

HIGH COUNTRY RUNNING

Saving Buffalo Park: the conclusion

BY NAT WHITE

Special to the Daily Sun

After months of no public discussion or action, on Aug. 20, 1985, the Flagstaff City Council, with pressure from a developer, voted to approve the alignment of Gemini Parkway through the buffalo statue and open space.

Dale Shewalter and I spoke at the meeting claiming lack of recent community notice. The lack of notice was said to be a mistake.

On Sept. 18, a community meeting was called in support of a roadless park. Nearly 100 signed the contact list. Sherilyn Murray signed with a succinct note, "Her dad drove an old stage in Buffalo Park" — a direct connection between an old and a new vision.

From this meeting sprang the idea of a voter's initiative. Let Flagstaff voters make the final decision on whether a major road should pass through Buffalo Park.

At grocery stores, banks, churches, meetings and going house to house, volunteers collected signatures. In less than two months enough signatures (well over 3,000) were collected to put the issue on the March 4, 1986 ballot.

The ballot language stipulated that the land



COURTESY

The approximate scene of the final proposed route. In line with distant Agassiz Peak, Gemini Parkway would have veered off to the northwest — just north of the entrance.

will be maintained as a public park, with no incompatible development, including roads or highways, for use by motorized vehicles. The sixth-month trail to passage was anxious, naive, controversial, energized and — eventually — successful.

There were many grassroot folks who rallied around the slogan "Save Buffalo Park." I wish I could name them all, but there were far too many to mention here; however, I will share a few stories to give a sampling of efforts and emotions.

Forty years ago, radio, brochures, T-shirts, bumper stickers, roadside billboards, and the newspaper primarily

communicated the pro and con messages. One effective radio advertisement was produced by Dale Shewalter, founder of the Arizona Trail, Jim Babbitt, known to all, and John Nelson, a local and U.S. Forest Service employee. The 15-second ad aired on KAFF radio station and started with silence, and then the beautiful song of a meadowlark, followed by a few more seconds of silence, and then ending with a clear, soft voice saying "save Buffalo Park." The memory of it still gives me chills.

Doug Degher, a Northern Arizona University professor who was practiced in communication, was our

formal spokesman. His written and spoken arguments, along with contributions of other committee members and random supporters, sought to counter the vehement transportation and growth arguments. The task was not easy, but their love and vision for the future of the park shone through their arguments.

I'll never forget that a few pro-road folks tried to paint us as a bunch of impractical, tree-hugging environmentalists. The discussion broadened throughout the community when a well-respected "Save Buffalo Park" committee member spoke up. Longtime respected Flagstaff physician and

Buffalo Park jogger, Dr. Carl Shrader, wrote a letter exclaiming: "I will lie down in front of the first bulldozer" In his honor, facing the buffalo statue, is a commemorative bench.

Along Route 66, a giant roadside billboard, legal at the time, displayed a confusing message: "We believe Buffalo Park is for everyone's use. Vote No." This was asking folks to vote 'NO' to save the park, when a 'YES' vote was what was needed. The Daily Sun called it "the great billboard war."

Business sentiment was split. The billboard was supported by two land developers, Jim and Susie Garretson, owners of their new

business: the Flagstaff Athletic Club — and the "Save Buffalo Park" movement was grateful for their full support of a roadless park.

While the above is a small sampling of the tremendous efforts of many in the community, there are many more funny and serious stories we are compiling for the 40th anniversary of saving the park. For now, I think it appropriate to end this High Country Running column with a quote from a Daily Sun article by Sam McManis. In it he quotes John Parson, a Western theme park historian: "Without the runners, Buffalo Park as we know it today simply wouldn't exist. The runners were and remain the guardians of the park."

Overstated? Maybe, yet worth sharing.

NAT WHITE WAS A MEMBER OF THE FIVE-PERSON COMMITTEE THAT HELPED SAVE BUFFALO PARK. NAT HAS RUN THOUSANDS OF MILES ON THE TRAILS IN AND AROUND FLAGSTAFF DURING THE LAST 57 YEARS.

RACHEL SMITH IS A MOM OF TWO AMAZING DAUGHTERS, A PROFESSIONAL RUNNER AND THE COORDINATING EDITOR OF THIS COLUMN. SHE WOULD LOVE FOR YOU TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE COLUMN AND SHARE YOUR RUNNING-RELATED STORY BY EMAILING HER AT RACHSCHNEID18@GMAIL.COM.

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board in the bottom half of the inning.

