



WILTON MANORS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Bradley Airport/Broward Speedway/Lake Lauderdale-Mills Pond Park/Snook Creek Park document compilation

by Ron Ulm

June 2026

This compilation begins with the Summer 2026 *Town Crier* newsletter article ***“Was there ever an airport and motor speedway in Wilton Manors?”***--about "Bradley Airport" and "Broward Speedway" and their connection to Wilton Manors' pioneer Joseph Neville McJunkin.

Following the article are samples of background newspaper articles and ads related to the airport/speedway [additional clips are available on Newspapers.com]. Also, rare ca 1960 aerial photos of the property; and a comprehensive history (w/ reminiscences) and photos of the airport extracted from *Abandoned & Little Known Airfields* by Paul Freeman. It concludes with articles about the transition of the airport land to become, variously “Bradley Park”, “Lake Lauderdale Park” and ultimately, “Mills Pond Park”. And finally, stories about the acquisition of the land for an entrance off Powerline Road; and Wilton Manors “Snook Creek Park” across the river.

A title search was outside the scope of this project. Available information suggests that the McJunkin family retained the “airport” part of the property, unused for ten years, until it was sold to the City of Fort Lauderdale in late 1977—for \$1.7 million. It would be another ten years before Mills Pond Park officially opened.

Broward County purchased the “riverfront” portion of the park during the same timeframe--to serve as a nature preserve/passive park. A 1953 Dolph map shows nearly a dozen individual property owners in that area. Maps and aerials would indicate that it was also undeveloped land or farmland, with no permanent residents.

Despite some internet sources, the park WAS NOT NAMED FOR THE MILLS FAMILY, who purportedly owned and sold the land to the City/County. Rather, with some controversy, it was named for a Ft. Lauderdale city commissioner who championed parks.

Looking for more details?

[Click/tap here](#) for more about Wilton Manors pioneer J.N. McJunkin and his family history.

Was there ever an airport and motor speedway in Wilton Manors?

And the answer to this issue's question is ... well, close-by. We'll elaborate through the "McJunkin-Wilton Manors connection".



In **1919** Wilton Manors pioneer **Joseph Neville McJunkin** began farming the land on what is now the site of Ft. Lauderdale High School. He went on to acquire and operate farmland throughout Broward County. He also ran a packing house adjacent to the Colohatchee railway depot. He and his family lived at **644 NE 22nd Drive**. He later acquired more land in the Wilton Manors area. This included what is now Edgewater Estates; the SE corner of NE 26th St. & NE 15th Ave.; the CVS drugstore site; and what is now Ankr Apartments, the Shoppes of Wilton Manors and east to N.E. 20th Drive.

Most important for our story was his purchase of a 95-acre bean field just across the river from Wilton Manors—part of today's **Mills Pond Park**.

In **1946** McJunkin leased the property to a veteran pilot and flight instructor from Georgia—**Ben Bradley**. Bradley started the airfield for training pilots under the post-war GI bill. By **1953** "**Bradley Airport**" had expanded—with a 2800 ft paved runway, two hangers with space for 38 aircraft, an apron with space for several dozen more, and a combined office/restaurant/training facility. Also a racing aficionado, Bradley sublet a part of the property for construction of a paved stock car racing track—"Broward Speedway".

[The two facilities were located in the south half of Mills Pond Park—beginning at N.W. 19th St and extending to about the center of today's softball venue.]

Over the years, the airport was also a regular site for the Ringling Bros and other circuses and County Expositions. It also hosted parachute competitions. The speedway eventually switched from stock cars to quarter-midgets and go-karts. It closed in **1960** after neighbors' noise complaints.

The entire site was zoned "industrial". Ever the businessman, in **1965**, with the coming of the adjacent I-95, McJunkin decided not to renew Bradley's lease. Instead, he demolished the airport buildings and put the property up for sale for \$1 million. Bradley moved his operations to Ft. Lauderdale's new "**Executive Airport**"—where he was one of the first tenants.

The vacant McJunkin site was later acquired by the City of Ft. Lauderdale; to later became a part of Mills Pond Park (which opened in **1987**). Active and alert, and still a resident of Wilton Manors, J.N. McJunkin passed away in **1988** at the age of 95.

Homes Are Sprouting up All Around It

Business Is Booming at 'Small Bradley' Airport; It Has Grown into \$135,000 Aviation Center

FORT LAUDERDALE—

While most of Fort Lauderdale has been unaware of it, a small airport has grown into a bustling aviation center on NW 19th st. in which more than \$135,000 has been invested.

The Bradley Airport now has two hangars with space for 38 airplanes. It has a newly completed 2,800-foot hard-surface runway, and a restaurant has been opened in office space at one end of the larger hangar. Business is booming.

Although some real estate developers are opposed to his remaining in business on NW 19th st., Ben R. Bradley, owner of the field, says he has no intention of closing up before his lease expires in 1966, and he hopes to renew it then.

