

said, explaining why she started playing on a Fairfax County softball team right after breaking up with her boyfriend.

Thompson didn't even have to wait for the season opener before she met a new man. On the first day of practice, the 26-year-old financial analyst met Kevin Spaner, an Interior Department employee who pitches for her team fittingly named ISO ("In Search Of"). They have dated since.

Romance is only one of the factors that have sent the number of organized softball teams in Fairfax County soaring. In 1983, there were 640 teams; in 1988, there were more than 2,200.

As more companies move into Fairfax, more offices sponsor teams. As traffic worsens, more people decide to wait out rush hour by playing ball in a field near work. And as some of the 660 players in the gigantic Braddock Park softball tournament yesterday said, a lot of people who need exercise would rather trot around the bases than do aerobics.

The Amateur Softball Association says Fairfax County is not the only place where softball is the fastest growing adult game.

Bill Plummer, spokesman for the Oklahoma City-based association, said the number of registered players has risen an



PHOTOS BY SHARON FARMER FOR THE WASHINGTON POST
C.J. Lee, 3, has some growing to do before he can play, but he knows the equipment.

growing so hard to find. Teams in Alexandria have had to schedule games near dawn and well after dusk. Dozens of teams in the District that wanted to play this year couldn't because there was no room.

In the District there are 500 teams, triple the number there were a few years ago, according to Tony Conte, assistant to the city's sports division chief. While some play to relax, Conte said, a number of the Capitol Hill and law firm teams play to win.

"It gets serious," Conte said. "They play for trophies and bragging rights. . . . Some get so upset with bad calls that they write letters of protest to the [amateur softball] commissioner. The adults can give you more headaches than the kids."

During any summer week, there are about 400 softball games in Montgomery County.

"You don't have to be 6 foot 8 inches or be able to hit it over the fence to play," said Jim Wiltshire, county sports coordinator. "Everybody can play and everybody in Montgomery County does, or it seems like it."

A rising number of games has brought a shortage of umpires in Montgomery. Although many Montgomery residents are well-mannered, others are not, particu-

See SOFTBALL, D6, Col. 1

the deadly fire at The Bear have turned up several suspicious. Roland (Fish) Powell said "it's very possible" the fire, a dangerous game called fireb

Police have determined the engulfed the top floor of a motel early last Sunday before unit, said police Det. Vick Pennsylvania students were other persons were injured in

The federal Bureau of Alcohol and Firearms continues to sit the curtains and carpet to room to determine the causes suspect it was student bizarre game of fireballing, spitting out a mouthful of gr lighting the spray with a ligl said Powell, a former fire ch

Gay Pride To Celebrate Secrets Told

By Patrice Gaines-Ca
Washington Post Staff Writer

Lorri L. Jean could have kept preference a secret. When 1 about boyfriends, she could h names, made up romantic tale: spent together. Or, she could t

The truth is Jean, a 31-year-er for the federal government During her senior year at A University, she shared her secr friends. But others found out were snide remarks. Some tho political activist, had gone too f still others told her not to tell a

"It is a myth that women ca sexual orientation more easily can," said Jean, who moved to shortly after graduating from A in 1979. "People wonder a lot a woman isn't married. They ask Anyway, I am an honest, open p hide and lie about anything w characteristic for me."

Today, hundreds of gays ar some of whom still keep their most crowds, will gather for th 13th annual Gay and Lesbian P noon, a parade, featuring severa marching bands, leaves Meridia also known as Malcolm X Par Street and Florida Avenue NW. val, with about 150 concession entertainment, runs from 1 to 6 grounds of Francis Junior High 24th and N streets NW.

For some gays and lesbians, such a public way the orientat kept so hidden is frightening at f

"Before I went to the first [P] was afraid. We all grow up wit stereotypes of gay and lesbian the rest of the country does," J was afraid of what I might see."

