



NOTRE-DAME-DES-NEIGES  
CEMETERY

Where life is a garden of memories

# Dialogue

*Notre-Dame-Des-Neiges Cemetery Newsletter*

*Vol.3 No.8 June 2001*

## ***The Tale of Notre-Dame-des-Neiges (Part V)***

**A** new century dawns. By 1925, the cemetery is three and a half times its original size. In 1912, there were already several buildings along Côte-des-Neiges, and Troie and Gatineau Avenues received the names they bear today. Numerous transactions were also made at this time for the sale and purchase of land, including the property sold to McKenna, the florist who, as you remember, complained during the construction of our greenhouse in 1887. On May 13, 1921, Canadian Army headquarters signed a contract for development of a military zone at the edge of the Protestant cemetery. Since graves were now being dug, even during the winter, the charnel house, expanded in 1901 by O. Martineau & Fils, contractors, now became a staff room and a place for warehousing.

Cyrille Corbeil, who succeeded Évariste Dupré as superintendent in May, 1924, drew up an exhaustive inventory of

the cemetery's land, buildings, furnishings and equipment. The inventory lists approximately twenty buildings, most of which were located where the service area now lies. However, the constable's residence, probably the old guardhouse, close to the Protestant cemetery and superintendent's residence, where Évariste Dupré lived after 1909, was located between Côte-des-Neiges and Troie Avenue, west of Gatineau.

Between 1925 and 1950, seven islets were created north of the administration building, two temporary grave areas were opened in the Ukrainian community section, and Sainte Vierge and the network of cemetery lanes grew considerably. The creation of a new entrance on the east side of the mountain, and the use of zones along the fence can be explained by the inauguration of two tram lines in these sectors. The monumental gate was partly demolished in 1926. The costly ornamental grill projects designed by

W. Vaillancourt of Verdun and the firm Vinant de Paris, which were intended to close off the rest of the area, were abandoned due to the 1929 stock market crash.

The most significant public development of this period was erected in 1931, 6 years after the beatification of Bernadette Soubirous, and less than two years before her canonization: a replica of the Lourdes grotto, where the Virgin of the Immaculate Conception appeared to Bernadette, was constructed at the northeastern edge of the cemetery. On December 8 of that year, Louis Bouhier, the Notre-Dame parish



priest, celebrated the first mass at this location.

On August 7, 1932, 15,000 people attended the official blessing of the

grotto conducted by Monsignor Jean Verdier, Archbishop of Paris and Superior General of the Sulpicians. On this occasion, the archbishop affixed a piece of stone from Lourdes to the grotto. This installation was transformed into family vaults around 1976; however, a statue of the Virgin remains, and one

**Thanks to all our readers  
who contribute comments  
and suggestions.  
Please keep writing.**

can still detect the outlines of the grotto's entrance today.

Finally, in 1950, the cross and angels of the Resurrection that once decorated the gate were installed at the main entrance, where they can be seen today. The first half of the twentieth century thus not only enabled us to envision some of our cemetery's transformations, but also allowed us to bear witness to many of

them, since they have remained unchanged to this day. We are now arriving at a point in our history where we have the opportunity to walk through the cemetery's beautiful lanes, and see the results of its development. ♦

**Yolande Tremblay**  
General Manager



CENTRE FUNÉRAIRE  
CÔTE-DES-NEIGES

## Caring for the dying: A life experience

**S**upporting a relative, friend or patient when death approaches is inevitably an intense experience, often disconcerting, and frequently challenging.

One thing is certain, this stage of life will, in most cases, disrupt our routine, challenge our beliefs, and confront us with our own mortality. Yet these moments can also be an opportunity for greater closeness and extraordinary communication, as well as a time for getting in touch with ourselves.

The Côte-des-Neiges Funeral Centre has created a video-cassette on the subject to help you cope with the dismay and confusion with you may be confronted during this difficult period. This video is one of the rare educational tools to deal with caring for the dying with respect, tenderness, simplicity, and humility.

The video was created with the help of specialists such as Suzanne Pinard, author of *De l'autre côté des larmes*, among others. The book contains moving testimonials from those who have cared for a dying loved one. Mme. Pinard also



offers simple and practical advice. Judging by the reactions and comments of the hundreds of people and organizations who have had access to this video, it is an indispensable tool.

The video is designed for families, friends, and volunteers, as well as for caregivers and anyone who is aware of the importance of human-

izing care for the dying. It is available free of charge from the Côte-des-Neiges Funeral Centre (514-342-8000).

