

LIGHTS and SHADOWS

from the
Dishman Hills

September 2003

WE'RE BACK

The newsletter was not published in August since everyone was on vacation and our computer was down anyway with several problems that have been since corrected. The Association and our helpers were working during the summer months on a number of projects including the state land transfer on Tower Mountain, the scout sign project (contact number for support is 921-9862 rather than the number reported in the July newsletter), trail work and new steps on the main route to the ponds, and a lot of paper shuffling that seems to go with land stewardship.

We also spent some time talking with officials of the new City of Spokane Valley, our neighbor on the north side of the Natural Area. We are delighted that they have expressed interest in being part of the community's natural space conservation picture.

The year of 2003 is shaping up to be a challenge. The convergence of a number of negative factors effecting nonprofit organizations have been referred to as the "perfect storm" that threatens many small groups. Factors include today's sour economy, donor burnout, scarcity of volunteer help, the decline of foundation, corporate, and government support, and the reduction of certain tax advantages for gift giving. We must find ways to do more with fewer resources.

SLOW DOWN

It was a long, hot summer in the Hills, but, so far, no forest fires to report (knock on wood!). Dusty trails wind their way through fields of browning grass, around dried up ponds, and pass by dormant springs. Most of the mid-summer flowers are but a memory and the forest seems to be waiting for the relief of the first good rains of the fall. This is the time when things natural begin to slow down, preparing for the quiet season of winter.

People should take a hint from nature and slow down from the accelerating pace of life that surrounds us these days. A recent hike up to the Rocks of Sharon Nature Area encountered only two other trail people; a forest jogger running like something large and vicious was chasing him, and a mountain biker approaching mach 1.

Americans are speeders. Court reporters document that we talk faster than we did in the 60's. Visitors from other countries comment that we appear to be walking in fast forward, and graphologists note that our writing is progressively degenerating into scribble. We sleep less, cook and eat faster, and are always looking for ways to convert our "down" time into productive time with cell phones, pagers, and laptop computers. Computers have speeded up many aspects of our lives, and the home computer now allows us to extend our workday into our domestic life as well as shop 'til we drop in the privacy of our own home. We are trading in our biological or natural rhythms for abstract, artificial time, forfeiting opportunities to understand how nature works and to be a part of it. Are we still alert to moon phases, drops in soil temperature, shortening of daylight, changing water levels, migrating birds, and the ripening of fruit on the trees? We used to "to slow down and smell the roses", but now we only have time to "wake up and smell the coffee."

We have made material consumption a way of life, a means to gain status, satisfaction, and security. Yes, to many Americans "time is money". The interval between desire and gratification is quickly

Speed is irrelevant if you're traveling in the wrong direction.

-- Mohandas Gandhi

approaching simultaneity as consumers expect a greater array of products and services at near breakneck speed.

The consumption of our natural resources and our natural spaces is also accelerating. Haste makes waste. Many scientists now agree that over-consumption is the world's most serious environmental threat, since for every product consumed 20 times its weight in raw material were consumed to make it. Every day, each American uses up 120 lbs. of stuff, requiring 24 acres of natural resources to support our life style, despite that there are only 5 acres available for each person on the planet. As countries like China strive to raise their level of consumption where will four or five more planets come from? Recycling has succeeded in taking some of the edge off our consumption, but in Seattle the amount of the city's waste recycled has dropped from 52% to 38% in the last two years, many people say they are just too busy, too tired, and too over worked to recycle.

So, slow down, take a hike, realign. Americans need their natural spaces more than ever. Take a slow walk in the Hills and leave your watch and schedule behind. Spend some time in the forest in search of the natural rhythms that make the season what it is. The best things in life really aren't things. Maybe it's the journey rather than the destination that is the most important.

ORGANIZATION NEWS

We are a non-profit organization dedicated to saving nature areas in the Spokane region for public enjoyment and education. Call Michael Hamilton, 747-8147, if you have any questions. We meet every other month on the third Tuesday at Opportunity Elementary School, S. 1109 Wilbur, in the teacher's lounge, 7pm. Our next meeting will be November 16.

The following are our July and August donors that have consented to be listed: Joyce Alonso, Kermit Anderson, Carolyn Boatsman, Bill & Patty Burkhardt, Nancy Cashon, Myrna Cliff, Helen Cook, Celesta & Gregory Frost, Bart & Lindell Haggin, Larry & Judy Hatch, Merry & Bill Herron, Burchard Krebs, Stephen Peterson, Constance Porter, Lorna Ream, Norma Rosenberger, Nan Smith, Betty Stratton, Jan Strobeck, Ken Swedberg, Richard & Lorraine Taylor, Beth & Ed Tiejen, Jeanne Wilson, Art Zack, Hershel Zellman, and 3 anonymous donors. Thank you for remembering us over the summer..

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