INSIDE

THE DISTRICT

Summer Hopping Custom

■ Pool-hopping is a frequently practiced pastime, according to police and some young people. Page D4

MARYLAND

Wanted: GOP Candidate

■ Some GOP officials say their candidate's withdrawal from the Senate race has been "demoralizing" but it need not be fatal. Page D3

Charges in Ex-Officer's Slaying

■ A Virginia lawyer was charged with the slaying of a former police officer in Annapolis. Page D4

VIRGINIA

Chlorine Gas Incident

■ Twenty-four persons were overcome by chlorine gas vapors yesterday at Montclair Country Club, near Dale City. Page D4

FOOD CLOSINGS

Page D6

History and Politics Clash At Mall Site in Manassas

By John F. Harris
Washington Post Staff Writer

The 542-acre tract known as William Center, home to Northern Virginia's most divisive development battle, looks very much as it did 127 years ago during the Civil War: an ordinary cluster of fields and trees.

Yet this plot of land, which has demonstrated an extraordinary ability to set people bitterly at odds, has a history as complicated as any in the Washington region.

For the fourth time in 15 years, the tract adjacent to Manassas National Battlefield Park in Prince William County has become the flag in a high-stakes tug of war, this time over a proposal by Northern Virginia's most prominent developer to build a shopping mall.

The struggle over William Center has the combatants joined in an elaborate debate over history and political power, one that takes center stage Tuesday with congressional hearings on proposals to buy the property.

As in the past, it's a case of conflicting visions.

When developer John T. (Til) Hazel gazes at William Center, he sees a piece of land that Prince William officials for years have tagged as an ideal spot for a large and impressive project—an open tract bounded by three major roads and directly in the path of one of the nation's hottest growth corri-

dors. So promising is the land's potential that its price is estimated by development experts and land records to have multiplied in value four times or more since Hazel's firm, the Hazel/Peterson Cos., bought the property for about \$11 million in late 1986.

When preservationists and Civil War buffs view the site, they see ground stained with the blood of soldiers who fought in the nation's divisive struggle—a historically significant tract that after a series of struggles and mishaps has been left unprotected in private hands.

"It is just ridiculous to put a shopping mall next to one of the nation's most important national parks. The developer and a handful of local officials have given Congress no choice but to acquire the property," said Rep. Michael A. Andrews (D-Tex.), a sponsor of legislation to have the federal government buy the William Center tract—unavoidably at a large profit to Hazel/Peterson—and add it to the park.

Among the questions likely to be raised at the congressional hearings: How much historical value does the William Center tract hold? Why is the property not already part of the national park? Where does the federal government's interest in preserving hallowed ground end and the local government's desire to chart its own future begin?

The modern era of the William Center property, which includes the site where Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee set up

See MALL, D4, Col. 1

Mall Fight Could Lead to Manassas Bypass Road

MALL, From D1

headquarters during the Second Battle of Manassas in 1862, began in February 1973, preservationists and county officials agree. That was the day the Marriott Corp. announced it was planning a "Great America" theme park on the property.

Prince William officials—then, as now, eager to improve their weak tax base—embraced the proposal, and the supervisors rezoned the property so quickly that a judge later ruled they had acted too hastily.

That was only the start of problems for Marriott, which in 1977 abandoned its plans for Great America.

Meanwhile, some National Park Service historians had their own ideas for the property. Throughout the late 1970s, then-Rep. Herbert E. Harris II, a Democrat from Northern Virginia, sponsored legislation to expand the Manassas National Battlefield park, and proposals floated from within the park service to include the Marriott land, according to park service officials and records.

Prince William officials vowed to fight any expansion that included the Marriott property. Park supporters, not wanting to lose the baby with the bathwater, agreed to eliminate the tract from expansion legislation in favor of property considered more historically significant.

Had the government moved to acquire the Marriott tract then, its value was about \$2 million, according to 1981 tax records.

