

Remarks by Sidney F, Van Zandt, to be given at the Memorial service of Edith Rowe Fairgrieve on Monday September 12, 2016 at St Mark's Episcopal Church, Mystic, Conn. To introduce myself, I was a founder and 1st President of GOSA and presently am Vice-President.

I first met Edith after I met her son, Ian, who was then at Fitch High School. He was a runner along with his teacher, Johnny Kelly, local hero and Marathon runner who formed a conservation club that was very active and helpful to "Save the Haley Farm" that abutted Fitch. Johnny was on the board of the new "Groton Open Space Association" that was formed in 1967 to raise the Town's portion of a Town/State/Federal fund to save the farm. Edith joined us there. She and Ian were in the next organization called The Environmental Education Committee (EEC) that took on the project of the first Earth Day for the Town of Groton. We also published education guides given to each school teacher in grades K-6 in Groton, and with the Conservation club began recycling across the street at the annex (barrels holding green, and clear, and brown bottles). This became so successful that it was later taken over by the Town. The EEC also promoted petitions to fight the "Industrial Jetport City" to be located in Northeastern Connecticut with plans on the drawing board for highways from Providence and Hartford. In 1972 Edith was appointed to the Bluff Point Advisory Council to come up with the highest and best use of Bluff Point. Plans in the works included a four-lane highway from Rt 395 to meet the proposed bridge from Long Island, with a filled marsh for a 5000 car parking area, 400 houses to the east, Industrial park to the north and a 400 boat marina. **Imagine**, this was happening before e-mail and cell phone. Fortunately Governor Thomas Meskill finally said "enough" in 1974, and he condemned the entire property so that it would then become Bluff Point State Park.

Edith was also active as President of the League of Women voters, as well as a founder of "Common Cause." She was also a founder of "T.R.E.E.S" (To Reassess Ecology-Environmental Safety) in opposition to the Allyn Street Connector in 1970. The newspaper mentioned that there was residential opposition culminating in arrests on the day construction began. A rumor that I heard was that Edith chained herself to one of those trees. I hope perhaps some of you who were there can share your stories later. "Did She?"

Going fast forward to a few months ago, Edith's daughter, Meg, asked if I would go through her files – 50 years with many file cabinets. Along with the local issues were two large drawers of issues neatly filed of problems from all over the world. Many of those boxes that I went through had information already saved, but one of the issues I was unaware of in the 14 years I was away was the 2nd battle to save Bluff Point from pressure by local political individuals who attempted to break the Bluff Point Coast Reserve legislation put in place in 1973. They wanted to allow autos down to the Point, provide parking, to provide more access to that very fragile beach. Edith dealt with that by putting together a strong two-page opposition paper and forwarding it to every environmental group in the State along with many in other parts of the country to oppose this. SHE WON.

In notes from former GOSA Director, Jim Furlong, he stated, *“Though she spoke quietly, Edith was a hard-nosed and uncompromising advocate for the environment. She was fiercely independent, and took strong stands against contractors and town planners. She would not think of tempering her positions in advance in order to avoid disputes. She put GOSA's case as strongly as possible with the aim of winning the maximum protection for the animals, woodlands, and the waters that she loved.”*

GOSA's President, Joan Smith, made the following comment that is on our website, gosaonline.org. *“It is sad to see the passing of one of GOSA's earliest and stalwart members. As Jim Furlong once said, Edith had a moral compass of “true north.” Her legacy lives on in many of GOSA's principles and projects. She made especially generous contributions to the acquisition of Avery Farm and to the Mystic Woods appeal. We admired her quiet but firm defense of the environment.”*

And so, “I say”, this quiet, but firm **little** lady who over the past few years could be seen walking her **little** dog in her neighborhood of West Mystic was in fact a GIANT TIGER. Through her good works this area of Southeastern Connecticut is a much better place and her force allowed the rest of us to move forward to say we can also make our world a better place. Margaret Meade stated: “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world: indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.” We all thank you, Edith, for helping to make Eastern Connecticut a better place to live.