

Capturing the sparks

I love it when the fireflies show during the summer evenings, and I look for them every year. I remember chasing them as a kid and catching them in my hand and then putting them in a jar (with holes punched in the top, of course). It was so fascinating they way that their glow pulsed on and off.

It was like catching fireflies on a warm summer night. I would stand, prepared with my jar and lid, waiting for the brief flash of cool green light that indicated their presence. Then I would see one some distance away, and move a bit towards it until the glow died away. Then I would stop to wait again, hoping that I could accurately track its flight.

They were very elusive, it seemed to me, and difficult to capture. Sometimes there were several around, and I would find that I wasn't actually chasing the same one all of the time. It could be very confusing. But it would feel great when I finally captured one in my jar and I had some control over it.

Some people didn't really notice them. Others saw them but soon focused on other things. There were a few that chased them down to catch them. They might put them in a jar, but they just let them die. A few took them and tried to make something useful. But I found that their existence had a much higher level of meaning to me.

These weren't really fireflies, of course, but something more ethereal and yet substantial. They were the seeds of thoughts that, if planted properly, could be developed into significant ideas. I took them as a spark and applied tinder as best I could, blowing to nurture the flame, and when it was somewhat mature I placed the illumination in a special holder that would protect it for later use.

Sometimes the ideas came so fast that it was like moving through a swarm of insects. But other times it seemed like an eternity between good ones. I added to the collection whenever I could, and eventually there was sufficient light to form a broader and more complete message. And I had to "trim the lamps" occasionally to keep them burning.

I was careful to keep my collection organized as best I could. It provided a multicolor display that included every component of the rainbow. As I used them, I hoped that the lights would help other people to see, but if not they certainly helped to light up my life.