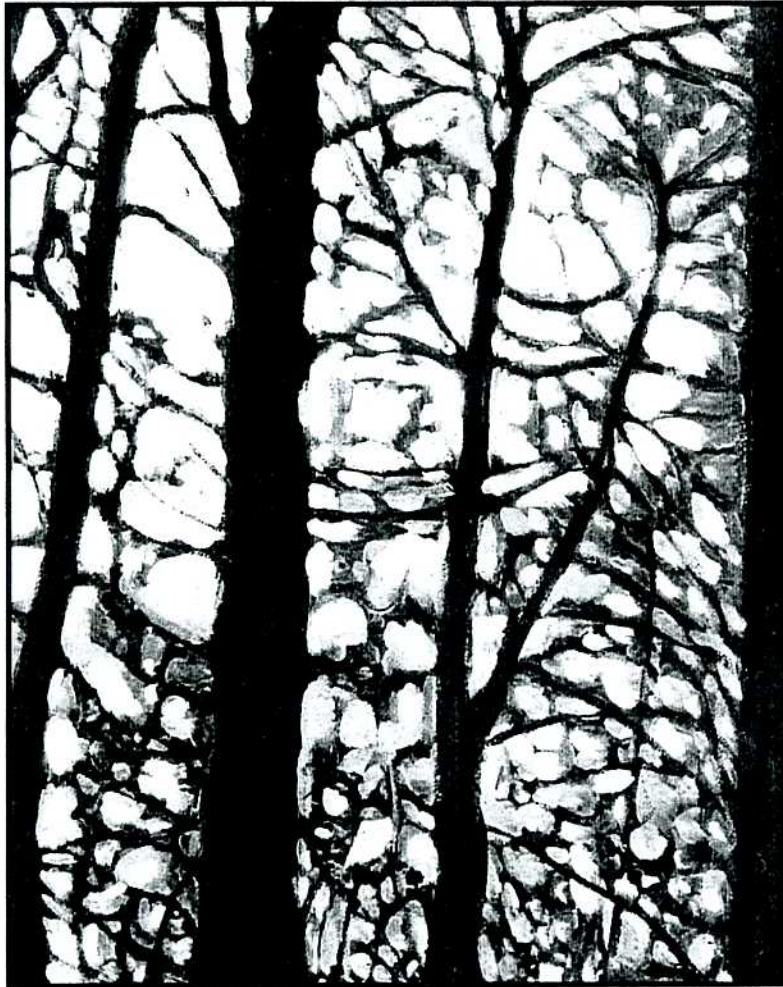

FRIENDS OF MOUNT DOUGLAS PARK



NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2007

'07 Wick:

Darrell & Mary

1491 Edgemont Rd.

Victoria, V8N 4P7 B.C.

The painting on the front cover is

Forest Temple

The artist is Kristi Bridgeman, a noted local painter who has very kindly permitted us to reproduce it here.

President's Foreword

Due to production difficulties this number of our newsletter is about two months behind the normal schedule. However, our indefatigable editor Sheilagh Ogilvie has now retooled, and the publication of our activities and concerns will return to a more customary rhythm

Over the year we have been having fairly regular meetings with staff from the Parks Department. Matters that have arisen at these meetings, and on which action has still to be taken, include:

- Approaches from the top parking lot to Mount Douglas East Summit;
- A reorganisation of the top parking lot to orient visitors more clearly towards the main (the west) summit;
- The removal of inactive phone lines along Ash and Cordova Bay Roads;
- The burial of the power line to the washroom;
- Tree replacement at the end part of the trail leading from the weir to Ash Road;
- Trail markers;
- The removal of the old tower base on the East Summit.

For more information on some of these matters see elsewhere in this letter.

We held our Annual General Meeting for 2006–7 on Tuesday April 24. After various reports on the proceedings of the past year had been presented, outgoing directors Robert Bridgeman, Sheilagh Ogilvie, and Claude Maurice were re-elected to a further two years in office. As guest speaker we had Peter McCully, manager of the Howard English Hatchery, who shared with us his wealth of experience in the restoration of fish habitat. His address, entitled "Chum—Nature's Fertilizer", outlined the intimate life-cycle interconnections between the chum species of salmon and other species within the environment to which it belongs.

