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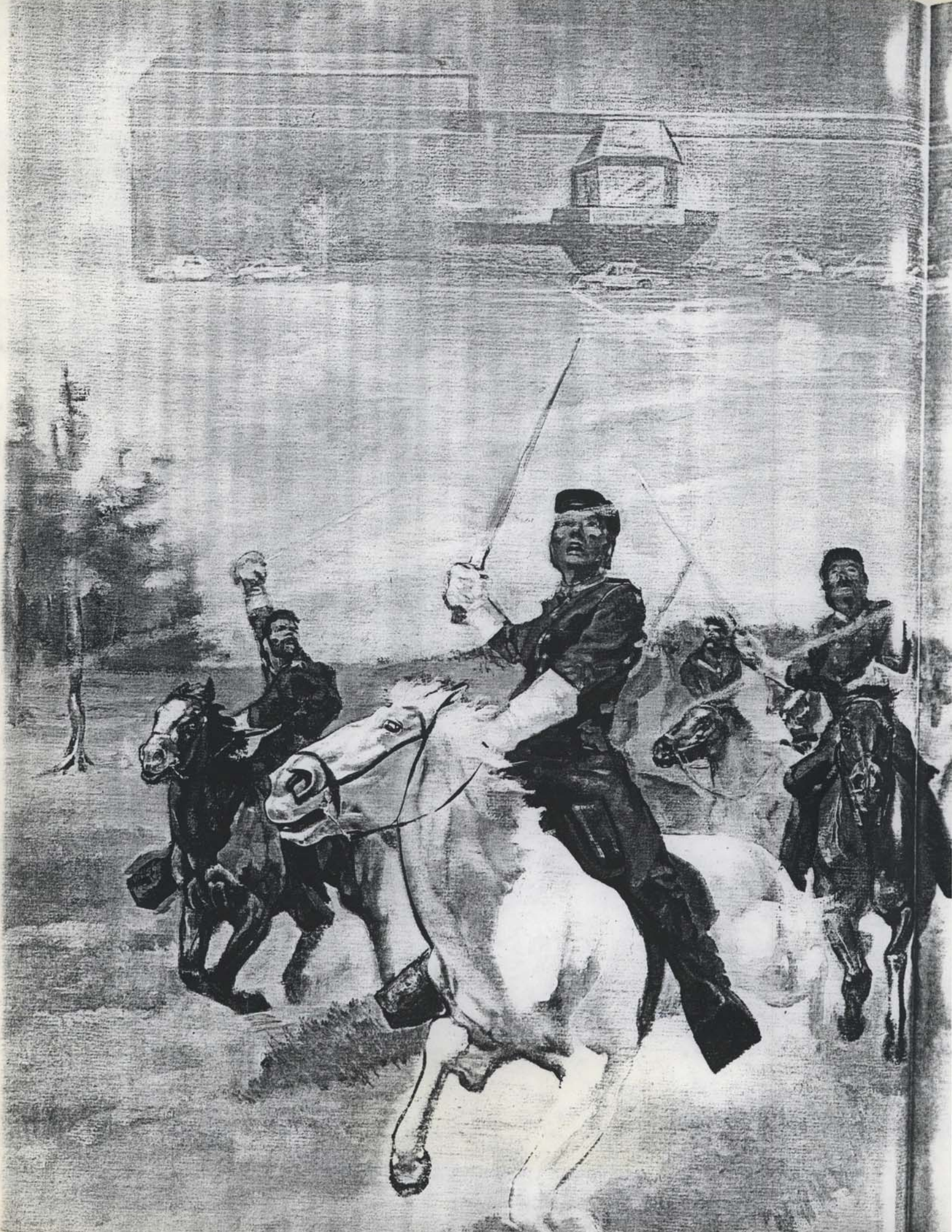
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*Til Hazel gets whipped by  
preservationists, no-growthers,  
environmentalists, Congress  
and a little old lady named  
Annie Snyder.*





# The Third Battle of Manassas

*Who says VIRGINIANS are still fighting the Civil War? To thwart Til Hazel's megamall near the Manassas battlefield park, opponents had to make it a national issue.*

by Karl Rhodes

Photographs by Roger Foley

**J**ohn T. "Til" Hazel Jr. is one of the most powerful men in America, if you believe *Forbes* magazine. He is perhaps the most successful developer in Virginia, and he's a partner in Hazel, Thomas, Fiske, Beckhorn & Hanes, one of the largest and most influential law firms in the state. He's also a political kingmaker.

