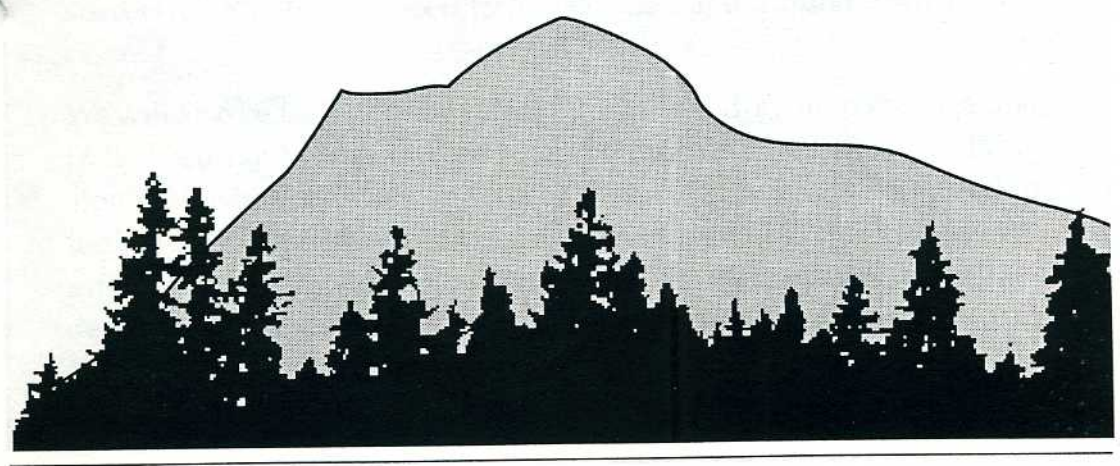

The Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society

NEWSLETTER

September 1997

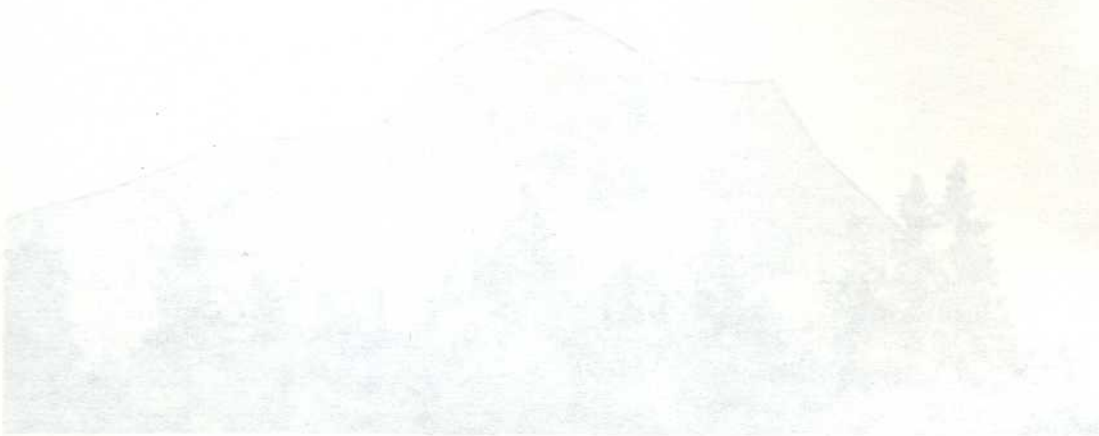


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LETTER

Do you have a friend who, like you, wants to see Mount Douglas Park survive and prosper?

Talk them into a membership. It's relatively painless.



President's Report

Consultations with the municipality have kept us busy during the past summer. We met with Mayor Frank Leonard, to acquaint him with our projects and ongoing concerns. Subsequently we discussed with the Engineering Department plans for replacement of the flume that discharges drainage water into the creek, and also for the construction of a weir just in from the Robinwood Drive entrance to the Park. For further details, read the reports further on in the newsletter.

The upgrading of the stretch of Mercer Trail that exits onto Blenkinsop Road has been another concern. We appeared before the committee of the Provincial Capital Commission with the purpose of interesting them in this upgrading, as an integral part of a Greenways system that would connect the Park with Lochside Trail via Lohbrunner Road. Saanich Parks has offered to match the grant by supplying most of the labour and all the materials for the project. The PPC makes the condition, however, that some of the work should be done by volunteers. We will be counting on the goodwill and enthusiasm of our members to translate into a certain amount of sweat should our application for the grant be successful. Plants may need to be relocated and ground obstructions cleared.

We will also be trying to convert the Parks Department to the idea that trails need not be constructed to accommodate side-by-side walking along the whole of their length, but that width should be adjusted to the nature of the terrain through which the trail passes. In brief, the uniform standard width of one-and-a-half metres intrudes on the wilderness character to which the path is supposed to give access.

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I also wish to remind members of the extent to which the Park environment is dependent on developments further afield. In particular, recent plans for development in the Cordova Bay gravel pits could increase traffic pressures on the road through the Park to an unacceptable degree.

Ken Rankin

Saanich in National Competition

During the summer, Saanich Municipality was part of a national competition trying to decide which municipalities or cities in the country had the best community involvement in their parks and recreation programs. Saanich was in the group of cities with populations of 100,000, which meant stiff competition from towns in Ontario and Quebec. Ron Carter, the arborist for the municipality spearheaded Saanich's participation and we were asked to meet the judges and discuss the various Park issues we have had to face through the nineties.

The judges, who came from Winnipeg and Ottawa, were surprised that such a large park could exist in such an untouched state so close to a major urban population. They were even more surprised to learn that it had come into existence so early in settlement of the area. During a discussion on the evolution of the park, it was clear that many of the problems we've had to face are mirrored at other parks across the country. When we came to the plans for the future and the role the park will play in the new greenways system for the region, the advice these people had to offer was "keep hold of all the green space you have got as it is much easier and cheaper than trying to claw it back for greenways once the land has been assigned other uses."

Overall, Saanich did very well in the national comparisons and all involved are to be congratulated.

Greenways

When we held a meeting a couple of years ago to discuss a greenways and blueways plan for the region, the speakers came from the Provincial Capital Commission, the CRD and the municipality. Their concepts were exciting, the possibilities enormous and the enthusiasm high. But there seemed to be a short supply of tangible assets.

Well, a review of the current plan for the region shows how quickly things have changed. In it, the park becomes a major centre or node in a system which offers alternate routes and connections throughout the region so that people are not encircled by cars and trucks at all points of their journey, but can move through the region separated from motor traffic at their own pace and in their own style.

As a brief comment on the matter of alternate pace, Darrell Wick managed to get from the park boundary on Ash Road to Esquimalt in 20 minutes on his bike, using the Galloping Goose for the most part. You would be hard pressed to do that in a car at any time during the business day. Now all we need to do is persuade everyone to cover a couple of hundred kilometres a week in training to build up their stamina, and then they can do it too.

The Road

As we all are painfully aware, there has been no progress on the road since the last newsletter. At that time we were waiting for the results of the survey, which the engineers needed to complete the drainage work. That has now been done, but the plans for this distinctive park road have yet to emerge.

Undoubtedly, Don Hunter's departure from the Directorship of Parks and Recreation is partially responsible for the delay, but the time has come to move ahead on this issue because the current arrangement is very dangerous.

Firstly, there has been general increase in speed because the road looks wider without the new lines painted on the blacktop. Also, people have reported
