

# Essay on My Favorite Uncle

My Uncle Johnny lives in a small farm ten miles from the town in which I stay. He plants vegetables and flowers for the market. In addition, he has a small fish pond in which he rears many types of fishes. With his wife, three young children and a couple of workers, Uncle Johnny manages his farm reasonably well. They have an old jeep for transporting their products to market and for sending the children to school.

Every holiday I go and stay with Uncle Johnny. In fact, he always makes sure that I visit him. Maybe I am his favorite nephew as he is my favorite uncle.

Once I am on his farm, I really enjoy myself. Uncle Johnny will teach and show me all sorts of things. He taught me how to fix up a fishing line and how to catch a fish with it. I learned to identify bird calls, animal grunts and read signs left by animals. I discovered the intricacies and techniques involved in planting vegetables and flowers. I can even predict the weather quite accurately by smelling the air and observing the clouds. In short Uncle Johnny has and is still showing me the wonderful world of nature, one that is so alien to those who live in towns.

I remember the time many years ago when both of us went on a trip to catch some tropical fishes in a small stream. We were only armed with a large fishing net made from mosquito netting and a pail to keep the catch. For a time, we managed to catch some shrimps and small fishes. Then all of a sudden from underneath some bushes overhanging the stream, a dark blob of something hurried across the stream. We froze in our tracks and watched the progress of the thing. It was a fresh-water turtle! It was not large, about 20 cm in diameter and it was frantically scurrying away from us as fast as its stubby legs could paddle the water. I was so overcome by the excitement that I went after it without a second thought. My bare hands were about to reach the turtle when I felt a steel-like hand clasp my shoulder. Next moment I was flat on my back in the water. Mind you, the water was only knee-deep but the force of my fall made me swallow a considerable amount of water.

Pulling myself up I could see Uncle Johnny deftly scooping the turtle into the fishing net. With the struggling catch safely in the net, he turned toward me with a big grin on his face. Wow! I eagerly splashed my way over to him to have a look at the captive. It was a beautiful turtle, almost totally green with a long snout that jutted prominently from its oval-shaped head. It stretched its long neck up probingly to find a way out. I felt like touching it and was about to put my hand into the net when Uncle Johnny stopped me with a curt "no!"

Uncle Johnny declared, "he bites".

Just two short words spoken with authority made me realize that I might have lost a finger or two. It was another lesson for me.

I wanted to keep the turtle for a pet but Uncle Johnny said it was not advisable. He convinced me that it was better for the turtle, and me, if we

let the turtle go to live a normal life. Uncle Johnny asked me to release it. Reluctantly I put the net into the stream to allow the turtle to swim away. Without hesitation, it swam slowly down the stream and soon was lost from sight. We watched it till we could not see it anymore.

From the corner of my eye, I saw our red plastic fishing pail lying on its side in the stream. I suddenly realized that I was holding the pail before we saw the turtle. I must have dropped it in my excitement. I rushed over to it but alas, only one tiny shrimp was left in the pail. Stupid fellow, I thought. The rest had escaped. I uttered a few words of disappointment.

Uncle Johnny looked at me. His eyes showed sympathy and something more important strength.

"Well, are we going to lament the loss of a few fish, or are we going to catch some more?" he asked.

My face lit up. Bless Uncle Johnny. He was such a strong guy. I wished that I could be as strong as him. We continued up the stream and by evening caught more than enough to fill my aquarium. I was ecstatic.

Now I am on the verge of leaving school and Uncle Johnny has grown older. My cousins are bigger now and they help around the farm. Though older, I notice that Uncle Johnny is just as lively as ever. Maybe the hard work and the clean air in the countryside contributed to his glowing health. I still visit him whenever I can and I still learn many things from him each time. Whatever profession that I may take up in my later years, I will always have the priceless knowledge of nature that Uncle Johnny has given me. Maybe one day I might stay permanently on a farm and live with nature as I know it to be, thanks. to Uncle Johnny.