When he started to develop the site as an airport in 1946, there were only about 10 homes between the airport and Sunrise Blvd., nine blocks south. Now the entire area is built up to within 1,000 feet of the field.

Bradley says he's heard very few objections to the operation of the field from home owners. He now has 103 acres under lease and has sub-leased land used for the Broward Speedway, a hard-surfaced track which opened last spring on the north edge of the field.

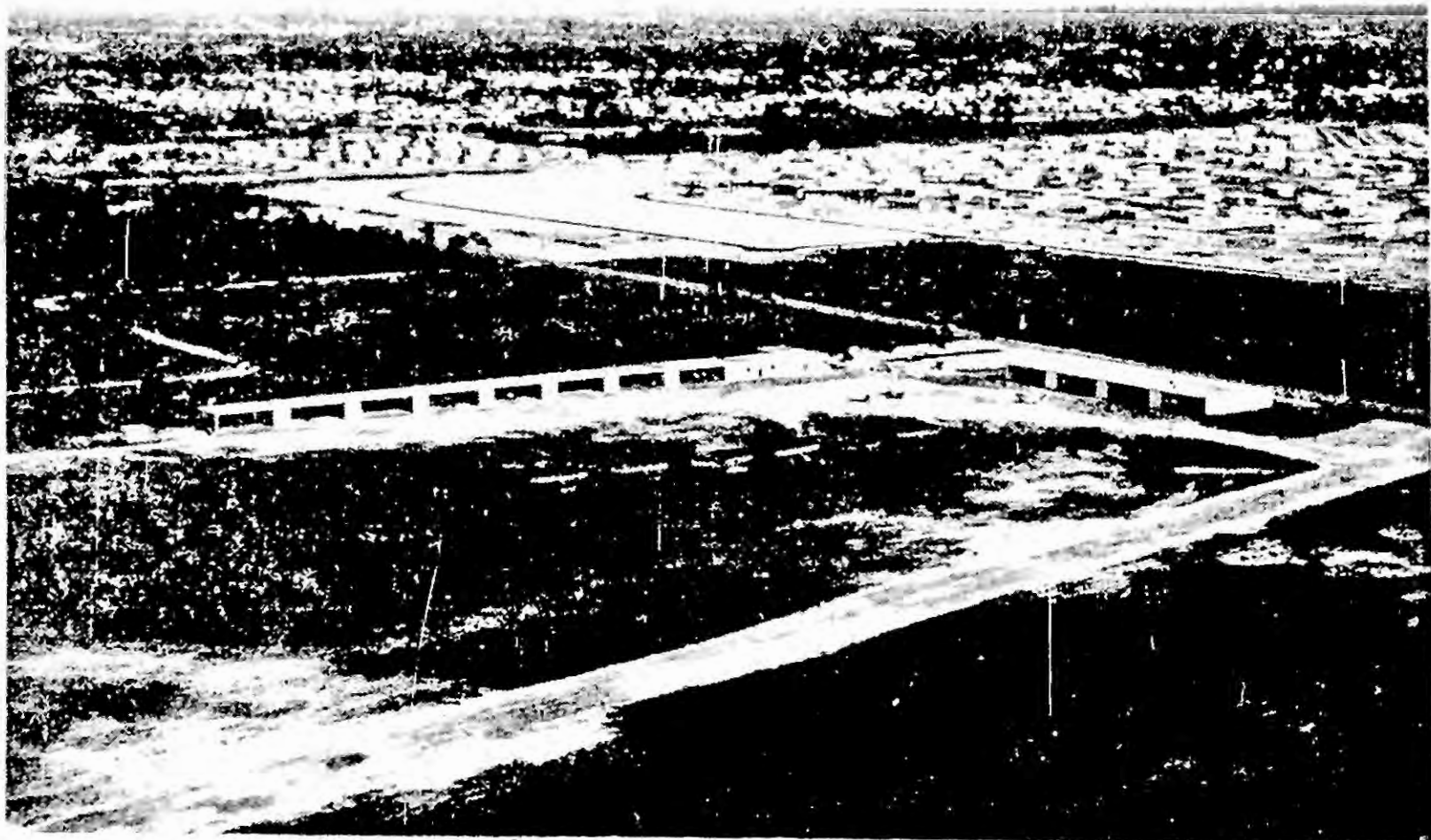
On race nights, Bradley's new runway is used as an approach to the speedway's parking lot. The field is closed to aircraft at sunset.

When Bradley first opened his airport in 1946, he named it the Broward Airport, which until six weeks ago caused confusion among pilots and the Civil Aeronautics Administration because of the county-operated Broward International Airport.

Bradley had just come down from Griffin, Ga., where he operated another airport. He noticed the name Broward on various business so he used it for his field.

"I had to have a name to put on the application to the CAA for an airport permit," he says. "I figured it was as good as any."