On a strictly peripheral matter, you may have noticed the recent appearance of signs at the entrance to Harvest Lane and also in the Parkside neighbourhood. These indicate the route taken by the newly created San Juan Greenway that leads from Cadboro Bay

at one end and joins the Lochside Trail at the other. The route is of interest for us since one of its links runs from the Park end of Winchester into Glendenning via what has so far been a fairly narrow pathway that skirts the very edge of the Park. This pathway is about to be (or has by now been) "upgraded" through widening and resurfacing to facilitate the anticipated increase in traffic. As a consequence, it will lose much of its former charm. However, we have to be thankful that no part of the Park itself will at present be impinged upon.

We have a long-standing need for volunteers who are willing to assist in our various park projects. Two of these are currently ongoing, viz the restoration of fish habitat in Douglas Creek and the removal of invasive species. Bob Bridgeman (e-mail rbridge@shaw.ca : phone 477 -7464) is in charge of the first of these two projects. Judy Spearing (e-mail jandd_spearing@shaw.ca: phone 472-0515) is in charge of the second. Both are eager to hear from you.

The continuing saga of Cordova Bay Road

The scene changes by the day.

Another forty-plus trees were logged at the Ocean Park development over the summer, and building has started on two of the remaining six lots.

At the same time, more extensive work has been done at the Blenkinsop junction, where many more trees were logged and the internal roadway carved out of the site. They have made three entrance/exit points to the development so that no one residence will get the full blast from the 200 trips a day in and out of the site.

Unfortunately, this thoughtful consideration has not extended beyond the bounds of the development. The three exits join Cordova Bay Road within 50 metres of each other on a continuous curve, along which the road first rises and then falls as it links up with Blenkinsop to make the junction. The net effect is that there is poor visibility at all three points and the potential for massive confusion when the traffic from the development meets the normal through-traffic traveling from U. Vic etc. to the highway. It may be too late to make any significant improvements to this dangerous situation but we should at least use it as example of what not to do.

Just up the road, near 4658 Cordova Bay Road, is the next site we have to worry about. Suddenly last summer, the traveling public gained a magnificent view of the park at the end of a 500-metre driveway. The brush has been cleared, an undulating meadow exposed to full view, and it all ends at the park boundary. There is enough space available on this site for ten times the development we have already seen along on the other side of the road. The only restriction at the moment is the urban containment boundary, which cuts through the property.

When the sewer project was completed, we knew there would be development and expected it would be relatively slow, but the changing economic conditions have turned the process into a stampede. It is time for the community associations, traffic managers, planners and parks personnel and ourselves to take the larger and longer view, to ensure that the transformation already underway preserves the best qualities of this region. If this is not done, then we can look forward to the unpleasant prospect of death by a thousand cuts, especially where environmental issues are concerned.

Developments at the motel

If you travel along Cordova Bay Road through the park (and who doesn't?) you will have noticed the presence of massive bulldozers, drilling rigs, mats to deaden explosions and the movement of rock to create a series of ledges on the lot close to the motel. The property is already zoned for a single family dwelling, and it seems that market forces are at work and sites such as this are now ripe for development no matter how precarious the location nor how difficult the access.