*Accompagner la vie à l'approche de la mort* (Caring for the living in the face of death) is part of a series of videos covering important themes such as *l'enfant et le deuil* (Children and bereavement) and *Vivre avec le chagrin après une perte soudaine* (Living with grief after a sudden loss). All these videos can be obtained free of charge by contacting the Centre. ♦

**Robert Leblanc**

Director, Côte-des-Neiges Funeral Centre

By Johanne de Montigny, psychologist

## Father's Day, a deeply-rooted memorial

While the beginning of a child's life is surrounded by maternal tenderness, a child's first steps away from home are guided by paternal hands. It is the father who gives children the courage to confront the world, to test and tame the unknown.

From the outset, the mother personifies attachment; the father, on the other hand, teaches us about the need for detachment. Thus, our father simulta-

neously challenges us with the hard necessity of solitude, and gives us the ability to accede to the world of relationships. Was your father present? Absent? Unappreciated? Idealized, or real? Authoritarian, permissive, loving or clumsy? Whatever the case, his role was not trivial. Nor is his image as an idealized or actual mentor. If he is not very forthcoming about how he feels, on the other hand his reserve makes intense situations seem less dramatic. Sensitive modern man,

creates the joy of uniting differences at the heart of the family. Many women and children have known such a balance. And this is why the father's presence opens the door between inside and outside, between freedom and responsibility, between adults and children. But what happens when death tears the father away?

In June of each year, those who are orphans privately unite with their hap-



Photo : Denis Houle

### *Songs of Innocence. The Shepherd*

*How sweet is the shepherd's sweet lot!  
From the morn to the evening he strays;  
He shall follow his sheep all the day,  
And his tongue shall be filled with praise.*

*For he hears the lambs' innocent call,  
And he hears the ewes' tender reply;  
He is watchful while they are in peace,  
For they know when their shepherd is nigh.*

*William Blake*

these give us a fairly faithful portrait of the man preserved in family memoirs and childhood memories of many who are now grown.

His propensity for the rational, rather than the expression of his tenderness, initiates us into the realms of logical thinking. One thing at a time, he repeats, endlessly. And, most important, do not panic. He remains calm in the face of life's calamities, and communicates his calm to us.

Adding the image of relationship sensitivity to the beauty of the masculine

piest memories and most precious treasures inherited from their father, transforming grief into celebration. It is at this time that walking in the footsteps of father they have lost gives them the strength to once more face the future, a matter of once again confronting the world, taming the unknown that confronts us. The child in turn brings his father to a precious land, and keeps him there, forever.

My father died on January 17, 2001. I carry him, deep in my heart. ♦

## Who was my father?

**In** June, one month after mother's day, Father's Day arrives; at our house, it was customary to visit the cemetery. Since we lived in the Plateau area, we took the Mount Royal Street tram. The whole family, mom, dad, my little sister, and I, made our traditional pilgrimage to the family plot where my older sister, who died of typhoid at the age of seven, was buried. Today, mom and dad lie with her, side by side in our family plot.

I would describe my father as a loyal and responsible man. Born in 1901, baptized in Saint-Denis parish, he only went to school until the 4th grade; since he had already lost his mother, he stayed home. As a teenager, he became a deliveryman for a laundry, driving a horse and cart. He loved horses, and loved to tell me about the adventures he had with his horse while making his deliveries.

The Great Depression of the 1930s turned him into someone who was always worried about the future. He had become a house painter, and was unemployed during the winter. There was more work once the Second World War began, but he continued to worry about the future. He was always afraid of not being able to provide for his family. However, we lacked for nothing. When I started classical college, at age 13, he had



to pay \$8 a month, plus tram tickets (the student fare was \$0.25 for 7 tickets). Those were worrisome expenses for him.

I felt him begin to relax at last when, at 25, I was ordained and, around the same time, my little sister began working in an office. This was how responsible my father felt toward his family.

A staunch family man, loyal to his work and to a job well done (I emphasize), he was also a faithful Christian. I don't think he ever missed Sunday mass. He is buried here in the Notre-Dame-des-Neiges cemetery, where I am now priest.

May he rest in peace. It is wonderful to pray here, next to his grave, where he is buried beside my mother, and their little daughter whom I barely knew (she died when I was 4). Remembering my father here in the cemetery always brings me joy; I know, because I am a Christian that one day we will all see each other again. Belief in life eternal and divine, the hope of one day finding myself again with my loved ones with God, our enduring love for one another... No, none of this can be done away with. Today, I remember. ♦

*Msgr. Yvon Bigras, p.s.s., C.S.S.*

## Québec's holiday: Saint Jean-Baptiste day

### A historical note

In March of 1834, a lawyer, Ludger Duvernay, a dedicated "Patriote", conceived the idea of establishing an annual French Canadian holiday. He chose Saint Jean-Baptiste day for the celebrations.

