

SOS Elms News

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Judith Benson

I think that I shall never see a poem as lovely as a tree . . .

(from the poem by J. Kilmer, who was killed by a sniper's bullet during the First World War).

We are grateful to all members who find themselves inspired by our stately elms. Art, poetry, prose, photos and song are welcome. In this issue is a poem written by U of S English Professor and long time SOS Elms member Don Kerr.

The Saskatoon Tree Tour was undoubtedly the highlight of our SOS Elms activities for 2003. On June 7th chief guide Glenn Gustafson set off with a bus load of keen participants. On and off the bus, he introduced us to each of the special trees and sites, which he embellished with its history and lore. Robert White and several other members of the Baha'i Community joined in the tour and the barbeque that followed. The weekend marked the 21st anniversary of the death of Richard St. Barbe Baker, and Robert led us in paying tribute in front of the last tree Barbe Baker planted, a poplar near the Diefenbaker Canada Centre where our tour ended. We are grateful to employees at the Centre for cooperating with our tour; and to Rae Hearn, Doug, Brad, and Bo Mitchell for planning the barbeque, cooking and serving.

Saskatoon Tree Tour booklets, ***A guide to the unique and unusual trees of Saskatoon***, written by Glenn and hot off the press, were given to participants. These guidebooks have since been widely distributed around town. If members need additional copies, they are available free at city libraries, Meewasin Valley Centre, or from SOS Elms. In August Richard Kerbes led a mini Tree Tour for the Saskatoon Nature Society.

Two public service TV ads about Dutch Elm Disease (DED) are now running to further

our goals to raise public awareness of this disease and its control. Sheri O'Shaughnessy, of SDEDA (Saskatchewan Dutch Elm Disease Association) advised that between July 10th and August 31st, her office received 518 calls from viewers expressing concern about various trees in response to our ad, which publicizes the provincial 1-800-SASKELM line. SOS Elms is grateful to Steve Hyde of Saskatchewan Environment, Global Television, and CTV for their support in making these videos for TV.

SOS Elms directors continue to keep in touch with Council and Staff of the City of Saskatoon regarding the health of our urban forest, which is unfortunately declining. The pruning of American Elms has greatly improved over the past ten years but drought has put stress on these and other species. With the inevitable aging of spruce and Manitoba Maple, and continued incurable infestation of birches by the Bronze Birch Borer, improved care of our urban trees is more important than ever.

Woodlawn Cemetery and its 3,000 American Elms became the focus of our concern in late summer. We got word that the trees there were in especially bad shape, in need of both watering and pruning. An infection of DED there could become uncontrollable in such a large concentration of elms. Woodlawn's most critically important stand of elms line both sides of Next of Kin Memorial Avenue, which is a National Historic Site (see Robert White's article below). When I visited in early September five or six of those Avenue elms had already died and had been replaced. The slender new elms were watered and mulched, but the large old elms continued to be neglected. I wrote three letters to City Council in September. They were acknowledged but not acted upon, so in early October I went directly to

the Superintendent of Woodlawn Cemetery strongly urging him to deep water these elms before freeze-up, to increase their chance of survival come spring. I finally received word that a contractor was to do the deep watering on October 29th – and we were hoping to mark Remembrance Day with a newsletter article reporting a successful fall watering of the Memorial elms. However, I received no word on the designated day, so began leaving phone messages. One week later my deepest concerns were confirmed. The below freezing temperatures on the evening of the 29th had halted plans for watering. Although the ground remained unfrozen, word was that the contractors' hoses would not be effective in cold weather. The Superintendent assured me that the elms will be deep watered in "early spring". . .

We thank Saskatchewan Environment and The Saskatoon Foundation for financial support for the past year. Special thanks to all SOS Elms members (about 100 of us) for your continued support, donations, and caring.