Two years later the county



HOMES ARE CREEPING up on Bradley Airport on NW 19th st., in Fort Lauderdale, until recently called Broward Airport. Residential developments now are within 1,000 feet

of the field. Ben R. Bradley, operator of the field says it was there before the homes and he intends to continue operating it.

took over operation of the Navy establishment at what is now Broward International Airport. Before the war that field had been named Merrill Fogg Airport for a pioneer pilot. The county named its new field Broward County Airport even though Bradley was already using the name Broward.

"The CAA wrote the county suggesting that it change the name of its field but they ignored it," Bradley says. Later, when Mackey Airlines started operating to Nassau, the county called its airport Broward International Airport.

During all this time, pilots landing at Bradley's field thought they were landing at the county airport, and vice versa. Mail frequently went to the wrong airport. This summer Bradley finally gave in and re-named his field Bradley airport.

The biggest boost his field got came with the GI training bill. His airport was one of the first in Florida to begin pilot training under the GI bill. Altogether more than 450 students took instruction leading to a private pilot's license at a cost for each student of between \$350 and \$500. Some 200 went on to get their

commercial licenses at a cost of between \$1,600 and \$2,000. Some got instrument ratings, with instruction costing up to \$490. There were two Link trainers, several planes in use and several instructors. Bradley has as many as 65 students at a time.

While all that was profitable, Bradley says he prefers his present operation — aircraft repair and maintenance, private flight instruction, airplane rental, and income from the sale of supplies and from hangar rent.

"What I'm trying to develop

is a good stable year around business with local people," he says. "Government contracts are all temporary and you can't depend on them."

He now has six people employed at the field — a full-time and a part-time flight instructor, three mechanics and a cook-waitress.

Bradley has been flying since 1932 and has logged more than 8,000 hours in the air. During the war he was a flight instructor at the University of Georgia and at Rush Field, Ga. He has flown acrobatics in air shows and has been building and repairing planes most of his adult life.

—Herald Photos by Gene Hyde



Oakland Park Blvd

Seaboard Railroad

Powerline Road

Broward Speedway

Bradley Airport



Seaboard Railway

Broward Speedway

Bradley Airport

hangars, tarmac
and office

N.W. 19th Street

Extract from "Abandoned & Little Known Airfields"
https://www.airfields-freeman.com/FL/Airfields_FL_FtLauderdale.htm#bradley

The earliest depiction which has been located of Broward Field was on the February 1947 Miami Sectional Chart.
It depicted Broward Field as having a 3,000' unpaved runway.

Broward Field was not yet depicted on the 1949 USGS topo map.



A 1949 USDA aerial view (from the [University of FL Smathers Libraries](#), courtesy of Chris Kennedy) depicted Broward Field as a simple rectangular grass field, with a cluster of a few small buildings & hangars on the southeast corner of the field.



A close-up from the 1949 USDA aerial photo (from the [University of FL Smathers Libraries](#), courtesy of Chris Kennedy) showed at least 4 planes parked on Broward Field.



The field was apparently renamed "Bradley" Field at some point between 1947-54, as that is how it was labeled on the August 1954 Miami USAF Sectional Chart (courtesy of Chris Kennedy). It had also gained a paved runway, as the Aerodromes table described the field as having 3 runways, with the longest being a 2,600' asphalt strip.

Michael Metzger recalled, "I grew up in Wilton Manors Florida just a few miles from Bradley Field & went to school with Ben Bradley Junior around 1957.

My dad had a hanger & flew out of Bradley Field & have fond memories of the airport.

Ben Bradley Senior had 2 children ... son Ben Junior & a daughter named Piper.

Ben Senior loved planes & mini race cars & he built a oval track on the airport ... clearly visible on [the photo below].

I remember hanging out the airport looking at several of Ben's mini-race cars he kept in hangars right next to planes."

Alan Reno recalled, "I have many fond memories of Bradley Field, having learned to fly there - my first lesson being on 1/17/57 with my father (Max - a pilot for Mackey Airlines) as my instructor.

We rented one of Ben Bradley's PA-18 Super Cubs. I was 17 years old & a Junior at Ft. Lauderdale High School. I soloed on 3/12/57.

On 6/7/57 I bought a Piper J-3 Cub for \$900. I took my Private Pilot flight test with 'Buzz' Price who was a flight instructor for Ben Bradley on 8/20/57.

The line boy at Bradley Field was Gary Parmateer."

Alan continued, "One day on 9/7/57 my father was sitting on the fence at the airport watching me do touch & go's and a man struck up a conversation with him & asked if I would want to fly his airplane (a PA-11 Cub) and do some aerial photography while building my flying time. This was Jim Smith of Jim Smith Aerial Photos. Of course, I jumped at the chance & I flew for him for 16 months while attending my Junior/Senior years of High School."

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A circa late 1957 / early 1958 photo by Alan Reno of Jim Smith's PA-11 on the south side of Bradley's hangars along the road, with the parking lot entrance behind the Piper's tail.

Alan Reno recalled, "Jim Smith subsequently merged with Bill Bosworth Aerial Mapping Company of Lantana.

