

Eisele helped define what "Napa" is • [Allen Spence](#) January 7, 2015

“Napa!” It is a brand, a destination, an ideal, that is known the world over. I wonder how many of the 140,000 residents who live here think about how unique a place this is. It is easy to take for granted the place where you wake up every day. Certainly we appreciate the beauty, but do we know how much work it took for this beauty to prevail? Along with some contemporaries, it took the tireless, relentless, and unequivocal passion of Volker Eisele (["Agricultural land advocate Volker Eisele dies."](#) Jan. 3).

For four decades, Volker fought to preserve what makes “Napa” one of the most amazing places on earth. To achieve that goal, he also educated many people so that they too would strive to maintain “Napa” with the same passion; I am one of those lucky people. What I learned was immense and what I came to know is invaluable. The strident protection of “Napa” is the course we should pursue.

There are countless examples where the idea of protecting special places has come under attack in the name of “progress.”

When Yellowstone National Park was created, many in the area screamed that their land rights were being taken and that this would be the end of democracy. In the 1960s when Ronald Reagan signed the law to save the San Francisco Bay from being filled in for housing, speculators owning the land under the water, screamed their rights were being taken away. When Napa County supervisors created the Ag Preserve that increased the minimum lot size, people screamed their rights were being taken away.

Today, very few would criticize having protected these special places.

What saddens me as much as losing a dear friend in Volker Eisele is that “Napa” residents, as a whole, are potentially unaware of the need to relentlessly fight to prevent the erosion caused by opening the doors just a little. Once the water (asphalt-driven development) starts flowing the erosion never stops. Volker looked far into the future and saw the cumulative effect of a little erosion and he fought tirelessly to save that future for all of us.

I can only hope that more people will realize that what “Napa” is today is unique, and the only way to preserve it forever is to not open the doors even a little.

Thank you, Volker, for being a leader, a visionary, and a dear friend. I hope we have the courage and conviction to follow your guidance.

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