

Walking in a Windsor Wonderland

By Dennis Knight

Join me for a stroll through Windsor Gardens on a late sunny afternoon. Signs of Christmas are everywhere. The thermostat says cold, but the winds are still, and we'll be comfortable in the Colorado rays. We walk down a lane to a vantage point on the fairways of Emerald Greens, peaceful on our arrival, then erupting as gaggles of trumpeting Canadians lift swiftly to the north, forming a graceful vee and circling the compass to make a home run for the larger Windsor Lake south of the Highline. It's that time in the late winter afternoon when geese are called to their bases.

Ahead of us looms a pine, tall, wide and strong, its green branches bearing snow. A neighboring cottonwood, leafless in the clear blue sky, casts a lacy shadow on the white field below. A rabbit in his winter fur scurries from no apparent threat across the snowy landscape. Carefree squirrels play and scamper up the trunks and through the branches. A maverick remains behind and approaches us for treats we do not carry. It's not a good idea to feed the wildlife, and most of the residents of the Gardens adhere to this creed, but someone must be doing it, because our critters are definitely spoiled. They are quite polite, however, and we are tempted to bring a handful of nuts the next time, but tough love will prevail.

Orange develops on the southwest horizon. We're losing the sun now so we zip our jackets against the chill. Many folks are about, slowing to chat with friends, and klatches gather on benches to kibitz about the weather and enjoy random threads of conversation. We're tempted to join but the pace of our stroll is invigorating so we stay on the move.

The flowers of summer are gone, their beds now winterized by the efficient groundskeepers, yet Windsor Gardens is still a colorful place. The Christmas lighting competition has been spirited again this year, and it's getting just dark enough to see the displays come alive. If you have the energy, we'll take a walk around the loop and do our own private judging of the show.

We enjoy the bold bright colors of inflated characters bouncing, some on the snow, others on dry tundra. Some even play tinny holiday music. Spirited building associations have come up with fun themes featuring trees, reindeer and other displays, some static, but others animated. With many sleighs, the jolly old elf has lots of transportation options. He might pick a bright red locomotive ready to roll on imaginary tracks to wonderful places near and far. The lighting is capricious and abundant, emphasizing, outlining and defining spaces.

We're delighted by a family with kids laughing and romping to greet their welcoming grandparents in a first floor lanai. I hope they take their own family spin through the Windsor Gardens wonderland. Just one more bend and we'll be back to my place on the canal. I have a crock pot of chili brewing for us that will really hit the spot tonight.