

Citizens for East Shore Parks
Remarks by Robert Cheasty, President
On the Occasion of the Dedication of the Berkeley Meadow
Honoring Sylvia McLaughlin & Dwight Steele

Dwight and Sylvia are friends to all of us here today and benefactors to our entire society.

Great deeds are not casually done. They require a lifetime of preparation and an heroic level of commitment to making a difference.

Many make contributions. That is the way of great and thriving societies. Whole democracies are built around those who contribute.

They are the safe harbors that gather the rest of us, that provide the infrastructure for community, that provide the confidence and security for commerce, education, the growth and nurturance of our children and the arts. And I call upon us all to bless these contributors for the interruptions of their lives to give something back to their communities.

But then there are those who rise above contribution. There are those for whom who a contribution is just a wake up call, for whom contribution just whets the appetite for seeing what is really possible.

There are those who, in borrowed words, ask not why the world is the way it is but why it is not the way it could be. And this then becomes the fulcrum for the changes they seek.

These brave souls begin to realize what it means to overcome the 30,000 foot elevations where true societal change is made. For most just survival is all one can muster at that height. For the visionaries who change our society, 30,000 feet is where you get to work.

These visionaries view enemies as future friends to be converted. They view the skeptical as the devotees who have not opened their invitation to a better life; Obstacles as opportunities. These are not airheaded dreamers, but eminently practical visionaries who came to act and to create.

Dwight Steel and Sylvia McLaughlin are two such people. They brought to the task a lifetime of preparation and that heroic level of commitment required to remake this part of the world to reflect their vision.

It is not an accident that today we are not dedicating the groundbreaking of a pizza parlor parking lot, or of the seventh largest shopping mall in the East Bay, or the latest in a string of Walmarts filling our shores.

No, today we stand here in this magical place, this place of unbridled opportunity for our feathered friends to make a new home in their quest to survive and to paint our skies with their majestic presence. We stand here today in the glory that is nature, the power that is this earth in its natural state, and the beauty that is the San Francisco Bay and its compelling shorelands.

And we stand here because of the leadership of two of our dearest and most cherished friends and leaders, two of the clearest visionaries, two of the strongest leaders of the environmental movement in California and the country.

These two, Dwight and Sylvia, were an unstoppable team, leading a ragtag group of organizations and iconoclastic individualists to strike at the heart of corporations who would destroy and despoil the Bay Shore, strike fear in the hearts of those who would bring the wrecking ball to the habitats of our fellow creatures, who would deprive the public of access to our waters. Dwight and Sylvia - who else could muster up an army of Norman La Forces and get them to march in time; who else could bend the will of governors, Senators, Assemblymembers and Mayors; who else could get the entire environmental movement to drink the same koolaid and climb on board the same bus all going in the same direction.

Who else could convince the wonderful Board of the East Bay Regional Park District and the State Parks Commission that adopting the Eastshore State Park was not only a realistic thing to do, but that everyone was asking why it was taking so long.

It is a tribute to both Dwight and Sylvia that they gathered as allies such stalwarts and environmental leaders as Tom Bates, Loni Hancock, Nancy Skinner, Norman la Force, Doris Sloan, Ed Bennett, Betty Olds, Shirley Dean, the stellar cast of the CESP Board, the leaders of the Sierra Club, Golden Gate Audubon and our friends at Save the Bay. They motivated and inspired friends

like Jean & Will Siri and a bevy of others who are looking on from the other side, enjoying the bounty we here see as well.

In this company I want to mention two other women, who with Sylvia founded what became Save the Bay some forty odd years ago and launched a wildfire of preservation efforts to save San Francisco Bay and its shorelands. You all know Ester Gulick and Kay Kerr.

Sylvia, Kay and Esther put the grace and charm into the movement and those who met them learned that those white gloves fit ever so gently over fists of iron. They saw a bay in need of saving and they overwhelmed anyone who got in the way with charm and the sense of inevitability or worse, if the rascals did not respond properly to charm.

So here we are today, where it all started, where Esther, Sylvia and Kay got inspired to stop a mall on a meadow, and where Dwight dedicated his life to taking the Eastshore State Park from a dream to a reality. There are so many to thank. Dwight and Sylvia were good at thanking people. And those of us who were privileged to work with them, to walk with them on this journey, know that stopping for this moment to honor them honors all the hardworking souls who committed themselves to this, from those who could only stop a moment to make a contribution, to those who put in forty or more years to make this meadow, this Eastshore Park happen.

Before closing I would be remiss not to add special thanks to those in the East Bay Regional Park District and those in service at State parks for their lifetime commitment to this park and to all the parks they serve. The Bob Doyles, Pat O'Briens, Ruth Colemans and all their staffers. And to the Board of the East Bay Regional Park District and the Commission of the State Parks for adopting this park, for putting in all that money and staff time to make this meadow the beautiful place it is and for your so warmly listening to all the helpful suggestions we are constantly making on how you should do your jobs. You have the patience of saints. We thank you all and from the bottom of our hearts.

Sylvia and Dwight, we love you.

Friends I introduce you to Sylvia McLaughlin and to the daughter of Dwight Steele, Marilyn Steele, and Dwight's grandchildren Azzia Zur and Jeremy Booth. Will you all please stand, smile and wave like Queen Elizabeth.