

LIGHTS and SHADOWS

from the
Dishman Hills

July 2005

REMINISCENCE

The following story is part of a letter to the Association from Rita Cencich. A recent stroll in the Hills was full of memories coupled with feelings of renewed discovery and connection with a beautiful natural setting. Rita visited the Hills soon after she moved here in 1969. Back then Rita and family signed up for a nature hike led by Tom Rogers, and had a special time in a special place with special people. As the years passed, Tom was her son's biology teacher at University High, and she worked with Tom in the Meals On Wheels Program. Rita states about Tom "A finer man would be hard to find."

It was one of those special days and special moments that seemed to have been ordered by God Himself. John and I decided to go to 'our' park, which is really a public park called 'The Dishman Hills Natural Area'. It is close by, a ten minute car ride away. There is a black top foot path that makes a loop around the perimeter of the beautifully kept picnic and playground area. This loop is just right for John with his walker. I remember a couple of years ago before John had his walker, he was confined to the house and yard because his back was so bad that he couldn't walk more than about twenty-five feet before crumpling into a chair. One day I saw a garage sale sign as I was heading up Bowdish Hill. Something told me to go around the block and check it out. Here was this black and red, four wheeled walker with brakes, just beckoning me to buy it. John looked at it with doubt and apprehension. I said, "Come on, John, lets go to the park and try it out". He agreed and I helped him into the car. Ten minutes later I found myself unloading this contraption from the trunk of the car at the parking lot. He gingerly took a few steps with it and checked out the brakes and then took off. By the time we had gone about twenty-five feet we were both wiping tears from our cheeks. He could walk again! We walked around the whole loop with the joy and excitement of a toddler taking his first steps. It was the beginning of many trips to the park from Spring until snow or ice covered the path.

Now back to our walk of just a couple days ago. We hadn't been to the park for a few weeks due to inclement spring weather. It was nice to get out again. There was only one other vehicle in the parking lot and not another soul in sight. The fragrant, warm, moist air with a hint of a breeze carried the message of possible rain. The birds were each trying to outdo the other. Their chorus was truly music to our ears. We stopped for a moment and listened to the call of one we had never heard before. I tried to catch sight of it but he was an elusive rascal and the loop was surrounded by tall pine trees that went back many acres into the rest of the park, so he had lots of camouflage. When we came to the bench which was conveniently located just half way around the loop, John pulled over and we sat down for a few minutes just taking in the splendor of the moment. Our cocker spaniel, Misty, was busy checking out the new scents of the area. No doubt she detected the scent of quail under the huge evergreen trees and of ground squirrels in the meadow where they had been burrowing. She had learned to love our trips to the park too.

We started reminiscing about days gone by when we didn't need to take the looped path; the days when we took the *hikers paths* with our golden retriever, Rusty, and could walk endlessly up one hill an

I go to Nature to be soothed and healed, and to have my senses put in tune once more.— John Burroughs

down another, through narrow cliff bordered places and across little foot bridges. Our legs were strong and steady and our dog was young too. Rusty had been brought up on these hills. When we first got him and his roly-poly brother, Bear, which we were keeping for our son Nick, they were only 8 weeks old. We brought them up here one sunny spring day to give them a sample of what they would be doing the rest of their life. It was so much fun to watch their antics as they explored a whole new world, sniffing and tasting, tumbling and waddling as puppies do. Soon they became tired and curled up on a warm, sun bathed rock for a nap. John and I found a nice moss covered rock and rested too. Suddenly I heard a very high pitched sort of squeal and a buzzing sound swept past my head. Soon it happened again and I caught the motion of something but it was so fast I couldn't detect it. Finally I saw the source. It was a couple of hummingbirds that probably were *twitterpated* like in the Bambi movie. They entertained us for several minutes before streaking off into the distance.

We continued to reminisce and long for the days when we were free to go where we pleased. Our recreation at that time, always involved hiking with our dog and several of our youngsters. Priest Lake and Skookum Lake were our favorite places for camping. Many snapshots have captured these memories and when we look through the albums of those days we find ourselves brushing away a tear from our cheek just as we did on this day while sitting in "OUR PARK" reminiscing.

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. Since we are on summer break our next meeting will be September 20.

The following are our June donors that have consented to be listed: James Conaty, Robert Damon, Mary Gardner, Lila & George Girvin, Tim & Sue Henderson, Glen Kivett, Rich Leon, Della Meyers, Leo Middendorf, Marilyn Miller, Roy Mills, Marlene Montgomery, Stephen Peterson, Diane Rogers, Patricia Sweeney, Lawrence Thieman, Beth Tietjen, Howard Waterman, Donald Woodke, and four anonymous donors. Thank you all.

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