It appears, however, that Hazel has met his match in Annie Snyder, a diabetic grandmother, who convinced Congress to condemn the land for Hazel's William Center project in Prince William County. Snyder opposed the 542-acre, mixed-use project because it's adjacent to Manassas National Battlefield Park.

President Reagan approved congressional condemnation in November, so Hazel stands to rake in tens of millions of dollars in compensation for the William Center



land. His pocketbook won, but his pride and principle got a whippin'.

Prince William officials have been stunned by the latest swing in the Third Battle of Manassas. They complain that turning Hazel's William Center site over to Uncle Sam would squeeze the life out of the county's long-range plans for economic development.

Congressional condemnation is a blatant encroachment on a local land-use decision, says Kathleen K. Seefeldt, who chairs the county's board of supervisors. She accuses Snyder of exaggerating the historic significance of the William Center tract to advance no-growth goals. Many congressmen voted to take the land, Seefeldt says, with absolutely no understanding of the local issues at stake. "You can't go along planning your economic development strategies for 10 years, and then have someone snatch away the centerpiece without it having a chilling effect on everything we are trying to do here."

Supporters of federal condemnation, however, argue that the site of Hazel's project played an important role in the Civil War's Second Battle of Manassas. "To us, the whole tract is historic," says Snyder, who chairs

the Save the Battlefield Coalition.

Snyder doesn't look like much of a match for Til Hazel, but she's proven her power to mold public opinion and sway Congress. Despite some health problems, Snyder is plenty tough. In fact, she was among the first 10 women inducted into the U.S. Marine Corps.

Hazel, with his trademark crew cut, looks more the Marine than Snyder. He too has a military bearing, but he pulls his power from immense wealth and high-level connections. *Forbes* included Hazel on a list of 62 "Heavy Hitters" across the country, people capable of raising vast sums for congressional candidates. Hazel, however, doesn't act the part. One of the largest builders in the state, he refers to developing huge mixed-use projects as "doing my thing."

"We prefer to do our project," Hazel says, "but you can't resist condemnation by the federal government." Either way, Hazel wins. Hazel/Peterson Companies bought most of the William Center site two years ago from Marriott Corp. for only \$10 million. Now estimates of the property's value range between \$50 million and \$150 million.

Hazel refuses even to guess what

the land is worth. "Taking a lot of money out of the federal treasury wouldn't make me feel good," he says, "particularly, when I know that Prince William has been so supportive. ... The federal government had no business in this thing. ... It's just a huge exercise in the ignorant abuse of federal power."

When Northern Virginians began to rezone their dairy farms, Fairfax County got the cream and Prince William got the skim milk. Fairfax attracted glitzy retail, hotel and office projects, and Prince William settled for blue-collar bedroom communities and tin truck terminals.