The real problem is the motel itself; its use has been under scrutiny by the owner for some time because of declining occupancy: it seems it never recovered from 9/11. His original proposal had our support because the park would regain much of what it had lost when the motel was constructed in the eighties, and the building would have remained much as it is now: the changes would have been internal, with the conversion of some typical motel rooms into suites suitable for a long term stay by people escaping the prairie winters for a couple of months. However, it seems that the booming B.C. economy now provides another and more lucrative development for this site. The sign announcing a rezoning of the land has been posted, and at issue is the idea of condominiums

and apartments right next to the Park. Fortunately, the Cordova Bay Association has been dealing with this type of proposal throughout Cordova Bay and has been very successful in preventing such developments, most recently at the junction of Cordova Bay Road and Blenkinsop. So from the point of view of the community plan this type of development is prohibited, but there are additional park matters that must be considered in any change to the status of this site. The following is a preliminary list:

- We support the rezoning of the land from commercial back to residential.
- We support the Cordova Bay Community Plan for single family homes with no high density condominium-style development on this site.
- We want to see all the park land that was commandeered when the motel was built returned to the Park.
- We want protection for the view from the tongue of parkland that lies between the motel and the West Bank development (see park map).
- We want to see the sidewalk and crossing installed in front of the property as originally proposed when the road was upgraded.

People should attend the Open House at the motel itself on December 16, from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m., and ask questions and express any concerns they have to the Cordova Bay Association and to Saanich Planning Department.

The plaque at the summit

A long time ago, when things were done very differently, a plaque was made and donated to the Park by the Rotary Club. It was mounted on a plinth in the observation deck at the main summit, where it highlighted the location of distant points of interest for many years.

Some time in the late seventies/early eighties it was stolen and a new one was cast. Henry Niezen, who is one of our members, was responsible for the replacement, and it has served the public very well since it was installed.

Now, in a move worthy of John Le Carre at his best, the Rotary club version has resurfaced. Apparently they received a phone call saying it had been located in a garage

and it would be returned provided no questions were asked. The drop site was the Princess Mary restaurant, where the parcel was left for the Rotary club to collect. We are thinking of sending this little vignette to John Le Carre for incorporation into his next spy novel. If he adopts it and you read about it later, you will know its true origin.

However, we now have a dilemma: where to place the recovered plaque with the Rotary symbol emblazoned in the centre?

Since the park was transferred to Saanich in the 1990s the policy of no advertising has been enforced very successfully, and members of the executive insist we should continue with this policy. Other organizations have contacted us in support of this view. Moreover, there is a more practical difficulty in that the Rotary Club wants to mount it so their members, including any who are confined to a wheel chair, can see it. The only location which minimizes the effect of advertising, exposes the plaque to large numbers of the general public, gives a useful expanse of distant sites and can be readily accessed by people in wheel chairs is in the picnic area with the views to Saltspring, Vancouver, Mount Baker and the Cascades.

Unfortunately, at this writing, the Rotary Club does not agree. Our Vice-president is presenting a second proposal to and, assuming the club has not until now understood the position of the Friends as guardians of a natural park, we hope it will meet with more favour. Let's have your opinion on how we should handle this problem; it is one that is going to recur in the years ahead.

The beach developments

We are still waiting to hear from the consulting engineers concerning the results of the tests they have done on their model for shoreline protection. Given massive world-wide interest and alarm about rising water levels this delay is not surprising, but it means that another year will go by before any work can be done.

In the meantime, a number of excavations have been carried out at the top of the cliff just outside the Park, to accommodate the basements of the new houses. Going down only 5 metres they are finding blue clay in areas where the top of the cliff has slipped

down the bank in years past. Do these layers extend throughout the cliff face and are they the source of the local springs of water people have noticed over the years? If the answer to both of these questions is yes, then the plantings in the cliff face will be of critical importance to the overall success in stabilizing the road bed and well as the toe of the cliff.

The sidewalk in Cordova Bay

If you drive or, better still, walk to Cordova Bay village from the Park, you will have used the new section of sidewalk which was constructed over the summer.

This new addition brings the goal of a safe walking path from Royal Oak Drive to Mattick's Farm that much closer and adds another completed portion to the overall Cordova Bay Streetscape.

When this particular project was started about four years ago, the section from Galey Way to Claremont Avenue was identified as the most dangerous for pedestrians and it has received two summers' worth of attention from Saanich engineers, with startlingly good results. The last unfinished part is the section from Sunnygrove Terrace to Galey Way, and a third summer of engineering effort should see it finished.