Although he had purchased a North American T-6G (N7404C) for high altitude mapping purposes, he did not have a pilot so Jim Smith told him I could fly for him.

My first dual instruction flight in that airplane was conducted on 1/31/59 out of Bradley Field.

I passed my Commercial Pilot check ride on 2/2/59 & started flying for Bill Bosworth.

I soloed the T-6G on 2/3/59 at Bradley Field after 3:20 of dual instruction including 9 landings.

Since I lived in Ft. Lauderdale & Bill's company operated out of Lantana, he let me commute back & forth from Bradley field in the T-6.

I did not receive a salary but flying time was like gold to me & it was a great arrangement for both of us.

I have often wondered if Ben Bradley & the other guys had thoughts of, 'That 18 year old kid will kill himself flying in & out of this small airport.'

The T-6 had 10 times the horsepower that my 65 HP J-3 had, and since it was the advanced trainer used by the military during WW2, it could be a handful of airplane operating out of a narrow, paved, 1-runway, airfield."



A 1959 photo of Alan Reno in front of Bill Bosworth Aerial Photo Maps' North American T-6 Texan at Bradley Field.

Alan Reno continued, "Part of the fascination with hanging around Bradley Field was the assortment of aircraft based there.

Besides the T-6, there was a Great Lakes biplane, Mooney Mite, a Fairchild 10,

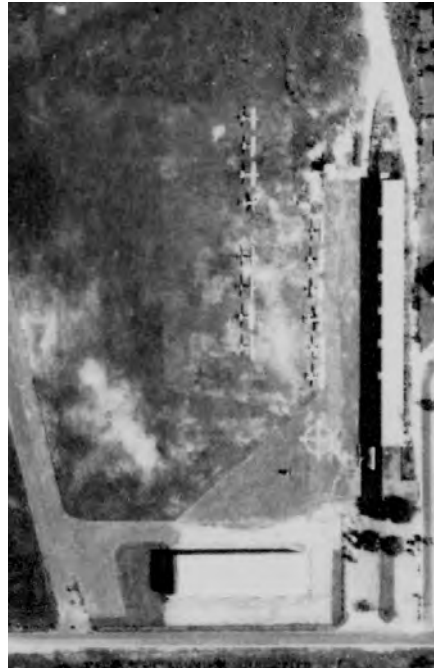
and other assorted transient types such as a clipped-wing Monocoupe, Ryan STA, PT-22, and Ben Bradley had his Grumman F3F (a rare, last-of-the biplane Navy fighters) there for a time.

On occasion, a veteran pilot would put on an aerobatic performance over the field. That was pretty heady stuff for a new teenage fledgling pilot."



A 9/20/60 aerial photo of Bradley Field (from the FL DOT, courtesy of Brian Rehwinkel).

The single paved runway was evident, as well as the 2 grass runways.



A close-up from the 9/20/60 aerial photo of Bradley Field (from the FL DOT, courtesy of Brian Rehwinkel), showing 2 hangars as well as a total of at least 14 light aircraft on the field.



The 1962 USGS topo map depicted Bradley Field as having a single paved northwest/southeast runway & a paved ramp on the east side, and 4 unpaved runways on the west side.



The last depiction which has been located of Bradley Field was on the April 1965 Miami Sectional Chart. It depicted Bradley as having a 2,600' paved northwest/southeast runway.

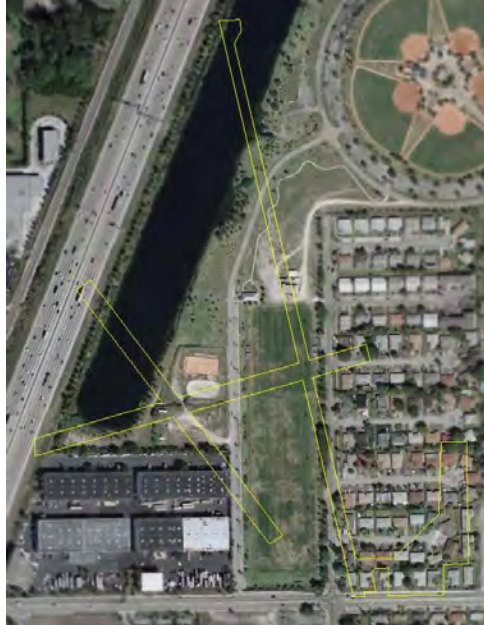
Craig Wilbur recalled, "I grew up in the Ft. Lauderdale area & remember Bradley Field, run by Ben Bradley."

Bradley Field was evidently still open on 6/26/65, when [NTSB records](#) indicated a "Watts Knight Twister" aircraft suffered a ground loop accident at the field, in which a contributing factor was noted to be the "weeds along runway 3-4' high."

Bradley Field was evidently closed (for reasons unknown) at some point within the next year, as it was labeled "Abandoned airport" on the March 1966 Miami Sectional Chart (courtesy of Chris Kennedy). A contributing factor for the closure of the airport may have been the construction of Interstate 95, which was built along the western side of the airport property.