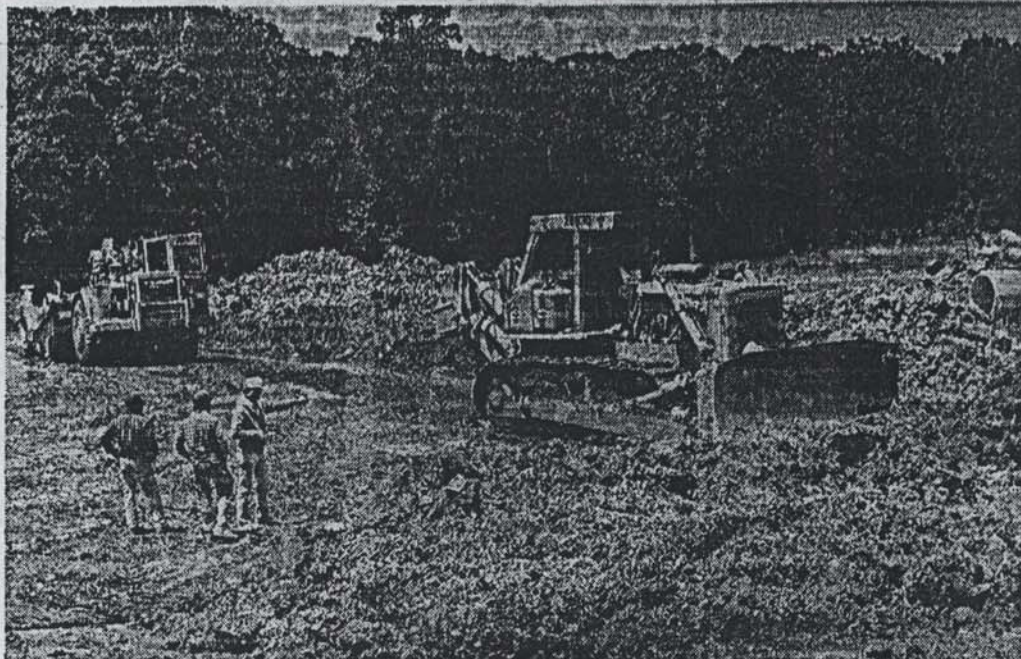
Harris' bills passed the House but were consistently blocked by the Senate's Virginia delegation until 1980, when a bill to expand the Manassas park by 1,800 acres was signed by President Carter. "It is my hope that this issue now—at last—can be resolved once and for all, allowing these people to plan their private lives and economic futures," said Sen. John Warner (R-Va.).

Prince William officials interpreted such comments as a promise that the expansion days were over, and that they were free to plan the property around the park as they saw fit.

An attempt to land then-Gov. Charles S. Robb's Center for Innovative Technology failed; both before and after this setback, top county officials had been talking with Hazel, he said recently.

Prince William had its share of problems. The county was battling the effects of an enormous boom in costly residential and downscale commercial growth, and was seen by many as an ugly sister to neighboring Fairfax County.

Who better to change this image than Hazel, the crew-cut developer with a Harvard law degree and a



Land is moved near the entrance of the proposed shopping mall, which is adjacent to Manassas National Battlefield Park.

developer with a soon-to-expire contract to purchase the Marriott property.

After a hurried round of assurances from county officials, Hazel/Peterson bought the tract, and the firm's land-use attorney played a major role in writing a new zoning category expressly for the property. The developer said William Center would be a project like its Fair Lakes business and residential complex in western Fairfax.

The Prince William Planning Commission gave its approval after a bus tour of Fair Lakes, and the supervisors followed suit on a 6-to-1 vote in November 1986. They boasted that William Center would mean millions in tax revenue.

Even historic preservationists and National Park Service officials endorsed the project. If the property could not stay undeveloped, they reasoned, a low-density office complex was the most palatable alternative.

Not long after the rezoning, however, Hazel/Peterson's plans changed, the developer said. Efforts to attract a major office tenant were yielding few results, when the Ohio-based Edward J. DeBartolo Corp. came to Hazel with another idea for William Center: a 1.2 million-square-foot shopping mall.

