

## The Gift of Relationship

Some of you may remember an episode from the old *Andy Griffith Show* in which the Women's Historical Society discovered that a living descendant of a Revolutionary War hero was living right there in Mayberry.

The news generated excitement and curiosity throughout the town as people made plans for recognizing the hero's relative. Barney Fife, of course, twisted his own family tree to the point that he put himself in line for the honor. The rest of the townspeople felt special just because someone among them was related to a hero.

Everyone was shocked, however, when the person's identity was finally revealed. A careful analysis of the genealogical records determined that the hero's descendant was none other than Otis Campbell, the town drunk.

Despite suggestions to find a "substitute Otis" for the presentation, the real Otis showed up for the ceremony true to form.

When the ladies finally give him the plaque, Otis holds it in his hands for a moment, and then decides instead to give the plaque to the town. He tells them, "Just because you're the descendant of a hero doesn't make you one, too. So I would like to present this plaque to the town of Mayberry, to which I am proud to belong."

Well, aren't we all? Aren't we all just happy to belong, to be included?



When Lola and I moved to Cleveland, Tennessee, in 1962 from Cookeville – the only place we had lived before and after our marriage to that point – we knew only a handful of people. We were trying to find our way around, learning customs and family connections (it was told us numbers of times not to say anything you might regret to anyone because most folks here are related one way or another), and settling into our jobs.

But the citizens of Cleveland and Bradley County took these newcomers under their wings and contributed to our growth and development in many ways. We are happy to belong.

This same pattern of friendship and blessings was true when Lola and I attended our first Life Care annual management meeting in 1986 in Portland, Oregon. Since then, our lives have been enriched by caring associates all across the country. We are happy to belong.

(more)

It's the gift of relationship, of belonging, of recognizing that we are all in this together! That gift is priceless in our personal lives and in the mission we are called to do in Life Care and in Century Park. In fact, the more we develop and build on relationships grounded in mutual respect and trust, the more likely is the attainment of business success.

It happens in the spiritual realm as well. When we accept Christ as our Savior, trusting Him to be the Lord of our lives, we become a part of the Kingdom of God. What an amazing gift that is – to be joined with Jesus and one another in the greatest of all relationships! Jesus made that abundantly clear.

*But when the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" Jesus said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets" (Matthew 22:34-40 NKJV).*

– Beecher Hunter