

heart and one to be envied. Ours was truly a garden bursting with the radiant colors of the rainbow sweet and pungent scents all blending together thriving on a diet rich in comraderie, and compassion, tolerance and total committment.

As summer gave way to Fall, we became lax with our garden. We members became like the Autumn leaves blowing hither and yon. Our socials grew in number and complexity--now including overnight trips, our Service projects now included not only a Xmas party for the Sumter County children, but providing school supplies and clothing. Requests for our financial help increased. We were so busy admiring our garden and reaping its benefits we chose not to see the weeds of discontent-- but they were there.

Then came Winter-. Our flowers were withering from neglect--while seeds of disention asserted themselves. A Storm blew through which caused in its wake the eruption of disease that threatened to destroy our garden. In our haste to rid our garden of this blight we threw on powerful pesticides and with wild abandon weeded and hoed. We forgot to protect and nurture our healthy plants with understanding, tolerance and forgiveness .

The pessimists cried "this was the demise of our garden". The cockeyed optimists claimed "Leave it alone and it will take care of itself". The realists said "A new season is beginning--it is a time to throw away the harsh chemicals and hang up the sharp tools; a time to stand back and let the brittle leaves soften into a workable mulch, a time to ponder our mistakes --and learn from them; a time to keep in mind for a garden to thrive it needs constant attention to detail, careful thought, some constraint and at times constructive criticism--all applied with tender, loving care." We have too much good to offer our community and more importantly to each other to do otherwise.

This is our past-- our future lies ahead and will be what we choose to make of it.

*Joanne Hassel - March 21, 2000*