

TEMPLE TO NATURAL WONDERS \ MEMORIAL - Worcester Telegram & Gazette (MA) - October 18, 1995 - page B1

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It's cold up on Tower Hill when the stiff October wind sends green waves skittering through the long grass, and the big oaks bend with the gusts as if straining after their streaming leaves.

The belvedere stands high on the side of the hill. It's a simple, classical structure, open on all sides, eight columns supporting a slate roof for protection from the rain, and a rail at just the right height for leaning on. Down through the trees, the wind-chopped water of Wachusett Reservoir is an impressionist mirror for the colors of fall. In the distance, Mount Wachusett is purple-gray under a steely sky. The word belvedere is from the Italian, and simply means a pleasant view. And so it is.

Janette Hedenburg was an optimist in outlook and she preferred spring, when everything is still full of promise and possibility. "She hated to see winter come," said Kenneth Hedenburg, her husband. "She didn't like the premonitions of winter."

It was that optimism that helped her through her first bout with cancer 23 years ago. "She had an absolute conviction that a positive, optimistic attitude was vital," Hedenburg said.

Last spring the doctors found more cancer. Her spirit remained strong, but she finally died at her home in Holden in November. She was 67.

SIMPLE ENDURING STORY

Kenneth Hedenburg was a Worcester boy, growing up in Tatnuck and Burncoat. Janette Christie came to the city as a 12-year-old from Scotland. Her own mother had died, and she was sent to America to be raised by an aunt and uncle.

The two met as teen-agers, attended Clark University together, and married after graduation. They had three daughters, and Hedenburg worked for Paul Revere Life Insurance Co. his whole working life, rising from sales trainee to second vice president. Last year the two celebrated their 44th anniversary. Ken Hedenburg loved his wife a long time.

After the funeral, Hedenburg started thinking about a memorial. "I knew she would never want a memorial for its own sake," he said, "and I had a vision that there could be something that went beyond that."

The Hedenburgs had done some volunteering at the Tower Hill Botanic Garden, and Hedenburg decided to build his memorial to his wife there.

"My idea was to have a place where people could come, somewhere with a pretty outlook," he said. "Couples, husbands and wives, lovers could come here to commit, or to recommit to each other,

or friends could become better acquainted. Or maybe a young person needing to make an important decision affecting their life could come, or it could just be a place of solitude."

PERSPECTIVE ON NATURE

When you think of memorials to beloved wives, you think of the Taj Mahal, built by a widowed Indian nobleman. But the Taj Mahal is a statement of excess, an exercise in opulent grief. The belvedere at Tower Hill is simpler, more self-effacing. It is not a place to awe the viewer, but a place from which to view the natural world and ponder.

"We all have certain places and times in our lives when things seem to come into focus," Hedenburg said. "Maybe you were struggling with something, and suddenly you see the solution. You might be in your own backyard just looking at a sunset, and you are suddenly able to focus and make important decisions. Janette and I always called them magic moments."

That explains the small plaque on a rock near the belvedere: "May this place bring magic moments."

There's the smell of winter in the air at Tower Hill now. The premonitions of the season are everywhere, in the black sticks of trees that have lost most of their leaves, and in the wind that rudely buffets walkers, reddening the ears and nose.

But beyond the winter, when the snows are melted and the first flowers snout their way through cold, wet dirt, there will be another spring. And if you're on Tower Hill then, you may well see a lone figure standing in the belvedere, staring out at reservoir, mountain and sky, and remembering.

CITATION (APA STYLE)

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