

mill ends ♦ ♦

By

DICK FAGAN

Mrs. Hilma Chickering of St. Helens sends a forget-me-not plant to put in Mill Ends park, the smallest park in the world, and like many others brings up the question of just what is going to happen to the park when its curator (namely, me) moves up to the fourth floor of the marbleized crackerbox.

Well, it's a tough decision. Mill Ends park was established about 10 years ago, and was dedicated by City Commissioner Ormond Bean and Harry Buckley, superintendent of parks.

Approximately 18 inches in diameter, it is located in a safety island in the middle of SW Front Street near the Taylor Street junction. Originally it was the site for a light pole, but no pole was ever put in it. Weeds grew in the place and litter collected, so I decided it would be much better if there were flowers instead of weeds and thus Mill Ends park was born.

Well, it has become quite a park. It has been the scene of bagpipe concerts (I was made an honorary member of Clan Macleay pipe band in the park), Christmas caroling, picnics, snail races on St. Patrick's Day. The Junior Rose Festival queen and her court planted a miniature rose in it for Rose Festival Week. One of the first Audio Murphy Roses in Portland was planted there.

People made signs for it, and sent in a multitude of things—a diving board manufacturer sent in a miniature diving board for the use of the butterflies frequenting the swimming pool, which was constructed by a swimming pool contractor. A "cherry picker" crane of Consolidated

Freightways lowered a ferris wheel in the park for the use of leprechauns, who established a colony there. This is only colony of leprechauns west of the Emerald isles.

Miniature sign boards in the park have advertised such things as the Lincoln High Popeycles, flower shows, and several times some sneaky politicians have put signs there. Various odds and ends have shown up in the park—a tombstone worth \$150 that was reclaimed, false teeth, flying saucers, and a great variety of plants.

The most interesting thing about the park, however, is the colony of leprechauns who make their home there. The colony is headed by Patrick O'Toole, and some times he can be a very difficult man indeed. He simply refuses to state at this date exactly what is to be done, but has made it fairly clear that he doesn't want to move.

Now it would be possible, I presume, to pick up the park bodily and move it to a terrace which adjoins the fourth floor of the marbleized crackerbox where we are scheduled to move. But then it would no longer have the public access that it has on Front, nor the glamor of the Willamette River nearby.

I think possibly Mill Ends park will have to be left where it is, with possibly an annex on the terrace off the fourth floor. That seems to be the trend of O'Toole's thinking, which, of course, will be the decisive factor in the whole thing. Going to mean more work for me, but O'Toole doesn't seem to give a hang.

Park
Mill Ends

SEP 19 1961

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I was again prepared to feel ashamed while driving by Mill Ends Park, the smallest park in the world, on Saturday, because I have neglected it woefully.

But there it was all ablaze with an azalea in full bloom. I would like to think that the colony of leprechauns, the only colony west of the Emerald Isle, did it, but I think not. Some kind person who has a feeling for the little park located in the middle of SW Front Avenue near Taylor Street, and has planted things there from time to time to keep it from becoming desolate.

At least once or twice a week I get questions about Mill Ends Park, and I'm always embarrassed to say that I've neglected it, and I usually try to hedge about it.

Mill Ends Park came into being a number of years ago when it was noticed that a hole in the middle of the safety island, apparently originally intended for a signal or light pole, was filled with dirt and was sprouting nothing but weeds. So it was converted to a park.

Hundreds of things were contributed to its success — a diving board for butterflies, a little swimming pool, statues, prize holly trees from Ambrose Brownell, daffodils and tulips on Christmas and New Years by the late Tommy Luke, the first Audie Murphy rose in Portland, gold fences, handmade signs just like the city park signs, a little ferris wheel brought in by a giant cherrypicker crane, many plants from Figinis, Portland Seed and others.

Picnics were held there, the Clan Macleay Pipe band held several concerts, a choral group did Christmas carols, the Junior Rose Festival Court made a rose planting, many groups requested signs advertising various functions, things like flying saucers occasionally showed up.

Pictures of the park (usually with a pretty girl) were printed in various papers

and travel magazines across the country, and there were many inquiries from tourists about it. The annual St. Patrick's Day snail derby was held there.

