

commissioned poem for the *Oswald West Video Project*, 2005.

## Ode to Oswald West State Park

Long before we built the road  
Dark highway 101,  
Long before our frontier fathers  
Founded Oregon,  
Before rattling clanks of fetters  
Found Indian drumbeats overrode,  
Shrouded under white hoods,  
The mountain stood.

Alpine paintbrush and columbine  
Forever blossomed at the peak,  
And the incline to the beach  
Is still the angle of the windswept trees,  
Views opened to the beckoning sea  
And breakers barreled along the shoreline  
In primordial time before knowledge of death  
Created fear; language; a need to express.

(continued)

Skunk cabbage robed in yellow habits  
Witnessed this whole place,  
Equisetum and fireweed bloomed  
Without disturbing the peace  
As earthquakes made room  
Enough for all to inhabit.  
Few fought for birthright or public access  
Until our age of private interests manifest.

Mountain and beach mark no boundary,  
Even the scree where cape meets sea  
Tumbles down sides and dives in  
Willingly, deep, and free.  
All we need to know, the poet divines,  
Is “beauty is truth, truth beauty.”  
Though we parcel ancient forest into parts,  
Stake a claim, and erect a park

The mountain stands, the cape  
Holds steadfast – bold figurehead  
Above the land –  
As surfers await the next wave to shred  
Small as auklets and  
Eager as children flying kites of fate.  
On the short sands of our hope,  
We learn what we can to cope.

(continued)

We come to the park to be warm  
Seeking respite from our daily cares,  
We lay in the sun of our luck  
Breathe in the salt of fresh air,  
Mindful of what the West has offered up,  
We vow simply to do less harm.  
For at the cross of forest, mountain, cape, and beach  
We find ourselves connected and released.

Copyright © 2005

Nancy Slavin