The SOS Elms Board remains strong and cohesive. Irene and Kerry Moffatt host most meetings in their home, where we enjoy a cozy environment and Irene's fantastic homemade dainties. Last spring Bronco Skorupan resigned from our board due to other pressing demands on his time. Bronco, an independent and certified arborist, had been on our board for many years and is an invaluable adviser. He also contributed his pruning services as a prize in our raffle fund-raisers. We welcome new board members, and invite you to consider jumping on board. We are making a difference, slowly but surely. We began in 1992 and thus far no DED in Saskatoon! Please let us know what initiatives you would like to see us develop for further

promotion of elm awareness. All ideas are welcome.

Saskatoon Tree Tour

By Robert White

This article is adapted from Robert's report which appeared in the Neighborhood Express last June, with further recent reflections from Robert.

A new guidebook to Saskatoon's tree heritage was launched by SOS Elms with a bus tour on Saturday, June 7th, 2003. About fifty enthusiastic participants were escorted by the author of the guide, Glenn Gustafson. This tour of the city's most interesting, beautiful, unusual and historical trees begins at Canada's last remaining arboreal monument to war veterans, in Woodlawn Cemetery. Started in 1923 and known as Next-of-Kin Memorial Avenue, it includes 1219 American Elms dedicated to veterans of all wars. Such memorials were established across Canada, but this is the only remaining one. It was designated as a National Historic Site in 1993.

A major stop on the tour is Patterson Gardens, which features nearly 600 varieties of trees and shrubs, many of them unique to Saskatoon. Maintained by the U of S Department of Horticulture, which provided expert guides for our visit, the Gardens are at the corner of Preston and College. They are open to the public and anyone thinking of planting trees would do well to check out the many possibilities demonstrated in these gardens. They are a delight to any one who appreciates trees.

A unique stop on the tour is the last tree planted by Richard St. Barbe Baker who was known as "The Man of the Trees". This dynamic man influenced the protection of the giant redwoods in California, the replanting of large areas in northern Africa,

and stimulated a new direction for forest conservation on a global scale. He founded "The Men of the Trees", a conservation organization which became active in 108 countries. A prolific writer, he recorded his experiences in some thirty books.

This real life tree hero attended the U of S from 1909-1913 and his life's work brought him back to receive an honorary doctorate in 1971. At the age of 91, while visiting Saskatoon in 1982, St. Barbe, as his friends called him, planted a tree near the Diefenbaker Canada Centre. He died three days later, and his body was buried in Woodlawn Cemetery. He is an example of what one person can achieve in a lifetime and to this end the Baha'i Community of Saskatoon is planning an historical marker at the site.

The tree tour demonstrates that uncommon species such as Ohio Buckeye, Dropmore and American Linden, Amur Corktree, Hackberry, Black Walnut, Lodgepole and Swiss Stone Pine and even Douglas Fir can do well here. The tour also highlights the importance of a comprehensive DED management plan if we are to save the 100,000 American Elms which grace our older streets and boulevards.

Six members of the Baha'i community participated in the Tree Tour - some out of interest in trees and some out of curiosity. The tour was enjoyed by all and of course the celebration of Richard St. Barbe Baker's life was appreciated. As a long time Baha'i, who frequently visited Saskatoon, he had influenced many of us in our career choices and interest in ecology. May Cummings, one of the participants wrote the following in the Baha'i community newsletter: "Now I am not an outdoor type yet through participation in this tour I found myself delighted to spend the time with people who truly cared about the world we live in and

had found their own path to improve upon it. For me they were inspiring and I found out that there is a lot of good being done out there! ...and how crucial trees are for human survival ...I had a super day! Personal connections made will no doubt continue. A wonderful crowd! A beautiful city! Precious trees! ...Since I am a high school teacher, I gave copies of the booklet to the science teachers and they seemed very interested."

This report is a good reflection of the joy and excitement we all felt. It was particularly special to have David Van Vliet from Winnipeg on the tour as it was he who had helped arrange St. Barbe Baker's visit to Saskatoon and had organized the planting of the tree by the Diefenbaker Canada Centre.

