



Acrylic on canvas, Kristi Bridgemen Fire Art and Illustrations (250) 477-7464

'Cel'annen (way of life):
clambake on Mount Douglas Beach 1900

'05 Rankin:
Mr./Mrs. K.W.
4285 Cedar Hill Rd.,
Victoria, V8N 3C7 B.C.

March 2006

FRIENDS OF MOUNT DOUGLAS PARK

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Tuesday April 18 2006
7:30 p.m.

McMorran's Seaview Room
5109 Cordova Bay Road

Reports from Committees
Election of Officers

Speakers

Angela Evans, Saanich Environmental Planner
"Roses and Rainwater: Watershed stewardship lessons from Portland"

Mike Ippen, Manager, Public Works, Municipality of Saanich
"Waterways- Maintenance Issues from a Public Works Perspective"

Election of Officers

*The chairman of the nominating committee is Kay Porter:
her phone number is 658-5792.*

*If you should wish to propose yourself or someone else as a candidate for the
Executive Board, please call her or make your proposal at the
appropriate point during the meeting.*

**Take time to renew your Friends' membership for 2006/2007,
either at the Annual General Meeting or by using the form
on the back of this newsletter.**

WE COUNT ON YOU.

President's Annual Report 2005 - 06

Over the year our involvement in two long-term projects continued. One of these has been the control of stormwater as a necessary step towards the further improvement of Douglas Creek as a fish-bearing stream. To this end, as mentioned in our October newsletter, we commissioned a report from the firm Murdoch Landscape and Design. That has now been completed and Council has approved its recommendations. Accordingly the challenge in the months ahead, both for us and for the municipality's technical staff, is to see that these recommendations are implemented. The other long-term project has been the protection of the shoreline and the shore's ecology. At the last AGM Peter Sparanese from Saanich Engineering and John Readshaw, the main outside consultant, outlined a plan that may offer what we want, and steps towards testing its practicality are now in train.

We have been holding periodic meetings with municipality officials on a number of more limited issues. One of these arose out of a release of oil into the sewer system and from there into the Creek. We have had a useful interchange views over how the incidence of similar episodes might be minimised. Consultation on another issue led to the removal of Bell Mobility's cell unit on the pole near the entrance to the main parking lot and its transference to the radio tower on the mountain top. With the Parks Department we have been discussing such matters as

- liability insurance for volunteers who engage in such projects as tree planting, fish release, and invasive species eradication;
- methods of disposing of invasive species (whether to cart out once pulled or to let lie to rot);
- trail guidance (maps and signage);
- the cost of burying power lines that serve the washrooms;
- the removal of redundant phone lines on Ash Road; and
- appropriate locations for benches.

For more detailed reports on our various activities from other members of the executive, read on.

Floating a Trial Balloon

It's been a few years now since we launched the idea of closing Churchill Drive until noon on Sunday mornings. It has been a great success with the users of the Park, and neither the motoring public nor the tourist industry have made any negative comments. It is also clear that an increasing number of people have incorporated the walk to the summit along Churchill Drive as part of their regular exercise program. In fact, many people make the trip several times a week and we want to encourage even more people to follow their example.

One of the drawbacks at the moment is that the exhaust gases from the cars cause some distress to the walkers; any time you do vigorous exercise your nose, throat and lungs become more sensitive to the air quality drawn through them and you can sense the irritating presence of carbon monoxide at much lower concentrations than usual.

It is important to note that the majority of these walkers are middle-aged and older; the dominant colours are shades of gray. They are not seeking an elite, pristine wilderness experience nor do they plan to scramble over rock faces to reach the summit, but they do want to walk in safety with their friends and their dogs.

Based on the comments we have had, it seems the time has come to extend the period of car-free walking along Churchill Drive. The problem is how to do it. The original thought was to designate another day (Monday) and treat it in the same way as Sunday. However, this could cause some confusion, and the last thing we want is to have a stream of irate motorists with lots of out-of-town passengers arriving at the foot of Churchill Drive only to find the gate closed because they had mistaken the day and time. With this in mind, we want to pursue the idea of opening the gate at the same time each day—say 11:00 a.m. except Sunday, so that the walkers will have the cool, clean air of the morning for their exercise and the motorists and visitors will have the views and sunsets of the afternoon and evening.

This idea of scheduling activities is the bedrock upon which our recreational centres operate, and the general population has no trouble adjusting to the idea that family swims will be at one time, diving at another and weight training at yet another. The number of people using the park on a regular basis has shot up in recent years, and some form of rudimentary scheduling is sometimes necessary so that one form of recreation does not interfere with and devalue another.

Let us know what you think, as we would like to make this a subject of discussion at the Annual General Meeting this year.

Cleaning Up Oil Spills

As you will read elsewhere in this newsletter, we suffered a serious setback in the fall when oil flowed into the Creek for three days, just in time to greet the largest number of spawning salmon in living memory. It was a stark reminder of the interplay between the watershed and the water quality in the Creek. In this case, the oil came from the Fire Station near UVic, the furthest point from the outfall at Robinwood, and thus provided a major challenge to the people from the Public Works Department who were trying to find the source of the spill.

Opening manhole covers and trying to gauge the level of contamination and then deciding which branch of the network to follow was a slow and difficult process: they arrived at the right conclusion at about the same time as the Fire Department realized it was losing oil at a phenomenal rate. At the post-mortem, a number of ideas were launched to deal with future spills: firstly it was recognized that the inadequate weir across the Creek is the last line of defence and that improvement can be made here to contain and decontaminate the water before it passes over the spawning grounds. Secondly, a new method of detection is needed to speed up the process of locating the source of pollution. And thirdly, increasing the detention time in the storm water system would lead to less pollution in the water emerging from the pipe at Robinwood.

By coincidence, Murdoch Landscaping Planning and Design had just completed a major project for us as part of the grant we received from the Public Conservation Assistance Fund. The report, which contains a number of significant recommendations about storm water detention and cleanup, was approved by Saanich's Environmental Advisory Committee who sent it to Council with a recommendation for approve. Council did approve the motion, and it was publicly endorsed by the Engineering Department and incorporated into the battery of techniques they are assembling to combat these recurring problems.

We will have a display of these techniques at the A.G.M.

To its credit, once the size of the spill was determined, the Engineering Department called in Scott Murdoch to see what could be done and we understand they plan to do some work together along Laval by Mount Douglas School.

However, the whole incident highlights the fact that in this game it is always a case of three steps forward and two back; we never have the sense of smooth steady, incremental gains over time, and that can be a little frustrating for everyone involved.