Craig Wilbur recalled, "In 1970, I had jury duty for 'land condemnation' for the I-95 corridor, which only existed in the Miami & Jacksonville areas. At that time, very little remained [of Bradley Field]... just remnants of the old runways. The land was sold to make way for I-95. Ben & family constructed Bradley Aviation at Ft. Lauderdale Executive (FXE)."

The 1999 USGS aerial photo showed that the site of the former Bradley Field had been reused as Mills Pond Park, with a pond having been built along the northwestern side of the former former airfield. Not a trace of the former airport appeared to remain.



A 2006 aerial photo annotated by Chris Kennedy to show the outline of the runways of the former Bradley Field.

Not a trace of the former airport appears to remain.

The site of Bradley Field is located northeast of the intersection of Interstate 95 & Northwest 19th Street.

Ft. Lauderdale News, Nov 14, 1954

FT. LAUDERDALE

BRADLEY AIRPORT

N. W. 19th STREET

THURSDAY

Nov. 25



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BARNUM
&
BAILEY
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Designed by **MILES WHITE**

Music by
**JOHN
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**PAT
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Lyrics
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**E. RAY
GOETZ**

Choreography: **EDITH BARSTOW**

Aerial Director: **BARBETTE**

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Broward County Exposition

Feb. 15-16-17-18-19-20

BRADLEY AIRPORT N. W. 19th ST.

Sponsored by Robert Agee Post, 1966 — VFW

Attractive Stock Car Racing Card Set Friday

50-Lap Feature Race Tops Venice Stakes

One of the most attractive programs ever offered at the Broward Speedway will be held Friday night, April 15, in conjunction with the second Annual Festival of Venice celebration.

A fifty-lap feature race is expected to attract a field of nearly 50 top grade stock cars as the chauffeurs compete for

an enlarged purse and The Venice of America Sweepstakes Trophy.

The Speedway, located in Bradley Airport at NW 19th St., has been a popular addition to Ft. Lauderdale's sporting attractions since it first opened its gates two years ago. A speed-inducing quarter-mile asphalt track, one of the fastest ovals in South Florida, has made it a popular racing spot

for many of the area's best pilots.

Bill Murray, publicity director for the sponsoring Broward Auto Racing Club and a former stock car racer himself, announced that a total purse of nearly \$1,000 will be offered to the night's winners if attendance figures justify it.

The Speedway seats more than 3,000 people and will have

three concession stands open on the night of the Festival feature. Free parking, conducted by the Robert L. Asee Post of the local VPW, is also offered to the fans.

Local drivers led by Herb Madray, Nick Nixon and Bill Birge, will face a tough task in trying to control the lead-footed stars from the Miami area. The Dade County contingent features such big names as Harry Vernon, in car No. 57, Marion Edwards, in car No. 2, Eddie Rowell, No. 24, Red Bludock, No. 37, and Duke Sistrunk, No. 3.

Other championship threats will come from Buck Gibbs, Gene Smith, Norm McClusky, Lew McGraw and Ronnie Knight.

Thirty-five laps of 3/4 Mid-get auto racing, an amateur race and exciting preliminary events featuring the stock cars in heats, semifinal races and a consolation event are also on tap. All Speedway heats are 10-lap affairs while the semifinal and consolation races are slated for the 12 circuit distance. A hectic amateur race, pitting many of the nation's top novice drivers shooting for spots in the regular events, will be another crowd pleaser.

A spectacular fireworks display and the antics of Jasper the Jerk, world famous Speedway clown, will help to keep the crowd entertained in between races. Tickets for the action will be available at all events.



BILL BIRGE
—Local Stock Ace



STOCK CAR WINNER WAVES CHECKERED FLAG

100-Acre Airport Offered for Sale

Property Zoned for Industry

By CAROL ALMOND
Of Our Broward Bureau

FORT LAUDERDALE — A million dollar for-sale sign has been hung on 100 acres of land that once raised soybeans and now harbors the remains of Bradley Airport.

What's left of hurricane-ripped airplane hangars will be torn down within two weeks, according to the wife of the land owner.

Mrs. Morgan McJunkin, speaking for her husband who is out of town, said as yet there are no buyers for the industrially-zoned property the family hopes to dispose of for \$10,000 an acre.

Ben R. Bradley, who opened the northwest Fort Lauderdale airport 20 years ago, is moving his operation to Executive Airport here.

His lease on the old field expires June 5.

Bradley took over the land at NW 19th St. in 1946 when the only building was a wooden cornerib. Construction of a hangar and office facilities began in 1947 and by 1953, Bradley had \$135,000 invested in two hangars, a 2,800-foot hard-surface runway and a restaurant in office space at one end of the larger hangar.

Despite complaints Bradley remembers from some realtors who realized housing developments had grown to within 1,000 feet of the field, business was booming.

In 1946 there were only about 10 homes between the airport and Sunrise Boulevard, nine blocks south.