Saskatoon Nature Society Tree Tour

By Richard Kerbes

On Sunday morning, August 17th 2003 I led a tree tour for a small intrepid assemblage of tree enthusiasts from the Saskatoon Nature Society. It was a knowledgeable and appreciative group, including a woman from Germany who was taking her summer holidays in the Saskatoon area! Using Glenn Gustafson's self guiding booklet to the Tree Tour, we visited Woodlawn Cemetery, Patterson Gardens and as many sites as time would allow. Everyone enjoyed the tour, and planned to be back, on their own, to visit all the sites and trees.

October 13th found me back at Woodlawn Cemetery with the Saskatoon Nature Society on their annual Thanksgiving visit there. Due to somewhat odd weather patterns this fall, we did not see many birds. Most local summer residents had gone south, while birds coming from further north to winter here had not yet arrived. The cemetery's White-tailed Jackrabbits, already

turning white, were out in force, and we were pleased to see both Red-breasted and White-breasted Nuthatches. Our group saw first hand what was happening to the trees in the cemetery, and I sought the naturalists' support in SOS Elms' efforts to improve the situation, as outlined by Judith Benson above.

SDEDA Workshop at Buffalo Pound Lake, June 19th 2003

By Judith Benson

My session was called "Community Action: Options for Building DED Awareness in Your Community." I set up my display on a workbench, complete with tools and sawdust. Very rustic, but the participants didn't seem to notice. They responded enthusiastically and asked questions I was able to answer - my favorite kind of audience!

I either displayed, described or handed out our SOS Elms material, including brochures, before and after DED photos, map of SK showing sites of DED, "Home Owner's Guides to Elm Care and DED Prevention in SK", newsletters, membership forms, "Elm P.I. Program and Journal", "Fungus Among Us," tee-shirts, videos, and our Elm Tree costume to share and wear for public relations events

I showcased SOS Elms' activities and accomplishments, including our web site, lobbying, raffles, displays, educational efforts, Saskatoon Tree Tour, Largest Elm Contest, Adopt an Elm Campaign, and our urban forest conference. By the time I covered about half the items on my list, my time was up, and lunch beckoned. Participants were grateful for the many ideas that have made SOS Elms a well-known organization throughout the

province. I hope they have been able to use some of them in their communities to maintain DED awareness and interest.

City of Saskatoon Urban Forestry for Schools By Michelle Chartier

This summer, staff from our Urban Forestry planting crew had the opportunity to work on new planting projects in partnership with two schools and a community group. These initiatives emphasized tree diversity and public education, which are key strategies in successful DED prevention programs.

In the first project we worked with kindergarten to grade eight students to plant twenty-seven trees around the perimeter of St. John's school. The project was initiated when Bonnie Kraus, the school liaison, contacted our Parks Branch to request trees for their schoolyard. After meeting with Bonnie we decided that involving the students in the project would likely foster pride and ownership of the trees. Vandalism can sometimes be a problem in or near school grounds and we wanted the students to protect and care for the trees.

On the planting day each class, from kindergarten to grade eight, came out to plant a mix of bur oak, green ash, and Manitoba maple. We took the opportunity to talk to the students about why trees are important in the city, how to plant trees, and what needs to be done to care for the trees. It was a nice day to be outside and the students were very enthusiastic about the task at hand.

We also worked with the grade six class at the Saskatoon French School where we assisted with their schoolyard planting plans. Monsieur Lucien Deux, the grade six teacher, asked for some assistance and urban forestry expertise for their project. They wanted to beautify the entrance of their school. We were invited to visit his

classroom where we discussed planting plans, tree species selection, tree quality and maintenance. We also had the opportunity to talk to the students about DED and the impact it could have on the urban forest. We used SDEDA's "There's a Fungus Among Us" as a resource for part of our presentation.

In both these planting projects the City and the school are sharing the responsibility of watering the trees. The school is looking after the watering in the spring and fall and our Forestry crew takes over the watering in July and August when school is out.

Another new planting initiative was a result of a Food Charter proposal that was presented to our City Council in the fall of 2002. One of the key elements of the Food Charter is to encourage community gardens, urban agriculture, and the recycling of organic materials that nurture the soil. Incorporating fruit trees in the urban forest of Saskatoon was listed as one of the ways to achieve their goals. As a result of this initiative our forestry staff worked with representatives from CHEP (Child Hunger Education Program) to coordinate the planting of seven fruit trees around two community gardens. The assortment included Norkent, Patterson, and September Ruby apple trees and Carmine Jewel and Evans sour cherries.

