

The Beauty of a Roadside Park

Some years ago, CBS ran a Sunday morning show called *On the Road with Charles Kuralt*. Many of you may remember the human-interest stories featured there.

Charles Kuralt drove around the country finding enjoyable stories about people. In the very first episode, he returned to Surry County, Virginia, where 12 years earlier he happened upon a beautiful roadside park on Route 10. He stopped to discover that behind it were 13 acres of what he called the most beautiful park he had ever seen in America.

There were winding paths with tulips that were neatly kept, and in between the scores of large dogwood trees and tall pines were literally hundreds of azalea bushes and ferns of all sizes and kinds. As he walked through the park, Kuralt said he began to wonder about the battalion-size of state-employed gardeners who must have been hired to keep it up. Much to his surprise, he discovered that it was the work of just one man – an 83-year-old gentleman named Walter Misenheimer, a retired nurseryman who created all this in the woods next to his house.

His parents had raised him to believe that if you don't leave this earth a little bit better than when you came into it, what is the purpose for your having been here? So this park was his gift to life. He had worked on it for 20 years to that point.

Since Misenheimer was a widower and had no children, Kuralt asked him what would become of his lovely park when he was gone. "I am afraid," he answered, "the weeds and the thorns will come into it and take it over."

Anyway, it was now 12 years later and for the first story for his new program, Kuralt decided to go back to Surry County and see just what had happened to that park. He knew that Misenheimer died four years after they had taped the original story. Some people had sent Kuralt a news clipping. He wondered, as he drove down the road, if the weeds and thorns had indeed taken over the garden.

Much to his surprise and delight, however, he discovered that the garden was intact and more beautiful than ever. What had happened?



(more)



Just a few months after he had filmed the original story, a Korean woman named Haeja Namkoong drove by and stopped at the park. She, too, was met by the kindly old man. She said that she didn't really want to go through the entire garden, but he insisted. A few weeks later, after she had returned to her home in Boston, Misenheimer called her and pleaded with her to come and help him for a couple of weeks and live in the guest house. Namkoong, 26, had no children, and neither did Misenheimer and his wife. He told her that when he was gone, he wanted the garden to be hers.

The idea appealed to her, and she moved into the guest house. In time, Namkoong was married in the garden. "He was very proud to give me away at the wedding. I guess he never thought, since he didn't have any children of his own, that he would give someone away. Other than my mother, I can't remember anyone who loved me that much and cared for me so much as Mr. Misenheimer."

Kuralt closed his show by saying that the old man would be pleased to know that weeds and thorns had not taken over his lovely garden. Kuralt concluded: Where the seed of love is planted, only good fruit comes forth.

So, what is the point of this story for Life Care and Century Park?

It is obvious. The seeds of love are sown every day as associates interact with residents in our centers.

And out of it comes good fruit. For them and for us.

Walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord (Ephesians 5:8-10 ESV).

– Beecher Hunter