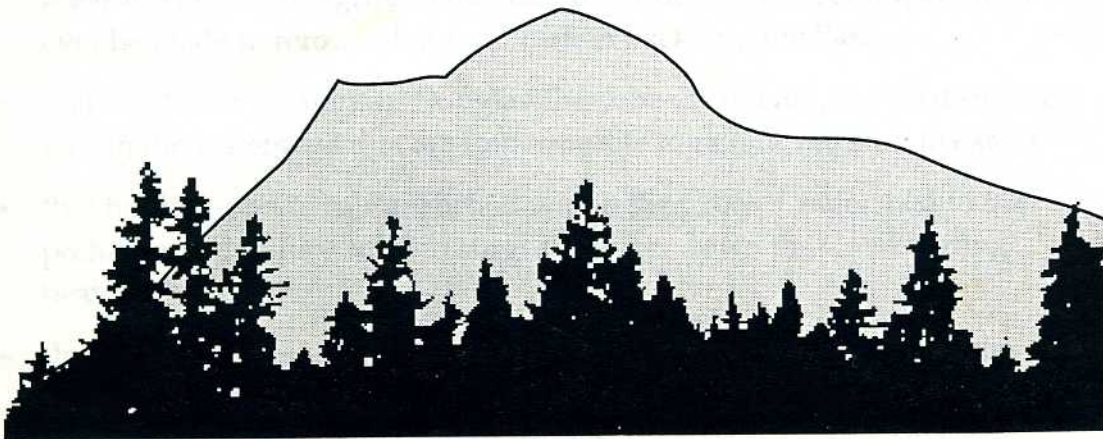

The Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society

Newsletter

February 2000

'99 Rankin
Mr./Mrs. K.W.
4285 Cedar Hill Rd. Victoria
V8N 3C7



Annual General Meeting

7:30 May 4, 2000

Richard Hebda,

Curator of Botany, Royal B.C. Museum

"Fostering wild flowers in Mount Douglas Park"

President's Greetings

This is a time to look ahead. But 'til when? Climatic changes within the next century and further may change the vegetative composition of the Park and, at the very least, its shoreline in ways we cannot predict, far less control. Perhaps, however, we can begin with a wish-list of what would be ideal within the more immediate future:

- that less reliance be placed on the use of private cars within the urban community—in particular, that eventually the section of Cordova Bay Road running through the Park be closed to traffic, or made accessible only to public transport.
 - that the Park shoreline be left to the elements of nature to determine, regardless of the integrity of the road that runs above it, and that no effort ever be made to reroute that road further back into the Park.
 - that built-over portions of Douglas Creek be uncovered, and that surfaces within the watershed that are impermeable to rain be reduced in extent.
 - that holding-ponds be established within the Creek's watershed to trap pollution and reduce sudden surges of water down the Creek during heavy rainfall.
 - that householders within the watershed become more sensitive to the harmful effects on fish habitat within Douglas Creek of flushing deleterious substances into storm drains.
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- that public access to the Park from Blenkinsop Road be improved, possibly through the acquisition of further property.
- that the radio mast on top of the mountain eventually be dismantled.
- that adjacent fields not be handed over to development, and no further building be allowed right up to the edge of the Park.
- that the Park be extended down to the natural treeline where not bounded by that treeline already.
- that the sides of roads leading into the Park be in keeping with (i.e. present no harsh contrast to) the natural environment they approach.
- that forms of recreation such as mountain-biking be *effectively* banned from the Park, or if practicable confined to certain routes, when it becomes evident that their unrestricted practice has been destructive.
- that inroads into the Park of invasive species—such as broom, gorse, ivy, daphne and holly—be checked.
- * that a larger pool of volunteers than we have at present become available for work on park projects.

Is all (or some) of this too starry-eyed? You may wish to add or subtract. As they say on TV these days, we would love to have your comments. You may e-mail us at sso@pinc.com

Wishing you all a Happy New Year, Century, and Millennium.

Letters to the Editor

These newsletters can't be telling you everything you want to know about Mount Douglas Park. Why not write to us, care of Ken Rankin (4285 Cedar Hill Road, V8N 3C7) with your queries, comments, complaints, suggestions. We welcome any letter that is not clearly libellous.

A Millenium Walk

New Years Day dawned cold and bright and, after the party, a brisk hike through the woods seemed a great way to start the year. It began with a stroll past the motel along the cliff edge to see the recent damage to the banks near the quarry. The remarkable feature was how dry the area was and how gently the stream from behind the motel flowed over the rocks to the beach despite the previous night's rain. At the quarry, the absence of the chain link fence, the new trail, the bike lanes, the view point, the clear and safe crossing; all integrated together to make this transition one of the successes of the last couple of years, There's still work to be done with the vegetation and pond but it's clear we are on the right track.