The veteran pilot, flying since 1932, served as flight instructor at the University of Georgia and Rush Field during the war, has flown acrobatics and has put in so many thousand hours of flying time he no longer logs his air mileage.

Despite the field's role in the development of Fort Lauderdale, Bradley exhibits no sign of nostalgia at leaving the torn buildings for a new city-built hangar to be readied by June.

"This place had it some time ago," he said cheerfully.

Even back in 1957 Bradley felt the airfield, already zoned for heavy industry, was too valuable to operate as an airbase.

Now, with houses encroaching to within 100 feet of the hangars, he's ready to move to quarters that can more readily accommodate his flight lessons, rentals, charters, sales and radio work.



—Herald Photo

Owner Values Bradley Airport Acreage at \$1 Million
... northwest Fort Lauderdale field opened 20 years ago

Park held up by land battle

By Dennis Kneale

Staff Writer

For want of a tiny triangle of turf, plans for a massive \$5 million city-county park have been stalled.

Since 1978, the city of Fort Lauderdale and Broward County have gradually been acquiring 115 acres of scrub land east of Interstate 95, west of Powerline Road and north of Northwest 19th Street, at a total cost of \$2.7 million.

To develop the park, the joint venture will cost the city another \$2 million and the county another \$566,000.

But officials say they need the last small piece — a fifth of an acre off Powerline Road — to make the park accessible to the thousands of people expected to use it.

The attorneys who own the triangle refuse to sell, but the county insists it will buy it. Now the two sides are locked in an increasingly bitter land struggle headed for court — at the expense of taxpayers.

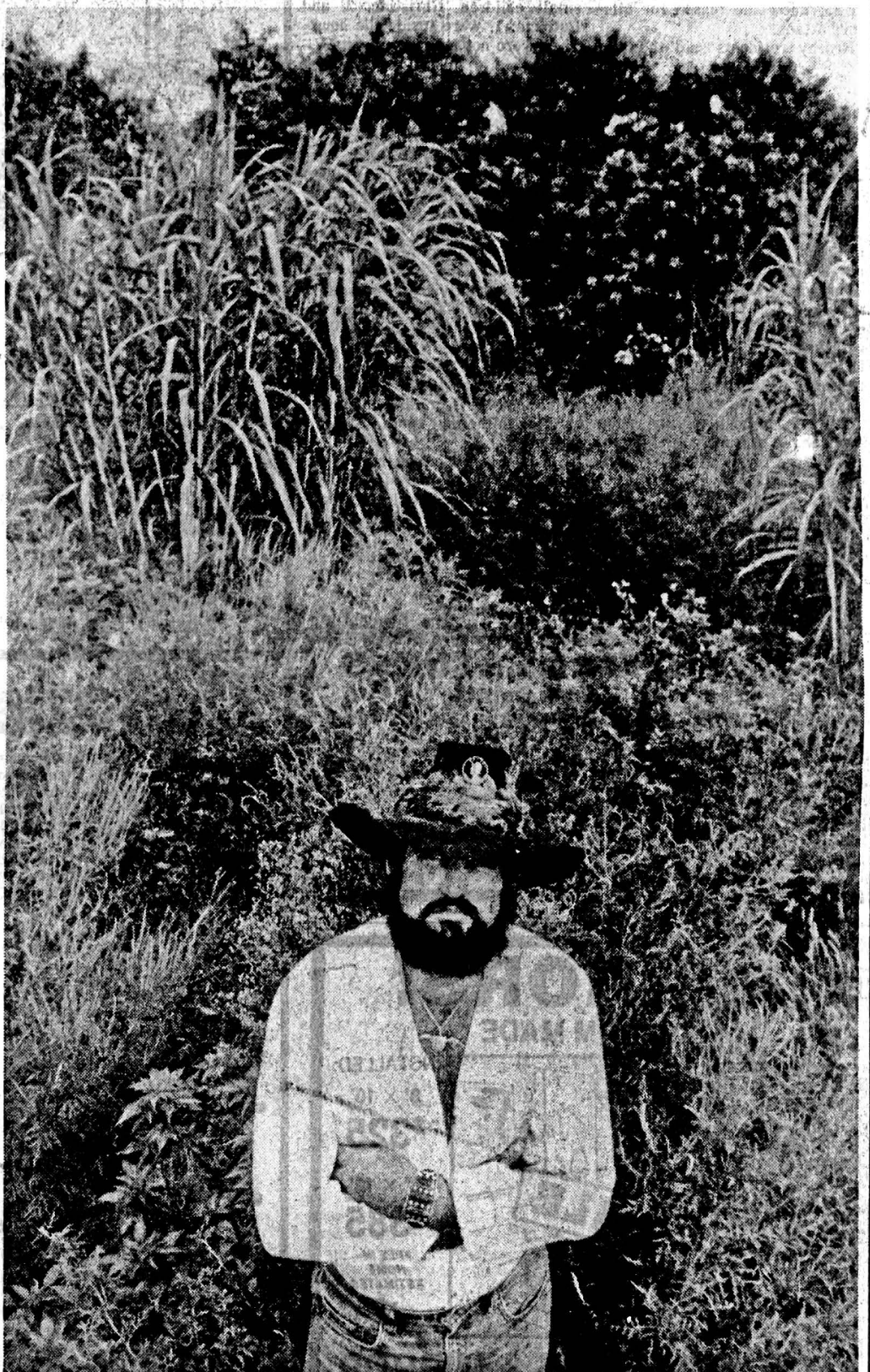
"I paid \$30,000 in cold, hard cash — I cleared that land," said H. Wesley Johnson. "If they think they're gonna steal my land from me, they're crazy."