Provided this is completed next year, walkers will, at long last, have a safe and useable path from the Park to the Village, with only a few rough spots along the way. After that, the next stage of the Cordova Streetscape plan will focus on the difficult part from Claremont Avenue past McMorrans and the school, where it will join the sidewalk that was developed at the time of the Mattick's Farm transformation.

But don't hold your breath: it will probably be settled as part of a village core regeneration project once the problems around the old gas station are resolved.

This project is headed by the Cordova Bay Association, but it has our full support. The point to emphasize is that all these efforts bring together people who are trying to preserve natural amenities and people who want to live in attractive residential communities. They are natural allies, and they can support each other against the forces of mindless development that surface every time there is an up-turn in the economy.

Memberships

If the date on the mailing label of your newsletter is '07 or older/smaller, your membership has or is about to expire. We hope that you find the work of the Society continues to be relevant to your interests in the Park, and that you will support us for another year by sending a cheque to the address below (one membership for one year costs \$5.00). Over the past year, we have gained many new members from new sources. Thanks to the magnificent work that Judy Spearing and her group of volunteers are doing, in clearing invasive species from the Park, the public can see what has to be done and what can be achieved. When they stop to ask questions, Judy gives them information about membership, and it is gratifying to see so many decide to join.

A number of present members have come to the conclusion that they have friends with similar interest to themselves, and that the friends would welcome a membership in the Society. Since Christmas is fast approaching, you might like to consider this way of solving your gift-giving problems. It would certainly help the recipient start the New Year on the right foot.

However, the traditional way of mailing cheques to the Treasurer still works, so choose your method and, in return, we look forward to sending you newsletters through 2008 and beyond.

Membership

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postal Code _____ Telephone No. _____

Individual membership fee is \$5.00 per year

Membership 1 year 2 year 3 year

Send or deliver to: Graham Shorthill, Treasurer
4623 Cordova Bay Road, Victoria B.C. V8X 3V6

Invasives

2007 has been a very busy year for the small band of intrepid volunteers working in Mount Douglas Park removing non-native, invasive plants. By the end of August we completed close to 700 person-hours of work in the Park.

In addition to our scheduled work parties to remove known invasives such as English ivy, holly, Scotch broom, daphne, and Himalayan blackberry, many extra hours were clocked in May and June this year in an effort to control a relatively new "alien invader". We had never heard of garlic mustard until February this year, but I can assure you we now know more than we care to about this insidious plant.

Originally, two local ecologists spotted its presence in the Park a couple of years ago, and reported it to Saanich Parks. No official intervention was initiated at that time, with only the ecologists who discovered it working on their own time to control its spread.

Unfortunately, with the heavy rains this past fall and winter, the wretched plant thrived and spread rapidly. This year, with the guidance of Saanich Parks and the same ecologists,





our CCIQS volunteers worked tirelessly in May and June to curtail further spread. We removed over 70 extra-large black poly bags of plant material from the Park and, at that time, thought we'd done fairly well.

Saanich Parks trucked the plant debris to the landfill and disposed of it, in bags, to prevent further spread. Garlic mustard is a very successful plant in that if the flower has finished its blooming and seeds are forming, the plant continues its life cycle and the seeds still mature even when the plant is uprooted!! So it cannot be pulled and dropped, left to rot in the Park, and it cannot be composted or we'd end up with garlic mustard everywhere that Saanich's compost is used. It has to be effectively disposed of!

Another major concern with garlic mustard is its alleopathic properties—that is, its ability to spread toxins that prevent or inhibit the growth of other species in the neighbourhood. It produces fairly high levels of cyanide throughout its life cycle, which renders it inedible to mammals, birds, insects, etc. Thus, there is very little predation of this plant and it grows and spreads undisturbed unless physically removed from the soil. If it is left unchecked, we could potentially lose the majority of our native flowers and plants in

the Park and end up with a complete understory of garlic mustard!! This is, apparently, the unhappy situation in some forests in Ontario today, based on what I've read on the Internet. These same chemical properties can have an adverse effect on certain fungi in the soil beneficial to the health of hardwood trees such as our big leaf maple.