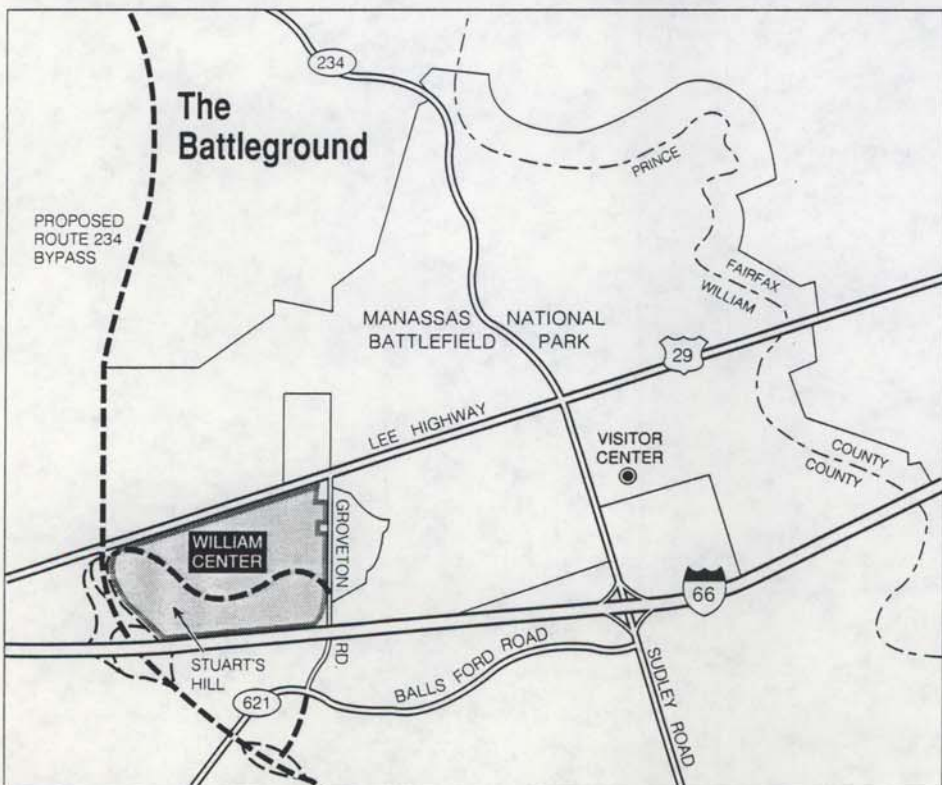
That's why supervisor Seefeldt is so succinct in listing her reasons for supporting the William Center project. "Revenue and jobs," she says: "8,000 jobs and \$260 million in tax revenue."

Sixty percent of the county's labor force works outside Prince William. Because of its heavily residential makeup, the county faces low property values and high demands for government services. Prince William has the fourth largest school system in Virginia and one of the highest tax rates in the state.

The problem is growing. The 1980 census pegged the county's population at 144,000. Now it's at 210,000, and it's projected to be 317,000 by the year 2000. "We have to face those facts," Seefeldt insists. "I wish Congress could listen to a tape of the citizens' input at our budget hearings."

Uncle Sam is a big part of Prince William's problem: Federal ownership of the battlefield park, Quantico Marine Base and Prince William Forest Park pulls almost 20 percent of the county's land mass off its tax rolls. "Economic development," says Seefeldt, "is the key ingredient to keeping our tax rate under control and providing basic services."

Since the early 1970's, the county has pinned its hopes on the William Center tract. That's when Marriott Corp. bought the land and proposed to build a theme park on it. The county granted the necessary zoning,



Annie "Stonewall" Snyder often quotes the famous general: "Who could not conquer with such troops as these?"



but one of Snyder's groups convinced the courts to overturn that decision.

"Then, as now, the local citizens rose up in righteous ire," says Snyder. "We defeated Marriott in court on a technicality. The county had not advertised correctly."

**T**he last time the federal government expanded the battlefield park, everyone seemed to agree that it would be the last time. In 1980, Sen. John Warner pushed a bill through Congress that added three historic tracts to the park's acreage.

In a hearing before the Senate Subcommittee on Parks, Warner said, "It is my hope that this issue now—at last—can be resolved once and for all, allowing these people to plan their own private lives and economic futures and to continue developing their community."

"The William Center tract was not even on the table at those hearings," Hazel complains. "The park service took the position that while they might like to have it in a perfect world, it was not even a tract that they were pressing for because it did not have sufficient historic interest."

In 1980, Warner seemed to agree:

"I also have sought the advice of Civil War historians, and the consensus is that all historically significant land will be protected by [this bill]."

Very little fighting occurred on the William Center site. During the Second Battle of Manassas, it contained a few field hospitals and the overnight headquarters of Gen. Robert E. Lee, who showed up late for the battle.

When the mall controversy arose, however, Warner changed his position on the historic significance of the site, particularly Stuart's Hill, where Lee pitched his tent. Warner advocated a compromise that called for the acquisition of 80 acres to preserve that hill.

Both Hazel and Seefeldt, however, place much of the blame for the Third Battle of Manassas on Warner's equivocation. "If Warner had stood up on day one and said, 'Forget it, this was solved years ago,' most of this uproar would have gone away," says Hazel.

"We certainly thought that Congress had spoken for the last time," Seefeldt agrees. "In 1980, this property was not even considered, and it has become the keystone of our economic development plans."

Seefeldt claims that the county has been prudent in its planning. "We feel

that we have acted responsibly at the local level to protect the park. ... We've been painted as insensitive. We've been called jackals and fly-by-nights on the floor of the House, and I resent it."