But when we moved from the old Journal building to our new location it was difficult to maintain and keep an eye on it. It was variously suggested that it be moved to the Hilton Hotel plaza, or be installed in the sidewalk on SW Jefferson near our building. But somehow that didn't seem right. It would lose its status as a full-fledged smallest park, by moving it out of the center of the avenue, and just become a "garden."

Anyway, it is still there and I promise to look after it better — particularly when there are unknown persons who come around and plant azaleas and geraniums in it.

Mill Ends Park - History

Mill Ends Park in Portland, Oregon, is very likely the world's smallest dedicated city park.

The park was created by Dick Fagan who wrote a daily column called "Mill Ends" for the Oregon Journal. Legend has it, the park was created one day when Fagan caught a leprechaun and was awarded three wishes. Fagan chose:

- to have many children (the Fagans had eight)
- to have the leprechaun write his daily column
- to have his own park

The park he got was small, leprechaun size in fact. Located on what was then Harbor Drive, in an empty light pole holder, the park was only 24 inches in diameter. Fagan named the park "Mill Ends" and looked out on it everyday from his window in the old Journal Building.

Today Mill Ends Park is set in a traffic divider in the middle of Front Avenue near Taylor Street.

Each year on St. Patrick's Day a shamrock is planted for the leprechaun users of the park. Occasionally carnivals, art shows and like events are scheduled there for the enjoyment of the little people, and the amusement of passers-by.

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It wasn't the best day in the world with a little bite in the wind and a threat of showers in the sky, but I had promised Paul Keyser, retired superintendent of city parks, that I'd go up to Washington Park with him and take a look at the Shakespeare Garden, for which he has particular concern.

As park superintendent, as a Shakespeare fan and as a member of the La Barre Shakespeare Study Club, he was instrumental in having the garden moved in 1942 from Eastmoreland to Washington Park. It is located near the International Rose Test Gardens and is a beautiful little plot featuring a sun dial, an uncovered small pavilion with a relief of Shakespeare with his words carved in the stone, "Of all flowers methinks a rose is best." And, there are borders of flowers around the grass center.

The sun dial was presented by the La Barre Shakespeare Study Club in 1957, but the club needs more younger members or auxiliary members to take an interest in the garden, thinks Keyser, so that it will be perpetuated, improved and used.

All gardening is done by the Portland City Park Bureau — mowing, planting, edging, pruning and the like — but more outside interest is needed to provide improvements to make it a truly Shakespearean garden. Rudi Kalmbach, curator of the garden, who wears pruning shears in a holster much like the Lone Ranger wears a gun, wants to see the borders in bloom from early spring to late fall and does quite a good job of it, but it takes a big supply of plants that are not always available through the city. This is where an organization could aid, too.

Even though the roses are not in bloom

yet, there was considerable color in the garden areas — along the Queen's Walk, where there are vacant places for the bronze plaques of queens for years to come; in the Royal Rosarian garden, which has a new brick walk and a tree rose and plaque for every prime minister.

Rudi said a marriage will be performed in the Shakespeare Garden June 22. Insofar as he knows it is only the second one ever performed there.

The neatness and beauty of the gardens does not show trouble experienced with vandals. Someone partially disfigured the Shakespeare plaque — and it isn't just kids who are involved in the senseless destruction and marring.

From the Rose Test Gardens we went up the hill to take a look at the Japanese Garden, located on the site of the old zoo. It is not completed, but enough has been done to indicate that it is going to be distinctive, and a wonderful addition to Washington Park's varied attractions.

They also are busy making an Alpine Garden in the park, and to fully realize what a fine park complex it is everyone should make a point of spending a day there this summer. Yes, you can spend an entire and most enjoyable day there if you really want to see things — the rose gardens, the Japanese Garden, a trip on the Zoo Railway, the zoo, OMSI, Hoyt Arboretum.

And, eventually, some day, as population increases, the parks owned by the city in the West Hills may be connected north to south for one of the largest and finest city parks in the world. It may take some bridges spanning the canyons from Hoyt Arboretum to Forest Park, stretching way past the St. Johns Bridge. But the possibilities are almost unlimited.