in serious debate, while mothers were sharing her experiences regarding raising the children. Teenaged children enjoy listening to scary stories from elderly children, while younger children were enraptured with fairy tales.

In the following days, the situation slowly gets better. At first, the electricity came just for short periods per day. The same situation followed with drinking water from water supply, since our neighbourhood must use the electricity for water pumping. During that time, we developed special rituals how to use the electric power at most efficient way, when it was available and more importantly, we gained knowledge - based on experience learning - how to preserve the electricity. The same, but perhaps more important, was the “water-saving-

mission”. We saved tap - water in plastic bottles for drinking, while we used “rain” water for cleaning, boiling and watering.

As the almost normal situation occurred again by retrieving the electricity again, it was a relief for all of was, but on the other hand, we missed the past when we were forced to help and support each other and work “TOGETHER” as a community.

Since then, in the evenings, the house of my parents is “glowing” by solar lamps, each house - corner has a container for collecting “rain water”. The social networking with neighbours remain ever since, and just recently, all the neighbours in our street, collectively place the solar collectors on their roofs.

From the time I experienced unpleased situation, I changed by behaviour toward energy conservation. The society pronounced me as “devoted” energy saver, as in my family, as at my employment, and in my new neighbourhood. Neither my sister nor I do not live any more at house of our parents, but we keep the monthly tradition “to save the energy” by preparing the food using a traditional way without consuming the electricity. Both of us still kept the memory on our “Indian way” of reading bed - stories using the lantern and thus we carry over this tradition on our sons. During the summer, we often go camping where we “demonstrate” in practice our children how we can survive without electricity.

I try to transfer my dedication toward energy saving to my son in a friendly-way using an experience learning, since my change in behaviour was rather action-forced situation without any pre-knowledge.

The changing behaviour is not simple and it cannot happen immediately, but taking the “energy saving concept” as a daily routine, it would help to address the awareness to community level.

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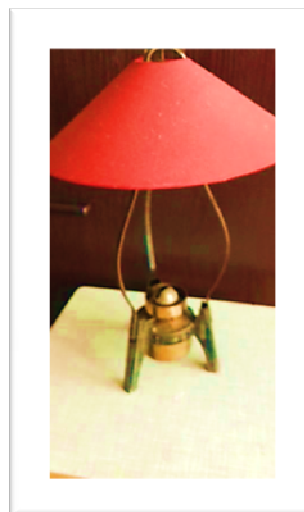
I and my sister



Food, as prepared by using the ancient way of food heat-treatment



Saving energy brings people “TOGETHER”



Lantern used for reading bed –stories