Johnson is a determined, fast-talking, hard-working lawyer who shuns three-piece suits in favor of a dusty cowboy hat and his junk-car business.

He and his wife, June, also a lawyer, bought the triangle from another attorney in May 1980. Wesley Johnson had just finished law school. Their dream: to build a law office of their own on the tract between a canal and Powerline.

But county and city officials envision the Johnsons' land as the only entrance to the spacious recreational area.

Please turn to page 8B, column 1



Staff photo by CHRIS WALKER

H. Wesley Johnson says he plans to build offices in this lot, which the county wants for a new park.

Couple hold key to park puzzle

Continued from page 1B

"We're talking about two-tenths of an acre. I believe he bought it for the very purpose of making a profit on resale to the county," said county engineer Charles Sanzare. "He's saying he doesn't want to sell, but that's the way you do it — until the money sounds right."

Wrong, the owner said.

"I definitely would not take \$60,000," said Johnson. He pulled out the blueprints for his law office, which were drafted three months after he borrowed \$15,000 from relatives, combined it with \$15,000 in savings and bought the property.

The drawings show Johnson's vision: a two-story building of cedar, glass and concrete; seven parking spaces for clients; three large, carefully placed trees for shade.

Park officials have drawings of their own.

Aerial photographs and ink-drawn overlays propose a park that will be known as Lake Lauderdale. Two soccer fields, six baseball diamonds, some tennis and racquetball courts, ample picnic grounds and launch space for canoes and paddleboats will comprise the park. Half of it should be ready by the end of 1982, park officials estimate.

Using Johnson's land as the entrance to the entire park, Sanzare said, offers the advantage of access from a major road — Powerline. Johnson counters that there is at least one other entry point — Northwest 19th Street to 15th Avenue, which now dead-ends directly at the park site.

"We need that ingress from Powerline Road," Sanzare said. "By the volume of traffic that would be generated, to have it go through the residential area (via 15th Avenue) would be a complete disruption. We've got to go by Powerline, it's the only way."

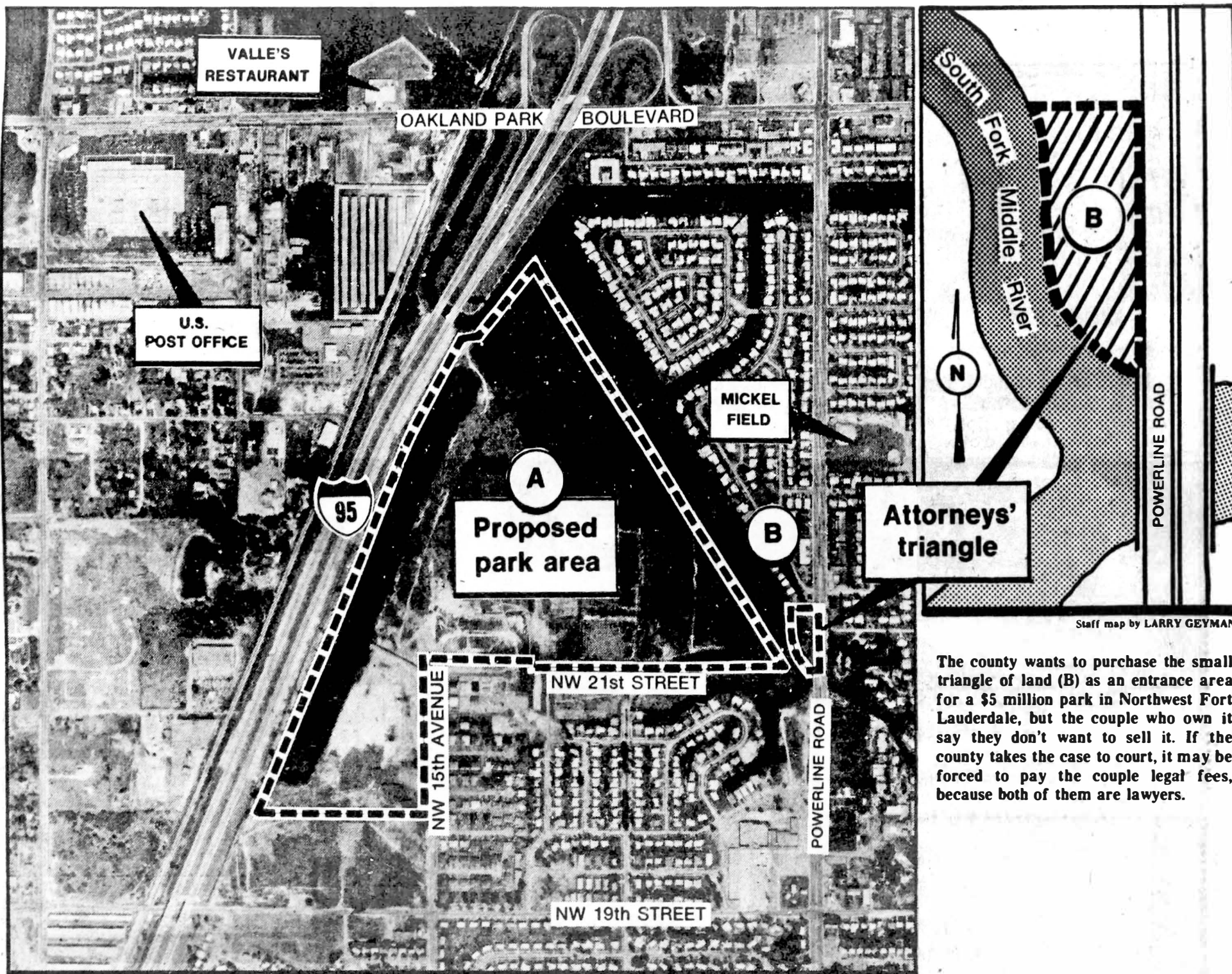
"What makes this all so unique is it's right in the middle of such a large population center. You just can't find land like that anymore," Sanzare said.