News Release Re: Cankerworms (September 23, 2003)

The City of Saskatoon's Urban Forestry Section advises residents that banding for cankerworms should not be necessary this year. Surveys conducted by the City's Pest Management Unit have indicated that cankerworm populations remain very low.

Tree banding will not be effective against the leaf rollers that were abundant throughout Saskatoon this past summer. Unlike the adult

female cankerworm, the female leaf roller moth has wings and banding will not control them. Bands also trap spiders that are potential predators of all types of young caterpillars.



there's a tree

by Don Kerr

between one thing and another
there's a tree

it's where the air cleans its teeth

the tree holds its head
against the sun
and makes shade
it hears the chain saws coming
and shakes in the wind

it's not aggressive but it is
competitive
leeching light water
rooting about

hides in its branches an assortment
of small and large life

between one thing and another
there's a tree
the air passes through it
like water

the tree is not a man
it has no use for rhetoric
or the fall of man
it hasn't a vindictive bark
in its body

when it shakes its leaves
it's not planning to attack
another tree or cut
down human beings

between one thing and another
there's still a tree

Update on the Rendek Elm Forest

By Diether Peschken

Rendek Elm Forest is being ravaged by Dutch Elm Disease with 25-30% of the American Elms dead. Stewards Moe Alain and Alex Rendek keep the trails in good shape by removing fallen trees. Yet the Sanctuary is still beautiful and the Ostrich Fern luxuriant. An under story of Manitoba Maple and Balsam Poplar is growing vigorously to fill the gaps. Near the small parking lot is a picturesque opening onto the Red Deer River where we listened to the Song Sparrow and where we spotted Greater Yellowlegs and the Belted Kingfisher. Rendek Elm Forest was alive with birdsong, and we easily identified 16 bird species by sight or sound. Especially the White-throated Sparrow filled the air with his melodies. Smooth Sweet Cicely frequently adorned the trails.

Editor's note: *The above is from Diether's report, which appeared in **Nature Views**, Fall 2003, regarding a June 24th 2003 Nature Saskatchewan field trip. Moving in from the east, DED continues its inexorable rampage through the native wild American Elms in the valleys of eastern Saskatchewan, now hitting the Rendek Elm Forest near Hudson Bay SK. SOS Elms members may recall previous Newsletter articles about this Forest. In 1997 Allan R. Smith wrote an article of concern, and that summer I organized a tour there, just before DED was first detected. In our last Newsletter Linda Moskalyk reported on a sad visit which she made to the Forest [last summer](#) (RK).*

Update from the Saskatchewan Dutch Elm Disease Association

Sheri O'Shaughnessy, Executive Director
SDEDA

It has been a busy summer and fall at the SDEDA with a great deal of our efforts focusing on education and awareness. It speaks volumes about our efforts when it is realized how many people know about the disease and how to care for elm trees.

Over the past few months a great deal of our time has been spent on communication and awareness of DED. In conjunction with SOS Elms and Saskatchewan Environment, the SDEDA has been running a "Symptoms" and a "Firewood" video on CTV, Global and CBC television throughout the province. We have also concentrated on paid advertising of these videos in the Regina area, which has always been a "hot spot" for DED. Participation in the trade shows has also been a top priority, with attendance at PFRA Field Days, Buffalo

Days, and AG Education in the Classroom. Presentations to elementary schools are underway, with some very enthusiastic listeners.

The SDEDA has also been working with SaskPower to assist them in the development of a revised pruning course that will allow them to meet the requirements of the training recommended in the revised DED regulations.

Progress continues to be made in 2003 to move closer to a completion of the revised DED regulations. The regulations have been through one round of drafting and will be submitted later this year for a second consideration. We are very pleased with the progress that is being made and are anticipating the completion of the regulations in the near future. The SDEDA is currently working on an implementation strategy for the regulations to ensure continued advance in the management of DED in Saskatchewan.