The name Jean-Baptiste was so common in the province that the nickname "Jean-Baptiste" was used for French Canadians in the same way that people from Ireland were called "Paddy" (from Patrick, or in the original Irish, Padraic). The holiday would revive an old tradition of marking Saint John the Baptist's feast day, a holiday celebrated when the colony was first founded.



It seems that Duvernay immediately began working on the national holiday project. But he began by organizing a banquet for leading citizens, to be held on the evening of June 24, 1834. The celebrations of 1843 were limited to a high mass, followed by a procession carrying a hastily created banner depicting Saint John the Baptist on one side, and a Canadian farmer on the other.

By the fall of 1903, the Association Saint-Jean-Baptiste was getting ready to celebrate its 70th anniversary in style. On the morning of the 24th, a procession made its way through the streets of Montreal. It included brass bands, floats, and carriages. Spectators were moved to tears by the last float, upon which a little blonde boy of 6 or 7, a lamb at his side, represented Saint Jean-Baptiste, patron saint of French Canadians. ♦

*Francine Mc Duff*

by Joseph Berchoud, *Pompes Funèbres Générales, France*

*An excerpt from L'huile de chou  
Editions de la Bruyère  
Author: Joseph Berchoud*

*An autobiographical tale in which a chapter relates the story of a death experienced in the hill country of the Beaujolais region, during the 1950s*

### The day has come

"Petrus Deprelle has changed a lot since last summer." I remember my grandfather's concise, prophetic statement. For him, this did not bode well. On a sunny January day, while we were doing our chores, we had seen our aged neighbour in the distance. From five hundred metres away, his steps seemed slow and difficult as he made his way onto his land. Alone, he stood still for a long time before he sat down on a large rock at the edge of the field. After meditating lengthily, he stood, leaning on his stick, face toward the earth. He remained there, like the harvester in the painting *Angelus* by Milhaud.

My father, my grandfather and I watched this solemn scene as we chopped up a cherry tree, which, too old to bear fruit, we had uprooted using picks.

After at least half an hour of contemplation or deep thought, Petrus turned to face his land for another moment, then left. It seemed like he had more strength for the journey home. He made his way towards his small farmhouse with even steps. When he got to the end of the lane, without talking, we simultaneously stopped our work and, like a robot, his form cruelly toppled over in the hollow of the road to the village. Then, a short word from my grandfather, which said much about the powers of observation and communication among men who till the earth: "Petrus came to say goodbye to his land." Three months later, we took advantage of beautiful, fresh weather to get the spring work done

on our Crêt vineyard.

When we looked up, we saw an intense-looking man walking towards us, cutting across meadows and seeded fields. His approach did not augur well! In our local culture, village men used the roads, even when coming back from the market. Here, only gypsies would cut across fields.

In fact, it was a neighbour, Jean Chambon, who, with a quick, barely perceptible nod, addressed himself simply and solemnly to my grandfather. "José, Petrus isn't well, and wants to speak to you." We understood. The old one ran toward the farm through the orchards and woods and, for the next fifteen minutes we watched him cut across the fields with even steps, and rapidly approach Petrus' house.

It was an honour, and a trial, "hearing the last words of someone who wants to tidy up his affairs before departing," to use a local expression.

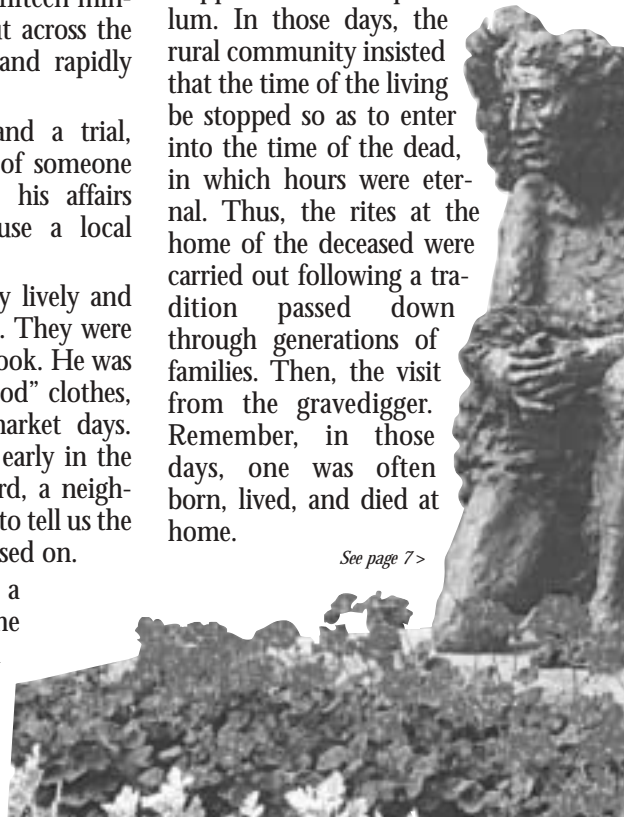
His small eyes, usually lively and bright, looked at no one. They were red, and had a far-away look. He was wearing his peasant's "good" clothes, the clothes worn on market days. Two or three days later, early in the morning, Jeanne Coquard, a neighbourhood woman, came to tell us the news: our Petrus had passed on.

