



# Lights and Shadows from the Dishman Hills, October, 1998

## THE MAKING OF A NATURALIST, PART 2

It was off to World War II for Tom Rogers, but not to fight his fellow mankind. Recognizing his natural talents, the Army sent him to combat evil bacteria in a medical lab in Omaha, Nebraska; yes, even a naturalist can help fight a war. Tom also ran pregnancy test on WAC's!

After the war Tom found himself married with a growing family. He needed a job, and found one teaching biology in the dryland wheat country of eastern Montana, a very different type of environment. Besides wheat, wind, and weather there was an abundance of birds with fifteen species of ducks and songbirds within a half mile of the school. Migrating snow geese and arctic owls were a highlight. But a thirst for trees was to drive Tom to the west to a new teaching job in Libby, Montana. For ten years Tom prospered as a biology teacher, bird watcher, and hiker, surrounded by the lovely Northern Rocky Mountains. A lucky man whose career and hobbies are so overlapping.

In 1957, a better job lured Tom to Spokane to teach at Central Valley school. One of his first impressions of Spokane was that Appleway (now Sprague) seem to run on forever. He joined the Spokane Audubon Society right away. In the Fall of that same year, missing the forest and mountains of Western Montana, he stepped outside of his new home on Maxwell Ave. and spotted a wooded ridge to the southwest. Investigating, Tom found a wondrous natural area with trails and a fascinating collection of plants and animals, the Dishman Hills. In the early "sixties" he started to formulate a plan to save the Dishman Hills. He first talked it up by writing articles for the newspaper, and letters to County Parks Department. By 1966 Tom and others took the first step by organizing a group to take matters into their own hands (that's what people did in the "sixties") to save the Dishman Hills. A hike that year kick off the project and a surprisingly large group of people joined up; Tom was the first president of the new association. The hat was passed to start accumulating funds to save the area by land purchase. The first land bought was from old man Goldback who made gravestones from granite quarried on the east side of the Natural Area. Granite dust from many years of stone carving had left him in bad health.

In 1974 Tom retired from teaching at age 62. That same year he remembers gazing towards downtown Spokane and the ongoing World Exposition from a overlook in the Hills and feeling very glad to be in his wondrous natural setting rather than being surrounded by all the trappings of civilisation off in the distance. It was also back in the early days that Tom started his biolist of the plants and animals of the Hills. For more than twenty years Tom observed and listed everything alive that makes up the ecology of the Natural

Area. Tom refers to himself as a "lister" and rarely fails to notice the details of forest, ponds, and meadows environments.

In 1998, Tom is still active in both enjoying and saving the Dishman Hills. Over 40 years of involvement sort of make Tom and the Hills inseparable. While he can no longer see the Natural Area from his house on Maxwell because of all the construction in the last several decades, and sore bones make his hikes shorter, the Dishman Hills remains a source of enjoyment for him. His goal to save the special ecology is not yet complete, but the success of the public's efforts are indeed impressive. Long after Tom is gone (and us younger ones too), the Hills will remain a special place for people to enjoy, to learn, and to absorb the wonders of our planet's natural environment.

## ORGANIZATION NEWS

We are a non-profit organization dedicated to saving natural areas in the Spokane region for public enjoyment and education. Call Michael Hamilton at 747-8147 with any questions. We will have our monthly meeting in November at Opportunity Elementary School, South 1109 Wilbur, the third Tuesday of the month at 7PM. Donations to our Land Fund amounted to \$1,671.53 in September. Expenses for the same month amounted to \$142.81, all for bulletin printing and mailing.

Our thanks to you who who donated and have given permission to be listed here: Joseph Collins, Frieda Froth, Roger Fruci, Don Griffiths, Beverly Hinton, Itronix c/o IFCC, Johnson-Fix Foundation, Helen Lininger, Margaret Millsap, Tom Rogers, Spokane Recycling Products (five anonymous donors), Marcia Spohn, Bernadine Van Theil, and Jeanne Wilson.

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