If we start to lose plant biodiversity in the Park with the spread of this alien invader, (and other known invasives) this will, in turn, impact the diversity of wildlife too, as their food sources then become scarce, forcing them to move elsewhere to survive.

Clearly, this is one more plant we do not want lingering in Mount Douglas Park—nor in any park, for that matter. I hear it has also reared its ugly head this year in Playfair and Beacon Hill parks, so community groups will be busy dealing with this problem over the coming years. The seeds remain viable in the soil for five years or more.

If we are to be successful in eradicating garlic mustard from our Park we are looking at multi-year projects. This will require the help of many more volunteers. You are encouraged to volunteer some time with the "Citizens Combating Ivy Growth and Spread". This community group is supported by the Friends of Mt Douglas Park Society, Saanich Parks Department, and the Gordon Head Residents Association.

To register as a volunteer, please phone Judy at 472-0515 or email to:
jandd_spearing@shaw.ca

We have lots of work to do in our Park and there are tasks suitable for all levels of physical fitness so please consider joining us!

Douglas Creek

The press release for the May chum fry transplant into Douglas Creek reads:

"The Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society invites you, with our community partners, to transplant 40,000 chum fry into Douglas Creek Sunday May 6th, 2007 at 11:00 AM. We meet at the weir, which can be accessed from Robinwood Drive. This is a great event for parent- or guardian-supervised children, students and adults.

The transplant is a part of the ongoing restoration of Douglas Creek. Previous transplants are responsible for the return of chum salmon to Douglas Creek where, this spring, chum salmon fry hatched naturally out of the gravels of Douglas Creek. The transplant will supplement the natural production from the Creek, which was heavily impacted by dramatically destructive flows this winter.

Our community partners include Saanich Parks, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, the Howard English Hatchery, Goldstream Salmon Enhancement Society, Esquimalt Anglers, Pacific Salmon Foundation, Pacific Forestry Centre, Stream of Dreams, Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society and other friends of the Park."

The fry were held behind the weir until the screens from the siphons were removed the evening of 08 May as we had planned. The chum then made their way downstream to Cordova Bay. The release was a huge success. We got everything we asked for: the delivery of healthy fry from the Howard English hatchery; a great crowd that included many children and some local notables; and weather that was ideal for our purposes.

Now we must provide suitable habitat for their return—redouble our efforts to implement stormwater controls on the watershed and inform watershed residents.

On May 28 we joined teachers, parents and students from



Spawn platform

Torquay School in releasing 175 classroom-reared chum fry into the Creek. More life was introduced into the Creek by local students, and a good time was had by all.

In June we started to pick the seeds for the riparian planting in November 2008. There is year-to-year variability within a species in the amount of seed produced and when it ripens. Walking through the park and forecasting seed crops is an interesting activity at almost anytime of the year. Harvesting starts in June and carries on into October. Species collected this year were: Oregon grape, snowberry, two wild rose species, red elderberry, red osier dogwood, ocean spray, Pacific ninebark, Saskatoon, thimbleberry, Douglas maple, and big-leafed maple. We have a permit with Saanich Parks to collect seeds. Once collected they are delivered to Rob Hagel at the Pacific Forestry Centre, where he transforms them into riparian shrubs.

The Pacific Salmon Foundation supported both of our funding applications. We received \$7040.00 to create spawning platforms and \$200.00 for the November 2007 Tree Appreciation Day riparian planting. The Pacific Salmon Foundation's cheque was the critical seed money needed to get the 2007 spawning platform project rolling.



In preparation, we walked the Creek with Marc Gaboury who, with Tom Rutherford, is an expert on stream restoration. We looked for one large site below the Ash Road Bridge but, to be honest, there wasn't one place without problems for a large structure. It's not just a matter of building a weir across the Creek: for a bigger project, the streambanks are problematic.

