

Edwardsville- Southern Illinois University Talk
January 31, 2009

Good evening and thank you for the privilege of addressing you this evening.

It is an honor and a humbling experience on many dimensions to be here to receive the first Annual Sustainability Award given to R. Buckminster Fuller.

- It is an honor to represent the Fuller family. My cousin Allegra Fuller Snyder Bucky's daughter- for he was known throughout the world as Bucky- sends you her greetings and very best. I am Bucky's niece- He was Uncle Bucky or Uncle Buckle as he often called himself. My father Wolcott Fuller was 3 years younger than Bucky- my father was a civil engineer on a different, more grounded level than Bucky's visionary engineering thinking.
- It is an honor to receive the award posthumously for someone who died 26 years ago, but who feels represents today, and increasingly so; attesting to the vitality, vision and relevance of Bucky's thinking and life.
- It is an honor to receive the award from a spiritual and education center, to be present this evening among educators and thinkers, for the award is also a testament to the fundamental value of education- core to human activity. Bucky was through and through an educator; his life was dedicated to transmitting and sharing his thoughts and ideas and visions about the planet, its function and sustainability to all students- of any age. His many books such as the OPERATING MANUAL FOR SPACESHIP EARTH are evidence of the centrality of education in his lifetime- as indeed was his associates with SIU for many years.
- It is an honor to receive the award as a member of the Buckminster Fuller Institute, B.F.I. The Institute is now 26 years old. I am struck by the parallel and wisdom of the evolution of BFI and the Center for Spirituality and Sustainability, your new name. Both entities have broadened their scope and purpose, moving beyond preserving a legacy. BFI was created to preserve the legacy of Bucky Fuller, in particular his archives. These are now housed at the Stanford University Library as a special collection. It is a huge archive – 1,200 linear feet

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of boxes. The BFI Board visited the Stanford collection last Friday morning and we were told that it is the most heavily visited and used of the Special Collections- by people from all over the world.

However BFI was created to do more than preserve the legacy. It was created to make accessible the teachings, the tools, the thinking of Bucky- to serve as a catalyst and to encourage the application to problem solving- of Bucky's approach and grand methodology called Comprehensive Anticipatory Design Science, CADS. Bucky first wrote about Comprehensive Anticipatory Design Science in a chapter called that in a book published by SIU Press at Carbondale in 1963- the book was titled NO MORE SECOND HAND GOD AND OTHER WRITINGS. Comprehensive Anticipatory Design Science represents systems thinking- holistic thinking, and is based upon the concept of the interrelationships and interconnectedness of all parts of any organization, entity, structure. The awe inspiring geodesic dome at Edwardsville is a physical representation of the mathematics of the interconnectedness of parts. In the comprehensive theory, affecting any one part of a system affects and has an impact on another part- and from this Bucky could deduce sustainability.

The Anticipatory component of CADS calls for focusing on the parts of a system that are most in need of attention for improvement or modification and where adjustments and redistribution of resources- in the most ample sense- will have a significant impact. Anticipatory thinking is also strategic thinking. Comprehensively one looks at the whole system- but one places priority or strategic attention and action toward what part which will bring about the greatest improvement to the greatest number in the most efficient manner- that is the aim of Comprehensive Anticipatory Design Science. Sustainability, a goal of CADS, is a key concern and issue today. Daily we hear of this issue at so many levels- family and social stability, ecological, economic. We see the convergence of problems, of sustainability in all of these areas, and at global level.

Your establishing an annual sustainability award could not be more timely- so appropriate and so needed to help more people focus not just on the problems- the crises, the critical path we are on- but on the solutions. It is true that Bucky was a visionary- he focused on sustainability in all of his work as inherent to the successful continuance of

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nature and humanity- but long before sustainability was regarded and labeled “a problem”.

Bucky’s work is full of statements about sustainability, such as quote ” To make the world work for 100% of humanity in the shortest time possible, through spontaneous cooperation without ecological offense or disadvantage of anyone”.

His legacy of Comprehensive Anticipatory Design Science seeks solutions to the problems that abound us, to be able to do “more with less”. Your beautiful dome is also a structural manifestation of doing “more with less”. Doing more with less will “enable all people to achieve a quality standard of living while sustaining the health of the planet’s ecosystem”. Bucky Fuller really believed this to be possible.

Bucky’s all encompassing vision of Spaceship Earth’s sustainability led him to see the land mass of the planet- as one united land mass- and by 1940-41 he had drawn up the Dymaxion Map- what he called a one-island world. Out of this cartographic experience grew other products of Bucky’s imagination and creativity- the World Game- and the World Science Decade, an inventory of all earth’s resources.

Sustainability means more than survival; it means distributing resources for meeting all of humanity’s needs now and in the future.. To achieve this goal; there must be information and knowledge to lead to intelligent distribution. The World Game works on this principle.

Bucky understood and internalized the notions of sustainability from his summer experiences growing up in an island- Bear Island- in the middle of Penobscot Bay in Maine. He and his siblings and cousins from 1904 onward, learned all about the interconnectedness of nature’s forces of wind, water, tides (there are very high and low tides in Maine) fog, the importance of learning of what’s under the water as well as on top. They spent their days on the water, boating and sailing. They learned from a 100% self taught man who was 100% capable and knowledge about the sea and survival on the island. A man who lived on the island all year long and raised a family of 7; he depended on no one but himself and his family, and his boats to survive. The need for sustainability was ever present in Bucky’s thinking and actions, even in his later years. He was so keyed into nature’s systems.