**I**f you could use just one word to describe Hazel, it would be authoritative. "Let me tell you about the situation," he says in a voice that's half asking and half commanding. "For at least a decade, Prince William County, through its representatives, has been encouraging Hazel/Peterson to come to the county and do a significant project."

When Marriott decided to sell the William Center site, Hazel moved in, but he brought along a few demands. First, the county had to provide the property with a new mixed-use zoning ordinance that would allow Hazel to "do his thing"—major mixed-use development. Second, Hazel wanted to know where the park issue stood.

"I was assured ... that the park issue had been solved and that Senator Warner had assured the county that they could now proceed with their business," Hazel recalls. "Based on those assurances, we bought the property and wrote the [new zoning] ordinance with the help of ... Well,

they wrote the ordinance with our help. However you want to put it."

Hazel rammed the new zoning through; that's the way Snyder puts it. "Hazel/Peterson's lawyer said, 'If you do not approve the planned mixed development, we will walk,'" she recalls.

Hazel/Peterson got its special zoning and bought the property in December of 1986. Then company officials sat down with the county to work out the details of the project. "For nine months," says Snyder, "we negotiated with them, trying to get the best deal."

The company reduced the project's residential component from 975 units to 500 units, provided battlefield buffer zones, offered to design an interchange for the Route 234 Bypass and pledged \$2 million to help build it. Hazel/Peterson also agreed to preserve the ruins of two buildings on the

site and to commission an archeological study.

"We felt that we had something that we could live with," Snyder admits. "We reluctantly agreed to support it."

Just when it looked like everyone was happy, Hazel changed his plans. Hazel/Peterson and the Edward J. DeBartolo Corp. filed a site plan to build a 1.2 million-square-foot regional mall on Stuart's Hill, where Lee camped for 24 hours during the Second Battle of Manassas.

"Bait and switch," Snyder screamed. Nothing was said about a mall — only homes and office buildings. There was a small neighborhood shopping center in the plans, but no mall. Snyder has a point. William Center's original plans on file at Prince William's Planning Department call for a 120,000-square-foot "community shopping center" — not a mall.

"We honestly did not believe that there was a high potential for a regional mall," Hazel explains. "We figured that would come later if it came at all, so we put it aside. We went on to the zoning ... but we continued to say that [William Center] would be like Fair Lakes."

A regional mall of 800,000 square feet is zoned into Hazel/Peterson's Fair Lakes project in Fairfax County, but the mall portion of that mixed-use complex hasn't been built yet. DeBartolo, however, approached Hazel/Peterson about building an even bigger mall at William Center.

"We said, 'Wonderful. There's just one thing. Don't come if you're not serious, because we don't want to stir up a lot of uproar unless you're really serious,'" Hazel recalls.

DeBartolo said he was serious, so Hazel broke the news to the county board. "I went around personally and

## Some Battlefields Are More Hallowed Than Others

by Karl Rhodes

There's an old joke about Richmond's reverence for the past that pretty much sums up the picture that many people in Northern Virginia cherish about folks south of the Occoquan:

"How many Richmonders does it take to change a light bulb?"

"Five: one to put in a new bulb and four to sit around and talk about what a fine bulb the old one was."

There may be some truth to that stereotype, but residents of "Old" Virginia can't be blamed for chuckling about their northern, Yankeeified neighbors' attempts to preserve the "hallowed ground" of the past. Til Hazel's William Center project isn't even on a Civil War battlefield. It's adjacent to the Manassas National Battlefield Park, site of a major Southern victory.

Activists in Northern Virginia give the impression that historic sites and commercial projects can't coexist. Maybe that's true in Prince William,

but that hasn't been the case in the rest of the state.

In Richmond, Atlanta-based Sigma Development Inc. is proposing a \$50 million shopping center just north of the city, where Confederate fortifications still stand. Working with local preservationists, Sigma forged a friendly compromise that saved about one-third of the fortifications.

In Fredericksburg, Richard B. Ladd is building an 85-acre subdivision on land that contains the only surviving example of zigzag entrenchments built during the Civil War. Hearing the pleas of local historians, Ladd has pledged to build a buffer zone and dedicate the trenches to the city. The preservationists say that if Ladd keeps his promise, there will be no controversy.

