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Gail Perry • Aug. 08, 2017

When I'm on a trip, flying over the country, I always try to get a window seat. Then, as I look down on the areas where people live, I ask myself, "Where do the children in this neighborhood go to play ball?" Have you noticed that in almost every residential neighborhood in our country, and, in particular, in the Midwest where the land is flat, there is a baseball diamond? Usually the diamond is either located on the grounds of a school or in a park. Sometimes there are several diamonds together, probably where children go to play their tournaments.

You can tell from the air if a diamond is well cared for. The infield and outfield grass is green, the baselines are clearly laid out with straight edges and filled with that red/brown sand/clay mix, the pitcher's mound and the batter's box are perfectly shaped and also filled with the same mix.

Sometimes it's difficult to see the diamonds that aren't manicured, the ones where the grass is climbing into the baselines, where there are no lights or bleachers. Those are my personal favorites, and, I'm guessing, those are the ones that are the most loved by the children who play there. Those are the children who go to their special diamond, draw squares or X's in the dirt with sticks to mark the bases. They don't need uniforms and they don't need parents on the sidelines – they just need the diamond and they need the game.

They need that time away from having to fulfill the expectations of others. A time when they can mark their own bases without precise measurements. When they can swing freely without someone telling them how to hold the bat. When they can miss the catch and not hear the sighs of disappointment from the stands. When they can lose the game and still walk away with their arms around their best friends.

I cherish memories like those and strive to find the equivalent in my current, busy,

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there are still times when we need and can benefit from having a private place that is just the way we like it. That place might be a vacation spot, or a favorite coffee shop, or it might even be your office with the door shut or you in your car alone with your thoughts while the endless highway stretches out in front of you. For me, pretty much all I need is a gentle, warm, Midwestern summer breeze with sounds of summer bugs calling from the trees. It's hard to get more perfect than that.

The next time you're yearning for a chance to take a deep breath and be yourself for a few minutes, think about those places you've had in your life that make you smile. Even the memories can give you the break you might need to reset your day.

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