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I can remember so clearly many examples of witnessing this. In the late 1970s, one summer afternoon on the island, where we are totally dependent on rain water, Bucky was sitting and writing at the table. It started to rain, and rain hard, and Bucky went into action. He grabbed his rain gear- yellow slickers, hat and all- and we followed him outside as he led us in an all-hands-on deck inspection of all the buildings to make sure that the gutters of the old buildings were attached to the roofs, that all the gutters were properly attached to the cisterns, that the cisterns were properly plugged and clean of debris- so that every drop of rain water would be collected- to meet our needs. This is a water planet- 70% of the planet is water - and water is essential, not only at a very local level, a 40 acre island, but also on the global scale. Bucky knew this.

Bucky is an inspiration to so many- you and your center are certainly an extraordinary example. My approach to planning and community development is an example of Bucky's thinking. It is a social, participatory planning approach, with a goal of inclusive, integrated communities, where there is a balance and joining of social, economic, physical and environmental forces, both within a community and the rest of the urban complex. I understand that at a community level all activities are interrelated and impact upon one another- as they do it the larger level in ever expanding circles. This is a bottom up approach to planning.

The idea of sustainable communities is represented as "self reliant communities" where "minimizing the dependence on others also means maximizing all levels of challenge whether intellectual, technological or social".¹ In this context and with the trip to Edwardsville I have been thinking about a Bucky project- one of his favorites- "Old Man River's City" for East St. Louis, Illinois. The project is still on the drawing boards, still relevant; maybe one day some of it will happen. This project –a bold one- envisioned building a dome a mile in diameter, and 1,000 at the apex, which would have homes, work space, recreation and other uses for 125,000 people, providing 25,000 earth homes- each with 2,500' floor space around the perimeter, with inner city areas for communal

¹ Michael Shuman. GOING LOCAL, HEALTHY SELF RELIANT COMMUNITIES IN A GLOBAL AGE.. New York: The Free Press, 1996 pg. 47

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and commerce uses where “the weather under the dome would always be pleasant”.² We need to look again at this enormous project- its purpose and possibilities, given the importance of mitigating urban poverty today, like that which exists in East St. Louis. More than 50% of the world lives in an urban context, as reported by the United Nations and too much of that population lives in poverty.

I’d like to speak briefly about Bucky and the individual, Bucky and his belief in the individual, all individuals. He said, “I deliberately undertook to experiment to see what the little individual could do, if anything, on behalf of all humanity”. Bucky called himself “human guinea pig B”, that is B for Bucky. Bucky also said “If success or failure of the planet and of human beings depended on how I am and what I do- How would I be, what would I do?” These questions were motivating ones all of his life. He believed in the potential and capacity of all humans to learn, to become educated, to be effective.

As some of you may know, on his gravestone in Cambridge, Massachusetts are engraved the words “CALL ME TRIM TAB”. He wanted to be remembered as a TRIM TAB. “There is a tiny section on the trailing edge of a rudder (of your airplane) called a trim tab. Just moving that trim tab builds a low pressure that pulls the rudder around. it takes almost no effort at all The little trim tab moves the big rudder, which moves the bigger airship.”³ “Call me trim tab”, requested Bucky.

Bucky came from a tradition of belief in individual development and creativity, of the contributions that one person could make to the betterment of society. He descended from the tradition of the transcendentalists of the 19th c. in New England that included his great aunt, Margaret Fuller, along with Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Bronson Alcott and others. He came from the tradition of Walt Whitman and the “Song of the Open Road”, and the great possibilities of the adventure of life ahead.

Bucky came from a tradition of utopian thinking. I have seen the chapter headings of a book to be published in June 2009 by the Stanford University Press titled “NEW

² Jay Baldwin, BUCKY WORKS: BUCKMINSTER FULLER’S IDEAS FOR TODAY. New York: Wiley, p. 185

³ SYNERGETIC DICTIONARY.. Vol.4, pg. 196

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VIEWS ON R. BUCKMINSTER FULLER”.⁴ One of the chapters is titled “Buckminster Fuller: America’s last Genuine Utopian?” It is my thought that utopian thinking and sustainability have brought us here tonight. I have utopian ideals. I would think that all of us here do; that we believe in a desired state of “livingry”, as Bucky called it, for all.

It is on that fundamental level that Bucky continues to inspire us today. As an example of the interconnectedness of his thinking, he wrote in one of his last books published the year he died, GRUNCH* OF GIANTS (* Gross Universal Cash Heist). “Evolution was clearly intent on postponing the inception of the livingry service industry until humanity had graduated from its pre-twentieth century condition as a planet of remote nations to an integrated global society, all of which waited upon completion of a world-around network of highways, airlines and telephones, and automobiles and jumbo jet airplanes. All these evolutionary events (requisite to the livingry industry) have now taken place or are about to take place in the very near future. If the political systems do not eliminate humanity with their weapons, the half-century-gestating, world-around livingry service-industry will soon be born”.

The newest flagship program of the BFI is the Buckminster Fuller Challenge Award. We will now see a 5 minute video of the Challenge Award and we will hear Bucky’s voice.

Thank you again for the Honor of the First Annual Sustainability Award to R. Buckminster Fuller on behalf of the family and the privilege of speaking with you tonight.

⁴Hsaio-Yun Chu and Roberto Trujillo eds. NEW VIEWS ON R. BUCKMINSTER FULLER. Stanford: Stanford University Press. June 2009