In Charlottesville, Cleveland-based First Interstate Development Corp. is building a 57,000-square-foot shopping center on Rio Hill, the site of Charlottesville's only Civil War skirmish. There a small Confederate force turned back a Union cavalry unit led by Gen. George Custer.

Responding to requests from local history buffs, the developer allowed one last search for Civil War artifacts on the site. First Interstate agreed to change the name of the project from Jefferson Square to Rio Hill Shopping Center, and the company promised to include an exhibit to commemorate the small battle.

In each of these three examples, opponents quickly settled their disagreements on the local level. There was no national outrage and no act of Congress.

Hazel/Peterson, the developer of William Center, offered similar compromises to preserve and commemorate the limited historic value of its William Center site, but those concessions didn't satisfy preservationists in Northern Virginia.

The difference, says Hazel, is the no-growth sentiment that has emerged in the Land of the Rising Traffic Counts. "Most of these people aren't preservationists," he says. "They are vicious no-growthers." ■

Congress barred Til Hazel from "doing his thing" on the William Center site.



talked to each of the supervisors, and explained to them that we had this opportunity, and they thought it was wonderful. ... In this type of development mode, nothing equals a regional mall in pulling it together and making it a place. ... The real key to making something happen in a suburban setting is a 1 million-square-foot plus regional retail mall."

Seefeldt agrees. "Regional malls in this region have been tremendous catalysts for the *quality* of economic development. We're not looking for mattress discounters out here." But were comparisons to Fair Lakes deceptive, considering that the regional mall portion of that project doesn't exist yet? "That's not for me to evaluate," Seefeldt replies. "Bait and switch is an easy allegation to hurl, but it's not true."

"This was our first mixed-use zoning, and I guess you could perhaps concede inexperience," she says. But the county's primary concern was to reduce the residential component of William Center. The zoning calls for 500 residential units and an "unspecified mix of commercial and retail."

Snyder looks at it differently. "I don't think it would hold up under any court test. We trusted these people,

and they didn't deserve that trust."

**T**he mall was a handy vehicle for a group of people out here who are traditionally no-growth," says Seefeldt. "The local issue is *not* the mall, I can assure you. The local issue is growth."

Many of those who oppose the mall are the same citizens who oppose the Route 234 Bypass, according to Seefeldt. The William Center project, with its commitment toward building an interchange for the bypass, puts the county one step closer to opening up Western Prince William for commercial development.

That interchange is not as crucial to the William Center project, however, as it is to Manassas, the county and the battlefield park. "Those two jurisdictions have been working on that project as their highest priority," Seefeldt says. Construction of the bypass also would help clean up the battlefield park by allowing the park service to close the roads bisecting it. "The park's problem is traffic," Seefeldt says, "not this mall."

Snyder, who lives on the proposed alignment of the bypass, disagrees. Developers, she points out, are donating a lot of the right of way for the

Route 234 Bypass. "They are not doing that to bypass Manassas. They are doing it to develop their area. Are we getting a bypass, or are we getting another development road?"

"If I knew that the bypass would assure the closing of the roads through the park, I wouldn't fight it," Snyder says. "I'm 67 years old, and unless I'm planning to live to be 87, I won't be here to fight it."

Snyder resents allegations that she is just using the park issue as a tool to stop growth in Prince William. "I consider myself an unpaid employee of the park service," she says. "I have worked for the park and defended it for about 30 years. This is my sixth 'Third' Battle of Manassas."

**W**hen the mall plans "hit the fan," as Hazel puts it, he decided to test the resolve of the county board. The developer paid a visit to Seefeldt. "I'm a little pompous," he recalls, "and I say, 'Ms. Seefeldt, are you going to stick with us?'"

"That's not really the question," she replied. "The question is are you going to stick with *us*?"

"Well, I was taken aback," says

Hazel, "and because I was so shocked, I promised my wife, my children and everything else as evidence that we don't cut and run very easily. ... I said, 'You get my permits as I need them, and we're going to start building up there. We are not going to be intimidated by this nonsense.'"

Nonsense or not, Snyder successfully swayed Congress and beat Hazel at his own game. Hazel is a legendary mover and shaker, but Snyder is a political swamp fox. On the William Center issue, she lured Hazel into the marshes of public opinion. After he stepped on a few snakes, all she had to do was hold his head under.