If the weir diverts too much force into some of those clay banks, one heavy rain some dark night would leave all our work high and dry as the Creek cuts another channel around the weir.

The consensus was that we might have a better chance with several small projects that incorporate available woody debris. We identified four places as good candidates. Steve Hocquard completed engineered-plan views of the sites with proposed log weirs. Last year we did the work by hand which, as it turned, out showed us that we can't build a structure by hand that can withstand the force of water in the Creek. To get the work done appropriate to our resources, we decided to use a Spyder Hoe—the machine of choice in stream channels. We were impressed that it could be walked down into the channel where a conventional machine could not go without causing a lot of damage.

We met with Andrew Giles, Don Dojack and Angela Evans (Saanich Parks) on Wednesday 18 July. We walked the sites, reviewed our plans, and discussed how we could get the work done. We set out responsibilities: FOMDPS using the grant from the PSF to pay for the Spyder Hoe and Engineering / Project Management, and volunteer management; Saanich Parks for assessment and removal of hazardous trees, delivery and installation of 30 cu yards of spawning gravel into the Creek; Fisheries and Oceans to organize the Spyder Hoe and to set up the permissions to work in the Creek.

As it turned out, we had to lose 11 trees (2 standing dead maples and 3 Grand fir in various stages of decay) to satisfy Workers' Compensation Board regulations. We want standing dead trees in the Park: the trade-off is where work is scheduled and trees must come down. The assessments are done by professionals who weigh the ecological/sociological values versus the legal and human health considerations.

The gravel was put into the stream via a portable flume Parks has figured out. If the woody debris weirs can hold the gravel in the Creek and provide a fairly stable habitat then gravel is a real enhancement tool—relatively inexpensive as well.



The Spyder Hoe started work on September 5. The operator (Len Masson), Steve Hocquard, and Tom Rutherford worked through various possibilities with 8 log weirs--burying log ends in the bank, placing ballast rock when available, and building braced structures where there wasn't enough ballast rock available. Len spread the gravel behind the log weirs. The Spyder Hoe got in and out of the Creek with very little damage.

We spent three days using wire rope to 'tie' the ballast rock to the woody debris, and on 22 September wrapped up that part of the Spawning Platforms project. All went just as we planned. The weirs have sealed off so that water is pouring over the top of them; even though we've had a few Victoria 'heavy' rain storms, nothing has moved. The structures are at high risk to fail because of the very heavy flows coming off the watershed.

We would like to thank all of the people who brought this project to a successful conclusion—from the Pacific Salmon Foundation, who gave us the funds to start the project, through Saanich Parks, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, and the agencies, institutions and individuals at large who built the spawning platforms: we all worked together to bring salmon back into this Creek.



While the spawning platforms were being built, Saanich's Mike Ippen, Henry Bendall, and carpenters repaired the baffle system for fish passage in the Ash Road culvert.

We look forward to working with Saanich staff again on projects that blend the unique talents of volunteers and professionals in a way that seems to get work done.

We celebrated BC Rivers Day on September 30 with a Creek cleanup. A dozen people picked about a cubic metre-and-a-half of trash out of the length of the Creek.

Tree Appreciation Day in Saanich followed, on November 4. We planted the streambanks where the log weirs were put in. It is a tough spot—dark and dry—but a variety of species were planted into the best spots: Douglas maple, red-osier dogwood, ocean spray, Oregon grape, Pacific ninebark, rose, snowberry, and alder. We had a good crowd—about 60 adults and kids—and a nice day; everything (about 850 plugs and some alders in one gallon pots) was in the ground in about 2 hours. Thrifty Foods provided snacks for participants.

A group of students from the University of Victoria mapped the vegetation project as well as planting a portion of the site. Good to get them involved, because their course paper is a record of what we did and where we did it.

Next event is the salmon carcass transplant. You are invited to join The Friends of Mount Douglas Park, Saanich Parks, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, and the Howard English Hatchery and volunteers at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, December 15, to transplant salmon carcasses into Douglas Creek. We have about 100 frozen carcasses that we will put into woody debris piles. The transplant introduces some of the marine-derived nutrients that Douglas Creek requires to maintain its ecosystem health.

