Isn’t it amazing how much difference a little can make when you haven’t had any?

Late last week, several spots in the county received the first rain drops received in several weeks. When the first drops started to fall, people came out to the sidewalks and from their homes to experience refreshing wetness and smell that has eluded us most of the summer.

I was driving in the country when the first big drops started splashing against my windshield. At first, I soaked in the pleasure so much that I refused to turn on the wipers but eventually that had to change. Still, the sound of the swishing wipers almost seemed like a novelty again.

Oh, most of us didn’t get more than three- or four- tenths of an inch, but the fact that it can still rain seemed good to many. People looked for signs of rain refreshing the next morning; grass appeared a little bit greener for a day or so, corn came out of its wilt for a few hours and garden vegetables stood proud in response to rain from above.

Unfortunately, the National Weather Service has spoiled our party by announcing that the few showers we received then aren’t even the beginning of what is needed to break the deepening drought across the area. But still, just the knowledge that it CAN still rain was a boost to all of our morale.

There are so many things we take for granted until they are suddenly removed from us.

Food is just sort of there, until we are afflicted with some illness and not permitted to eat for several days. Then, the first piece of toast or cup of soup is like a nugget of gold.

A close friend in Indiana underwent an extremely traumatic medical illness that nearly took her life earlier this spring. Then, through prayers of many, her health changed directions and she gradually started to recover, but still was supported by the need for oxygen and the necessity of

feeding tubes.

Then, one day, doctors concluded that her health had recovered to the point where she could try a few things and the support measures were removed. Gradually, she started to gain back strength. Then, one day last week, she said to her husband (who owns a pizza establishment), “I am so hungry for an Arby’s sandwich.”

“I was on out the door and on my way to Arby’s before she finished her sentence,” quipped her husband. “I cannot tell you how great that request sounded. Who would have ever thought I would be nearly moved to tears by going through an Arby’s drive-through on her behalf?”

Many years ago, my stepfather, living in Angola, Ind., was working on a barn when he lost his balance and went crashing to the cement barn floor. He was life-flighted to Parkview Hospital where he was diagnosed with a broken neck, but not an injury that permanently paralyzed him. Still, for several months, he was in a huge plaster full-body cast.

Then the day came when the doctor said the cast could be removed. I took him to the office in Fort Wayne; as I sat in the waiting room, I could hear the sounds of the cast being removed. When he emerged, he looked at me and broke into major tears.

“Look,” he said, “I can move my hands, I can walk, I can move my body.”

He wept the entire way to the car from the trauma of excitement of freedom to move once again. For most of us, a movement is as non-eventful as life itself. But when it has been removed and is returned again, it’s a whole different story.

Back to the rain, who would have thought last winter during a period when we were having deluges of rain and cold winds that we would ever have such wonderment and rejoicing over a few drops of water from heaven?

But who would think the same about putting one step forward, hearing the voice of one who has been gone for a long time, experiencing the release of recovering from illness or the sigh that accompanies the removal of some major stress.

Interesting, isn't it, that deprivation brings some of life's most treasured moments? And then there are the more tender reminders such as appreciating those around us, taking time to spend with our family and soaking in a few moments for the blessing of meditation and quietness. Anything that could be taken away is worthwhile embracing.

My dad used to say that when he arose in the morning, he would pray, "Lord, give me strength for all of the steps I need to take today."

Then at bedtime he would pray, "Lord, you helped me take every step needed today, thank you."

Awe, the wisdom of aging, another one of those things never to be taken for granted.