"The next thing I know," says Hazel, "Snyder and her no-growth crowd had gone up on Capitol Hill and enlisted [Rep. Robert] Mrazek and [Rep. Michael] Andrews. And I went over to see Mrazek and Andrews, and they said, 'Til, you're a nice guy. Everybody's doing their thing. But we see this as a national issue. We want to find a way ... to defend the perimeters of all federal park sites.'"

Mrazek and Andrews, Democrats from New York and Texas respectively, pushed through legislation that delays construction of the Route 234 Bypass interchange. Hazel told them that fighting the interchange would only hurt the park because it would postpone the eventual closing of the roads through the battlefield. "They said 'Yeah, that's true, but we're going to screw your mall,' and I said, 'Be my guest.'"

A Mrazek aid, who was present at the meeting, denies that language. Andrews doesn't remember it that way either. "We had a very civil and productive meeting with Mr. Hazel," Andrews says. "As respectfully as we could, we told him that we were going to do everything we can to stop his shopping mall."

Finally, Hazel visited Interior Secretary Donald Hodel and worked out a compromise that moved the mall off Stuart's Hill to a site where it would not be visible from any point in the park. According to Hazel, the park

service was satisfied with that compromise, but Snyder didn't bite.

"Their so-called compromise was between them and the Interior Department," she says. "We were never asked to participate."

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*"We don't cut and run very easily," says Til Hazel.*

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For Hazel and the county, things went from bad to worse. Northern Virginia Rep. Frank Wolf, a Republican, drafted legislation that called for congressional condemnation of the William Center property. "I don't understand why Congressman Wolf leaped into it last spring," snaps Seefeldt. "This is *not* his district."

Hazel lays the blame equally on Wolf, Warner and Rep. French Slaughter Jr., who represents Western Prince William and who voted for the legislative taking. "I've gotten the short course in how irresponsible the Congress is when they are under the glare of TV cameras." Only then, says Hazel, do you learn "who your friends are and who they aren't."

**R**obert Kelly, Hazel/Peterson's vice president of advertising and public affairs, says that the preservationists have dabbled in "deliberate distortions of the truth."

"They lie," says Hazel. He accuses the National Trust for Historic Preservation of using the battlefield controversy to generate donations and publicity. The organization has fired out "Urgent Preservation Alerts" that call for "Emergency Contributions" to fight William Center. "I don't know what they are spending the money on," Hazel ponders. "They haven't filed any suits, and most of their publicity has been free." Some of it, in fact, was drummed up by Jody Powell, former press secretary to former President Jimmy Carter.

Even the environmentalists jumped

on the bandwagon, according to Hazel. "After they ran out of any other way to harass us, they decided that it's a wetland, and the EPA said that there was some flower that may be on the site."

"The Small Whorled Pogonia, an endangered species," interjects Hazel's son Jim, who is project coordinator for William Center. "Nobody has ever seen one there, but the allegation was made that if it's in Prince William County, it may be on that site."

So the search was on for the elusive Small Whorled Pogonia. After surveying the property, however, the Department of the Interior decided that William Center did not provide a possible habitat for the flower. The wetlands issue "went away after two or three months of harassment," says the elder Hazel. "To come up here [in the rolling hills] and talk about wetlands on that site is absurd."

The Third Battle of Manassas has had its humorous moments; everyone seems to agree on that. A preservationist in California wrote Snyder to suggest a protest march around Candlestick Park at the opening game of DeBartolo's San Francisco 49ers. City officials wouldn't allow the march at Candlestick Park, so the demonstrators decided to picket the team's headquarters building in Santa Clara.

"We spent 30 minutes looking for the place," Snyder recalls. And only 40 or 50 people showed up. "The sad part," she laughs, "was that the building was on a dead-end street with only one other building nearby. ... There we were with all these fliers and nobody to give them to."

The DeBartolo demonstration flopped, but rumors persisted that the Ohio megamall builder was developing doubts about William Center. "That was a lot of idle conversation," says Hazel. "The simple fact is, we had two other regional mall developers who would have liked to come here if they went away. ... But the old gentleman [DeBartolo] sat right here at this table, where I'm sitting now, and said we're going to stay with you until it's over." ■