The trail from the quarry leads straight up towards the summit through the gullies and over slippery rocks, and all is quiet except for the occasional car or disturbed bird. After the vigorous climb the trees give way to an outcrop of rock overlooking Cordova Bay and the Islands. Looking north all is lonely beauty, but turn south and in the last hundred metres to the summit the environment changes completely. People come and go in all directions, snatches of conversation drift your way as you get closer to the summit; father to daughter as they descend...and it's a great place to bring a book and read in summer," mother to child ".....please be careful, you'll fall! mind the rocks....." and so on. The constant crowd mills around the summit, but the individuals stay about five to ten minutes—long enough to take in the panoramic view, to place homes and lives in a larger context. One family comes to celebrate the millenium with the launching of a helium balloon containing their message for the new year in the hope of a reply from who knows where.

Down the steps to the car park the pace is slow as people pass each other. Round the corner of the observation deck, down the summit trail, and back into rock and trees and silence. The going is easy now, the slope is steep and the hikers few; they are coming up the trail (and their favorite question is "how far is it to the top?"), along the edge of the wash out (something has to be done here) in the hope of seeing some woodpeckers, but no such luck.

On the gentler lower slopes a steady stream people comes up the trail from Glendenning, many with large happy dogs who revel in the rare freedom from the

leash and the smells released from the undergrowth by the rain of the night before; each passing brings a smile and a new greeting.

Down the broad path between the tall trees to the Glendenning entrance. The hike took about ninety minutes in all, but the memory of it will last a lot longer. The sense of continuity in the presence of surrounding change; of more and more people finding the same pleasures in the same area as the people who came here a hundred years ago. Not a bad way to start a new year and a new millenium.

The Old Quarry

What's happening at the old quarry?. Those of you who pass this point regularly will have seen much work, lots of chaos and many delays over the last two months. Now there are some significant improvements.

Firstly, the old chain link fence is gone and the trail has been rerouted, resurfaced and edged with rock so that walkers have a clear and interesting path through the open space and up into the woods. The rock also forms the boundary for the fire trucks when they use the hydrant, and the surface on which they park has a new open-cored structure that allows grass to grow in the cavity, but provides enough strength to support a fire truck . It looks a bit raw at the moment, but the new growth will blend it into the surroundings quickly. There was one setback during this phase of the changes due to heavy rainfall. Part of the new trail slipped down the slope, leaving a line of separation which had to be repaired and a drain added—a good indication of the problems we have with water near the surface in this area. Which leads to the second set of operations begun in the new year.

Massive drilling rigs suddenly appeared and started to drill holes on the seaward side of the road. They were sinking small sensors into the banks to provide the engineers with details about movements within the cliff face. Yes, this question of slippage and instability is on the agenda again. In the fall, some of the upper reaches of the cliff slipped down to the beach to await the winter storms which carry such debris into the sea. From the observations made by the consultants it appears that the toe of the cliff has remained in place but these periodic showers of rock and soil, loosened by their fall, accumulate in front of the toe and are easily swept away. At

this stage, the engineers want a clearer picture of what is happening and the risks involved of doing nothing. Once the data has been collected and analyzed there will be some recommendations for action.

The Beach

As a change from the dark and wet woods of winter, take a walk along the beach at low tide. Enjoy the company of eagles and great blue herons, the occasional seal and otter. As you wander along the sand and amongst the rocks watching the changing scene over the Gulf Islands and Mt. Baker beyond, think about how best to preserve the natural qualities of this unique area within the park. Let us know your thoughts and ideas; we are going to need them when the engineers bring in their recommendations about instability in the cliffs that rise from the shore.

Transmitter Site Report

All four cellular telephone companies now have installations on the Mt. Douglas transmitter site. The original two occupants were BC Cellular and Cantel. "Fido" was next and the most recent arrival was Clearnet. You might have noticed the addition to the underground transmitter site building last year.

Our input to the process was simple: "When finished, visitors should not be able to see that there has been an addition to the building." And it appears that Saanich accomplished that task successfully!

Now BC Tel and Cantel are requesting a new antenna arrangement on the tower, along with additional conduits between the transmitter building and the tower. We are not happy with the present conduits as they are quite visible from the parking lot. We will be pursuing a complete overhaul of this area, with the goal of completely hiding the old and new conduits. Not only is this desirable from the Park visitors' viewpoint, but it is also desirable from the transmitter site maintenance perspective.
