

## Media Release, Friday, July 20, 2012

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### **Title: Save Mount Diablo Co-Founder Art Bonwell Passes**

**Image:** <https://www.yousendit.com/download/QIVnblFPcTJ0Nit5VmNUQw> **Captions and Credits:** At bottom

CONCORD, CA - Arthur D. Bonwell, "Art" co-founded Save Mount Diablo on December 7, 1971 and served on its Board of Directors until he passed away (b. 4/28/1927 in Dana, Indiana d. 7/14/2012 in Concord, California).

Born April 28, 1927 in Dana, Indiana, a town of about 700, Art moved to California in 1956. When he returned to Dana in 1987 to care for his elderly mother, he was elected to the town council in 1988 and served as the town council's President for several years before returning to California in 1993.

Between his junior and senior years in high school, Art worked for Western Union. From April 1945 to 1948 he served in the U.S. Navy as an electronics technician. After graduating from Purdue University with a B.S.E.E. in 1951 he went to work for a Dupont ordnance works built at the start of World War II in Dana. In 1956, he transferred to the Organic Chemicals Dept. and moved to California to help build and operate the Dupont-Antioch Works where he was a Process Control Engineer, while living in Concord. He retired in 1982 at age 55 but had already begun the equivalent of a second career, in conservation.

Art was active in both the Contra Costa Park Council and in the Sierra Club. In 1969 he became Chairman of the Central Contra Costa County Conservation Committee of the Sierra Club's S.F. Bay Chapter. Botanist Mary Bowerman was also a member and repeatedly brought attention to increasing threats to Mount Diablo and that the State was doing little to protect it or to enlarge the small State Park there. Art suggested that they organize a group to work specifically on Mt. Diablo issues. In 1971 Art and Mary co-founded Save Mount Diablo, which he considered the most important work of his life.

Save Mount Diablo has helped expand protected lands on Mount Diablo from just one park of 6,788 acres in 1971 to more than forty parks and preserves totaling 110,000 acres in 2012. Bowerman was recognized for providing Save Mount Diablo's early vision but it was Art's organizational skills which created the organization and aided in its growth to more than 8,000 supporters today. Art served Save Mount Diablo in many roles over the last forty-one years including as its President, Vice-President, member of the Executive and Land Committees, as well as the first webmaster. At the time of his death he was a Board Member Emeritus and continued to serve on the organization's Land Committee. While serving Save Mount Diablo, such well known areas of Mount Diablo as Mitchell, Back and Donner Canyons were preserved, as well as North Peak, Pine Ridge and Canyon, and the Blackhills.

In 1971, Art founded the Diablo Wheelman bicycle club, which organized rides and trips, many of them more than 500 miles, throughout northern California and Oregon. It eventually grew to 450 members.

Art was closely associated with the Concord Historical Society, where he served as a member of the Board of Directors from 1996 until 2009. He edited the Society's newsletter, changing its name from *Newsletter* to *Concord Historian* in 1998. He updated and expanded the Society's web site. He also began the oral history interviews, recruited the interviewers, arranged the transcriptions and loaded them on to CHS computers for easy access.

Art was a taciturn mid-westerner, both gregarious and fiercely independent. He was continuously doing whatever was needed from carpentry to lobbying elected officials in Sacramento. He actively campaigned for legislators such as

Senator John Nejedly, Assemblyman-Senator Dan Boatwright, County Supervisors-Assemblymen-Senators Tom Torlakson and Mark De Saulnier, and County Supervisor-Assemblyman Joe Canciamilla.

During Art's tenure on the Dana, Indiana town council from 1988 to 1993 and as council president, the town got a new well, sidewalks, and playground equipment. He was always helping others to pursue their passion, and better their lives. He helped several bicyclists become accomplished racers, and mentored several other young adults and teenagers. He never hesitated to offer his physical labor to make others' pursuits a possibility.

During his life Art received many awards including a State of California *Golden Bear Award*, the 1996 *Chevron Times-Mirror Magazine National Conservation Award*, in 1999 Save Mount Diablo's first *Mountain Star Award*, and in 2000 *Diablo Magazine's Threads of Hope Award for Lifetime Achievement*.

Art is survived by his sister Jane Bonwell of Indianapolis, Indiana.

A "Celebration of Life" event in Art's honor will be held on Sunday, August 19, 3:00 pm, Mitchell Canyon, Mt. Diablo State Park, Clayton. In lieu of flowers, donations can be made in Art's memory to:

Concord Historical Society	Save Mount Diablo
P.O. Box 404	1901 Olympic Blvd., Suite 320
Concord, CA 94522	Walnut Creek, CA 94596
<a href="http://www.concordhistorical.org">www.concordhistorical.org</a>	<a href="http://www.savemountdiablo.org">www.savemountdiablo.org</a>

*"I didn't think Mount Diablo was getting enough attention."*

*"Helping to create Save Mount Diablo and arousing public and legislative support for the mountain has been the most important work in my life-- I feel that I have contributed to the world. Much of Mount Diablo has been purchased as public open space; preservation of Mitchell, Donner and Back Canyons on the mountain's north side, for example, were singular achievements because they're so accessible, so well loved by the public and so important to the mountain."*

- Arthur Bonwell, Co-Founder--Save Mount Diablo, 1971

Information in this obituary was provided by Seth Adams, Dan and Theresa Baldwin, Jane Bonwell, Lind Higgins, Kay Massone, and Sharon Walters.

### **Summary**

**Who:** Art Bonwell (April 28, 1927 – July 14, 2012), Co-Founder, Save Mount Diablo, non-profit organization in Walnut Creek, CA

**What:** A "Celebration of Life" event in Art's honor will be held. The press and public are welcome to attend. R.S.V.P. to Save Mount Diablo at (925) 947-3535 or [smdinfo@SaveMountDiablo.org](mailto:smdinfo@SaveMountDiablo.org) by Monday, August 13<sup>th</sup>.

**Where:** Mitchell Canyon, Mt. Diablo State Park, Clayton, CA

**When:** Sunday, August 19, 3:00 pm

**Why:** Save Mount Diablo's Co-Founder Art Bonwell was a local hero in the conservation movement.

**How:** In lieu of flowers, donations can be made in Art's memory to:

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P.O. Box 404	1901 Olympic Blvd., Suite 320
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**Captions and Credits:**

1. Art Bonwell and Dr. Mary Bowerman, late Co-Founders of non-profit organization Save Mount Diablo. Photo by Sandra Hoover-Saul Bromberger, courtesy of Save Mount Diablo.

Save Mount Diablo is a non-profit 501(c)(3) conservation organization, which has been preserving lands on and around Mount Diablo and educating the public to the mountain's natural values since 1971. Preserved lands have increased from 6,788 acres in one park to more than 100,000 acres in 40 parks and preserves. Save Mount Diablo continues to preserve, defend and restore the remainder of the mountain for people and wildlife to enjoy. Contact: Save Mount Diablo, telephone: (925) 947-3535, fax: (925) 947-0642, 1901 Olympic Blvd., Suite 320, Walnut Creek, CA 94596; [www.SaveMountDiablo.org](http://www.SaveMountDiablo.org)

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