



ROGUE PARKS

by Meghan McGuire

Historical Lithia Park brings pleasure to the masses

When I moved to Ashland in 1994, there was an abundant scene in Lithia Park, where hippies, bums, and youngsters spent many a day playing hacky sack, selling hemp hair wraps, and stealing into the foliage to indulge in illicit activities.

With nothing to do, and no one to ask, I too wandered into the park on occasion. I discovered the hippies on the front lawn were just the tip of the iceberg. The further you went into the illustrious park, it seemed, the more it offered. There were duck ponds, Japanese gardens, trails and playgrounds, one in particular that held the "rat wheel," a large human-powered wooden wheel. Once inside, the point was to run as fast as you could until you fell down while the wheel kept spinning, a guaranteed gnarly wipe-out. In a huge disappointment to myself and other young masochists, they took the wheel out a couple years later.

Ashland without Lithia Park is like Butch Cassidy without the Sundance Kid. On the rare occasion when I attempt to sell people the idea of moving here, I always boast of the park. Days in the park bring out the best in people. There is no better place to clear your head of cobwebs while hiking, playing frisbee, or catching rays.

Some may wonder; how exactly did this valuable land get preserved so well in a time when Wal-Mart rules, and parking is so hard to come by?

Well, once upon a time, believe it or not, Ashland was not the teeming metropolis that it is today. In fact, it was basically made up of a flourmill, co-owned by pioneer Abel Helman, and a water-powered saw mill that stood where the entrance to the park remains today. During these lonely times, Helman's cook planted the "Tree of Heaven," the towering landmark that stands between the now-headless Abraham Lincoln Statue, and the plaza. The emigrant planted this legendary *Alnus altissima* from seed that he brought from China in order to remind him of his homeland.

In 1859, the population was a whopping 50, some of whom had ties to communities in Ashland, Kentucky, and Ashland County, Ohio, thus Ashland was born. Needless to say, we, as a city, have stepped up our standard of creativity quite a bit since then.

During the late 1800s, Ashland became the fastest growing town in Oregon, south of Portland. With a population of 3,000 by 1900, Ashland was the largest town in Jackson County, (put that in your pipe and smoke it, Medfordites!)

The Chautauqua Association, an organized movement that began with gatherings on the banks of Chautauqua Lake, New York, founded the park on eight acres in 1892. The organization, which supported the arts and wrote manifestos in support of the plight of the working man, had a huge influence on today's Ashland. They built domed buildings for their various artistic and musical at-



Meghan McGuire/The Siskiyou

New Years Day, 1997. I think I climbed a tree or something to take this. I can't remember.

tractions, which around 3,000 people attended every year, while camping in the park.

Wait. Hold the show. Camping in the park? Indeed. The activity that has brought so much controversy to the City of Ashland was once a large point in founding the land we call Lithia Park. Of course these were the days of slip knots and spittoons. And back then, when you went panhandling, you were actually holding a pan in the river, searching for gold. Oh, how times change... Alanis would surely call that ironic.

After 30 good years of the Chautauqua shows, along came young Angus Bowmer who in 1935 founded his three-day Shakespeare festival, and history was made. Today's festival sits on the same location as the original domes.

Little by little, the land that makes up the 93 acres that we now know as Lithia Park was aquired. In 1908, the Women's Civic Improvement Club passed a measure that included park maintenance in the City Charter.

In 1910, things were moving

right along with the construction of the duck pond and the waterfall that feeds it. The following year, a journalist named Bert Greer came to town with money and dreams. He purchased the Daily Tidings and hatched a plan to turn Ashland into a world-famous spa. He piped water to the plaza fountain from a spring located four miles away. Close to Emmigrant Creek, the water was found to include high amounts of Lithium—then thought of as a healthy addition. It's a good thing that water tastes so bad, or else we might have even more crazy old people living here than we do now.

The coup d'etat of Ashland's founders was achieved in 1914 when they hired John McLaren, who designed San Francisco's Golden Gate Park, as landscape architect. He preserved many native species and selected numerous hardy ornamental plants in addition. He was true to the area's natural canyons and waterways, and molded the park we have today.

Two floods have since ravaged the Lithia Park, one in 1974, and another that many of us remem-

ber, in 1997.

With a hangover the size of Tinseltown, I walked through the ravaged park, that New Years Day. Now established in Ashland after living here three years, with a gang of roughnecks I still call friends, I walked through the park and assessed the damage. The plaza was under water, the bridges were down, and giant logs seemed to have ended up in unthinkable places. "It's Armageddon," we screamed. It was disastrous, but the raw power of mother nature energized our adolescent minds.

Nowadays, the park is looking better than ever. I was enjoying it with all my senses as I drove my friend to the upper duck pond the other day, so he could cruise down the hill on his skateboard. I followed him in my pickup, and watched as he wove past the duck-crossing, and carved between the fountain and the bandshell. Close to the bottom, he did a dramatic powerslide, and came to a stop near some sunbathing ladies. I cracked up as I listened to him smoothtalk, and thought about what a fine day it was, to be in the park.

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| ON DECK | 5/8/2006 - 11:30 AM | 5/13/2006 - 10:00 AM |
| | Cascade Conference | Track & Field "Last Chance" Meet |
| | Softball Tournament | |
| | 5/11/2006 - 9:00 AM | 5/25/2006 - 9:00 AM |
| NAIA Region I | Track & Field at NAIA | |
| Softball Tournament | Championships | |

Softball starts tourney with win

By Rich Rosenthal
Sports Information Director

The Southern Oregon University softball team began its quest for postseason glory with a 5-1 victory over Concordia University at the Cascade Conference Tournament in Portland Sunday afternoon.

The triumph sets up a 9 a.m. Monday showdown with regular-season champion and top-seeded Oregon Tech. The winner advances to the championship game of the league's inaugural postseason

tournament.

Senior pitcher Julianne Cree earned her 12th win of the year with a complete-game, four-hit, five-strikeout performance, while senior shortstop Megan Rock cracked a first-inning solo homer and went 3-for-3 with three RBI for the Raiders.

Southern jumped Cavalier ace Annele Huckins for the second time in recent days at the Delta Park softball venue to the tune of four earned runs on six hits over 3.1 innings.

Freshman outfielder Deni Rowley extended her school-record hit streak to 14 games with a fourth-inning bunt single.

In other Day 1 tournament action, No. 4-seeded Albertson and No. 6 Corban were eliminated, and Concordia and Eastern Oregon play for the right to join the four-team NAIA regional tournament field tomorrow at 9 a.m.


OIT and SOU earned automatic bids to regionals by finishing first and second, respectively, in the regular-season standings.

2006 CASCADE CONFERENCE SOFTBALL TOURNAMENT - DAY 1

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| <p>Opening Round Eastern Oregon 11, Albertson 0 (6 inn.) Concordia 5, Corban 2</p> | <p>Oregon 4 (6 inn.) Southern Oregon 5, Concordia 1</p> |
| <p>Second Round Oregon Tech 12, Eastern</p> | <p>Loser-Out Concordia 5, Albertson 2 Eastern Oregon 8, Corban 2</p> |

16th Annual

Ashland Community Bike Swap



Buy & Sell New and Used Bicycles, Parts and Accessories
\$1 entry fee at event, \$3 Family. Admission includes 1 raffle ticket to Win a New Bike and other prizes! Bicycle Races, Music, Food, a new Skateboard Swap and Much More!!! Drop-off your bike to sell 7-11 AM, Bikes on sale 12-4 PM. For Information call Ashland Parks and Rec. 541-488-5340

Saturday May 13th at The Grove 1195 E. Main St.