Our grandfather filled a demijohn with wine, the best in the cellar, drawn from a barrel that had already been tapped and, after giving us a few instructions, left with

the demijohn in a sack. The priest, who in the preceding days had visited the dying man to give him the last rites, was there. With the neighbourhood women, he was saying the rosary and reciting prayers at the foot of the bed. Jeanne, who had taken charge of the household, tidying, doing dishes, making coffee, took the wine and immediately filled a small enameled metal pitcher. Soon, the house was full of relatives, some from far away, neighbours, friends. All came to sprinkle holy water on Petrus, reposing on his deathbed.

Jeanne was completing Petrus' toilette, dressing him in his wedding clothes. The mirrors on the wardrobes were covered with white cloth. At the foot of the bed, she placed a small cherry table that she covered with a white, carefully embroidered cloth. On it, she laid a crucifix and a bowl two-thirds full of Lourdes water, brought back from a pilgrimage. She gently plunged a boxwood branch, blessed on Palm Sunday, into the water. Finally, she stopped the clock's pendulum. In those days, the rural community insisted that the time of the living be stopped so as to enter into the time of the dead, in which hours were eternal. Thus, the rites at the home of the deceased were carried out following a tradition passed down through generations of families. Then, the visit from the gravedigger. Remember, in those days, one was often born, lived, and died at home.

See page 7 >



## A WORD ABOUT THE NEWS...

*Every year at the cemetery, new projects arise, and why not! This place of meditation and respect must adapt to the growing needs of our increasingly multicultural society. Traditions and customs change with the generations, and it goes without saying that there is a trend to variety in burial styles.*

Choosing a gravesite can be a difficult decision, and takes time. Preplanning is an excellent solution!



Those who believe that a cemetery that is almost 150 years old will be resistant to change will be very surprised.

Among other things, we have completed development of the **Notre-Dame section**, which now offers 90-foot lots, enabling from four to six traditional burials or four traditional burials, and a central site reserved for the interment of cinerary urns. This section is located near the main entrance on Côte-des-Neiges, where one-hundred-year-old trees keep watch. Also in this section is an exterior columbarium, the first to be erected in our cemetery, which is adorned with the beautiful statue of Notre-Dame-des-Neiges. You can also

purchase larger plots located around the columbarium which enable lawn-crypts to be installed, a new and completely innovative style of monument. A model lawn-crypts is on display in the small garden near the main pavilion.

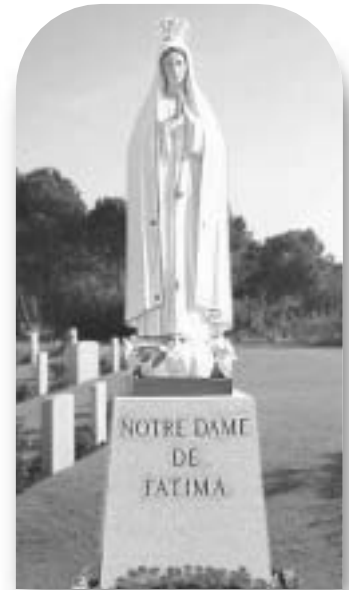
The Montreal section provides lots that are somewhat larger than average, where Mayor Jean Drapeau and Maurice Richard are buried. It has a superb view of the plain at the cemetery entrance, and of the city. It is an exceptional site.



The commemorative monument, “**Saint Peter’s Passage**”, also must be seen. A magnificent work that allows you to honour a loved one’s memory, and reflect in its garden.

The new section, called **Notre-Dame-de-Fatima**, was officially inaugu-

rated last May, and will be completely set up by the beginning of autumn. It will have gardens, and you can already admire its venerable patron, “Our Lady of Fatima,” mounted on her pedestal. The section, bordered by a wooded area, is accessible from the Camilien Houde entrance, and makes a very pleasant walk on a summer’s day.