The mall, roughly the size of Fair Oaks, made sense to Hazel. The zoning allowed it; moreover, a shopping center would be a catalyst for other attractive growth, Hazel said.

Instead, the mall has become a focus for a preservation battle of national proportions. "The fat was in the fire," Hazel acknowledged.

In the minds of many preservationists, Hazel duped naive local officials and now has his bulldozers running roughshod over hallowed

Hazel and his relatives have made large campaign contributions to all three—Republicans Frank R. Wolf, Stan Parris and D. French Slaughter, whose district includes the national park. Parris and Hazel have been close associates for more than three decades, and Parris owns a house on the Hazel family's 4,000-acre estate in Fauquier County.

The National Park Service also distanced itself from the Andrews-Mrazek legislation. After meeting with Hazel, park service director William Penn Mott Jr., joined by his boss, Interior Secretary Donald P. Hodel, changed position and declared that the mall was not a threat to the park.

Instead, traffic on Rtes. 29 and 234, which divide the park, was the principal problem, they said in announcing that they would endorse the mall in exchange for a plan to close the two roads and build a bypass west of the park.

In late May, Wolf ended his silence, introducing legislation that would use an obscure legal provision to accelerate the government's purchase of the William Center property and build the bypass.

The measure, which Parris and Slaughter quickly signed on to, left many preservationists confused. It sounded appealing, but was it a Trojan horse for Hazel? If it passed, would Hazel/Peterson take its profit

and simply relocate the mall nearby? Would the battlefield bypass become part of a much larger "Washington Bypass" that Hazel and others have long advocated for the largely undeveloped western suburbs?

Mrazek and Andrews said they support the concept of Wolf's bill, and would work to ensure that the bypass protects the park, rather than serve nearby development.

Other preservationists have been skeptical.

"Hazel wins no matter what happens," said Prince William civic activist Annie Snyder, echoing suspicions that the developer has fanned the controversy over William Center intentionally. "He's going to get his highway, and get the rest of us to pay for it."

Hazel said his firm intends to stay in western Prince William, even if the government condemns William Center, and acknowledged that he owns land along possible routes for a Washington Bypass.

In April, he and several associates purchased a 100-acre site a few miles from William Center for almost \$10 million.

But he scoffed at notions that he secretly wishes the government would buy William Center, allowing him to make a quick profit and move elsewhere. Said Hazel: "My critics give me more credit for being Machiavellian than I deserve."

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Who better to change this image than Hazel, the crew-cut developer with a Harvard law degree and a blow Virginia drawl? Hazel and his partner, Milton V. Peterson, were the brains behind many of the most successful Fairfax developments, including Burke Centre and Fair Lakes. In meetings with Prince William officials, emissaries such as County Executive Robert S. Noe Jr. and Board Chairman Kathleen K. Seefeldt (D-Occoquan) pressed the case for coming to their county, Hazel recalled.

The developer was underwhelmed. Prince William's financial problems, along with an electorate that seemed unwilling to confront the inevitability of growth, were uninviting.

Moreover, Hazel said, most of the logical spots for a large development were "tainted" with a corner gas station here, a warehouse or convenience store there.

Hazel said he changed his mind after receiving an offer from a de-

veloper with a soon-to-expire contract to purchase the Marriott property.

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Not fair, Hazel argues. While he is working on a high-end development that in the long run would enhance the national park, many of his adversaries are using the controversy in a futile attempt to halt inevitable growth in western Prince William, or to boost the coffers of national preservation lobbies, Hazel said.

The congressional effort against William Center has been spearheaded by Andrews and Rep. Robert J. Mrazek (D-N.Y.), whose office is adorned with photographs of Abraham Lincoln.

Their legislation, which would have the federal government purchase William Center and add it to the park, has more than 200 sponsors, though Northern Virginia's three House members did not sign on, initially saying the dispute was a local matter.

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