Junior Jace Adams struck out five of the six batters he faced in

his two innings on the mound while senior DJ Faust added two strikeouts in his perfect inning of work.

Adams and senior Brody Johnson each finished the game with

three hits, followed by two apiece for senior Eli Boeck, senior Will Carpenter, senior Cullen Callander and sophomore Teyan Clerry. Johnson and senior Luke Holt each

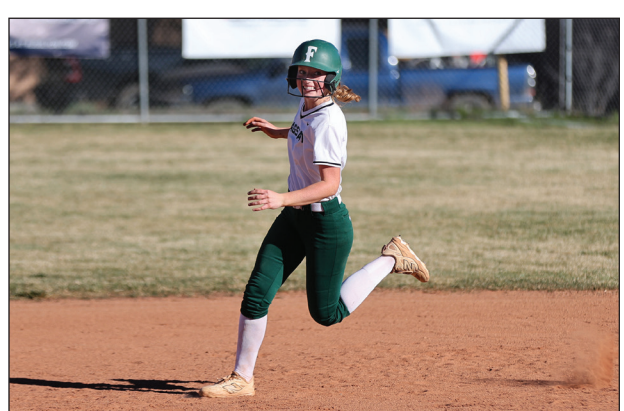
scored four runs, followed by Faust and Broden Custer with three. Six errors by Agua Fria assisted in bringing runs home for Flagstaff, but Johnson also produced a team-high four RBIs. Carpenter and Clerry also each stole a pair of bases.

Volunteers 10, Panthers 5

Two days after earning a walk-off victory against Lee Williams (2-2, 1-1 4A Grand Canyon), Coconino (5-2, 1-1 4A Grand Canyon) lost the rematch in Kingman.

After taking a 2-0 lead in the top of the second inning, the Panthers allowed six runs in the bottom of the third as the Volunteers secured the lead for the remainder of the day.

Junior Wes Shafor finished the game 2 for 3 with a double, a run scored and three RBIs. Senior Caleb Begay added two RBIs and a single to account



HATTIE LOPER, ARIZONA DAILY SUN

Flagstaff's Molly Speer (7) runs from first to second base during a game against Agua Fria on Wednesday at Flagstaff High School.

for the Panthers' only other hit in the game.

Coconino will face the Prescott Badgers (4-1, 2-0 4A Grand Canyon) on Tuesday at Chase Field in Phoenix. First pitch is scheduled for 4 p.m.

Girls tennis

Panthers 9, Bulldogs 0

Coconino bounced back from a loss in its home opener with a near perfect match against Sierra Linda on Thursday afternoon.

The Panthers (3-1, 0-0 D-II Section II)

swept all nine matches and dropped just six total sets against the Bulldogs (0-5, 0-0 D-II Section IV). The loss was Sierra Linda's fourth in its five matches this season.

Seniors Mei Cobb and Kailyn Anderson beat juniors Olyvea Martinez and Maryam Al-Mawla 8-0 at No. 2 in doubles, with senior Talia Garcia and junior Eva Peterson doing the same at No. 3 against juniors Jannessa Rodriguez and Yuneley Ramirez Salgado. Sierra Linda's most competitive match of the day came at No. 1 in doubles, where Coconino senior Alora Richardson and junior Josie Kennan won 8-2 against senior Hayben Bermudez and junior Melanie Carrillo.

In singles play, Carrillo and Cobb won 6-0, 6-0 against Carrillo and Martinez at No. 2 and No. 3 respectively. Richardson won 6-0, 6-1 against Bermudez at the top spot, with Kennan beating Al-Mawla by the same score at No. 4. Peterson beat Ramirez Salgado 6-1, 6-0 at No. 5, and Garcia beat Rodriguez by the same score at No. 6.

Coconino will begin section play on Tuesday as it hosts the Mingus Union Marauders for a match at 3 p.m.

Young Professionals of Flagstaff

The Arizona Daily Sun is seeking nominees to be recognized in its annual Young Professionals of Flagstaff special section.

We're looking for people who have demonstrated leadership, initiative and dedication to growth in their careers and communities.

Please email Zak Meier at zmeier@azdailysun.com or call (928) 320-4476.

YOUNG PROFESSIONALS OF FLAGSTAFF

Nominations due by **May 14**

Let's Get Grounded Series:

Physical Spiritual Session
Spirit Animal Healing Session
Rolfing with Energy Healing Session

Kirsten Tinning
Advanced Rolfer
MA, Healing Arts
Psychic

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