We meet at the Edgemont entrance to the Park. Dress for the weather and a bit of fish slime—rubber boots if you have them. Believe it or not it is an interesting and fun event—takes about an hour and a half. For more directions contact Bob Bridgeman at 477-7464 or rbridge@shaw.ca

Soon after the salmon carcass transplant we will be transplanting 100 of the native crayfish *Pacifastacus leniusculus* into woody debris piles in the Creek. We are trying to rebuild the food web, starting with a large invertebrate omnivore. Creeks in the area that maintain salmon populations also have a crayfish population. The crayfish recycle

nutrients from organic debris that are too large or otherwise unavailable to smaller invertebrates. The transplant is at the leading edge of restoration practices and deals with ecological health on the micro scale.

The project was put together by Louise Ditmars as result of a personal interest in the Creek and also as the thesis for her Restoration of Natural Systems Diploma. Louise has obtained all of the permits required and put together partners from the University of Victoria's Aquatic Facility. We are looking forward to this transplant and the very interesting work that will follow.

So here it is November and we don't have any fish in the Creek. It looks like we are not going to see any. Why? We are not sure. After three continuous years we felt that we would always get some: considering the three-year overlap from each brood year we thought that it was a certainty. We could spin scenarios about what has happened, but it would be sheer speculation.

We worked hard this summer to prepare for the run, so the lack of fish is a considerable disappointment. It comes at a time when we want to make plans to enhance the spawning habitat in the Creek, and a hundred fish could have made a huge impact and bolstered our plans for future work. However, this is a stream that has been sadly mistreated for many years and we have to be prepared for setbacks. We thought that an oil spill on top of spawning salmon was the worst, but perhaps there is worse than that to come.

We have considered our options, and with encouragement from our mentors we have decided to carry on with undiminished effort to work toward next year's run. We will be walking the Creek to look for restoration opportunities; we will be meeting with our community partners, writing funding applications and pushing forward with the restoration of the Creek.

Seasons greeting! More next time.

History of Mount Douglas Park

In between restoring the Creek, pushing for restoration of the foreshore, hoping for eventual improvement of the watershed, removing invasives, working toward returning the old quarry to natural park state, recommending improvements to roads through and abutting the park, developing a Park policy, and working to ensure that development on Cordova Bay Road north of the Park will not endanger the Park, we also find and keep whatever historical records there are of the Park.

That last takes a bit of digging, and from time to time, via the newsletter, we ask members if they have any old photographs to increase our store, or any journals or letters or news clippings that cast light on the history of the Park. Do you know anybody who can help us with any of the above? We would copy documents and photographs carefully and return them in good condition. If you can help, please contact Ken Rankin at 477-8007.

In the meantime, the following are some scans we already have. Long-time members will surely have seen them before, but will enjoy the reminders.

This photograph was taken in the early years of the century, looking north from Mount Tolmie, across what is now Gordon Head, to Mount Douglas.



And this one is a drawing from the height of Mount Douglas, looking back toward Mount Tolmie:



Emily Carr frequently painted and drew in Mount Douglas Park, often staying in a small trailer, accompanied by a friend's dog and drinking tea with the many friends who came out to visit her. Her last visit was in 1942, toward the end of her life. She was not in the trailer this time, but staying in a small cabin near the teahouse. This time she stayed only eight days, but in that time she produced more than ten large and many small oil sketches. One of the canvasses was "Cedar", supposedly the cedar still just to the right of the present parking lot.



Board of Directors 2007/2008

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Historian: Pam Lewis

Membership

Please check your address label (above); if it reads less than '06 your renewal time has come. We hope you will continue to support the work of the Society for another year by sending \$5 for each one-year membership to the address below.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postal Code _____ Telephone No. _____

Individual membership fee is \$5.00 per year

Membership 1 year 2 year 3 year