Always a wonderful place to visit is the **Saint Marguerite d’Youville** mausoleum, if only to admire the very beautiful bronze and marble statues, columbariums containing more than eight hundred niches in surroundings imbued with respect and reflection, as well as crypts for the burial of coffins. Surely a place to visit and discover! ♦

**Johanne Duchesne**  
Director, Marketing

**MOURIR POUR VIVRE?** (Dying, so as to live?)

by Abel Pasquier,

Editions de l'Atelier, collection questions ouvertes

All life is based on an eternal sequence of life and death. Nature attests to it: night-fall and dawn, fallen leaves and buds, the caterpillar and butterfly... Human beings also live with the "deaths" associated with the passage from one stage of life to

another: childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and old age. "I am mortal, but I am dedicated to life so as to learn how to leave it behind."



**LA VIE CACHÉE EN DIEU** (The life hidden within God)

by Robert de Langeac,

Médiaspaul, collection spiritualité

"God is at the depths of our soul, but hidden. The inward life is like the dawning of God in the soul." Robert de Langeac was a Sulpician priest, and taught at the Grand Séminaire of Limoges before the war. His writing evokes the soul's progression towards God.

A GARDEN  
of memories



**The cemetery's peonies**

Peonies are probably the best-known perennials.

Surely, everyone has seen a peony in bloom in June. Our grandparents grew them near their balconies, and the flowers decorated our grandmothers' kitchen tables.

Quite easy to grow, peonies are distinguished by their longevity. Some plants can live more than thirty years.

At the cemetery, peonies have been part of the landscape for several years, and remain very popular.

A peony reaches its full potential when planted in a sunny area, in soil that is well-drained and rich in humus. It should not be planted too deep. The top of the bulb should be less than 5 cm from the surface.

We would like to take this opportunity to wish all fathers a memorable Father's Day.

**Yvon Pagé**

Superintendent, Notre-Dame-des-Neiges Greenhouses (514) 735-1361

From page 5

At the cemetery, the grave had been carefully prepared. After a final brush of the aspergil on Petrus's coffin, his family and friends received condolences in the established order before witnessing the interment.

A very emotional moment: the final separation. Already, so-called modern civilization had had an impact, and children were kept away from these realities.

Finally, it was time for the funeral supper, a moment in which life took precedence again, a time for remembering the deceased. Usually, the meal was prepared at the family home by a village woman who created the menu based on well-established local rules. A single dish, based on boiled meat. Usually, it was stewed chicken. The broth, with cubes of bread soaking in it, was served as soup. The meat was served with rice sautéed in a large pan with a

piece of butter, onion, and a bay leaf. Then the inevitable tray of ripe cheese was served, depending on family custom, and the season.

Lastly, coffee and liqueur. To these pleasures could be added a cigarette, a pipe of gray tobacco, a pinch of snuff. Without a doubt, these were the first steps in the work of mourning... as if to remember that life is stronger than death.

Thus, before psychologists, before social security, this was how solidarity and mutual support were expressed. Helping each other in all the important stages of life. A recipe for community life that should perhaps be reinstated, since the interactions generated by these ceremonies of farewell were very meaningful. ♦

## Guided tours of the cemetery

For all history buffs! Guided tours of the cemetery will be offered on Saturday, July 14 at 1:30 p.m., Sunday, August 12 at 2:00 p.m., and Sunday, September 9 at 12:30 p.m.



In case of rain, the tour will be held the following week, at the same time and on the same day.

We have selected approximately thirty sites, and we will enjoy the opportunity of listening to tales about these famous people told by a guide who has selected historical moments that have affected our past in the areas of politics, science, literature, and culture.

Please confirm your attendance by calling Wilma Resta (514) 735-1361, specifying the date you wish to visit.

**GREETING CARDS**  
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AVAILABLE IN  
THE FRONT OFFICE

SPRING CARD  
"SKYWARD"  
BY LAURENT LAFLEUR



**Annual commemorative mass will be celebrated outdoors under a marquee on September 9, 2001 by Msgr. Yvon Bigras, priest of the Basilique Notre-Dame de Montréal, at 11:00 a.m.**

Light snacks will be served,  
starting at 10:00 a.m.  
*All are welcome.*

### Monthly Masses

All masses are celebrated on Saturday:  
July 7, August 4 and September 1, 2001  
and take place at 10 a.m. and 11 a.m.  
at the Chapel of the Resurrection.

**FREE PARKING**



NOTRE-DAME-DES-NEIGES  
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### For more information...

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