The park would also be the largest ever built near the predominantly black northwest neighborhood. "The area is low-income," Sanzare said. "You're dealing with the kind of people who don't have the means to entertain themselves. They can't afford it."

The triangle runs for about 200 feet on the west side of Powerline Road at about 23rd Street — prime frontage property, owner Johnson noted. The tract is 78 feet across at its widest point, and borders the canal for 160 feet — another attractive feature.

"It's a unique piece of property," Johnson said.

Last February, the county offered \$30,500 for the triangle — a \$3,700 loss for Johnson. Along with the \$30,000 purchase price, Johnson spent \$4,200 for the architectural



The county wants to purchase the small triangle of land (B) as an entrance area for a \$5 million park in Northwest Fort Lauderdale, but the couple who own it say they don't want to sell it. If the county takes the case to court, it may be forced to pay the couple legal fees, because both of them are lawyers.

plans and some bulldozer work.

The county upped its offer to \$33,050 in March — still a net loss of \$700 for Johnson. He refused.

"Where did these county people come from anyway? They must think I crawled out from under a rock," Johnson said.

But officials said the Johnsons are stubborn. "They never would counter-offer," said Ted Schrader, an assistant county real estate officer. "They said they'd see us in court."

"All of us hold our property subject to the right of the government to take it for the good of all," said

Arthur Burrows, the assistant county attorney who will face the Johnsons in court. Government wins most of the time, he said.

But Burrows conceded that the Johnson case differs from many disputes — making the court outcome less than a foregone conclusion.

First, Johnson is an attorney. Under Florida law, property owners who fight the condemnation process are reimbursed for all costs of the legal battle — including lawyer fees.

That means if Johnson chooses to represent himself, the county will

have to pay him between \$75 and \$125 an hour (the average range) for legal work, Burrows said. "That's a very interesting point," he said.

The point hasn't escaped Johnson.

"See, if it turns out to be a long case, it could run \$30,000 just in legal fees," Johnson said. "That goes into my pocket if I represent myself."

For decades the parcel was never recorded in official land files. The first mention of it came 11 years ago: "a portion of tract a, unrecorded." Then owner Union Oil

Co. of California sold it to a local land company for \$5,000.

In 1978, Fort Lauderdale officials had an opportunity to buy the triangle — and didn't. They were in the process of acquiring 78 acres for \$1.7 million from Realtor Richard Geisinger and his partner, lawyer John E. Morris Jr. of Fort Lauderdale.

Morris and Geisinger owned the triangle at the time, and wanted \$45,000 for it. But the city didn't buy it because another parcel separated it from the acreage, Geisinger said. When the middle parcel was finally purchased this year, the

attorneys' triangle came into the picture, he said.

Most eminent domain battles never get this far, said Burrows, who hopes to have the case heard before the end of the year. More than 65 percent are settled before any court threat, and half the court cases end up being settled before a jury is asked to make a decision.

Johnson vowed to fight all the way.

"Had they come to me nicely in the beginning they probably could have worked something out," he said. "But they told me I couldn't win. That's it — right there"

Plans are taking shape for new lakeside park

By Ellen Stein
Staff Writer

Motorists driving north on Interstate 95 just before the Oakland Park Boulevard exit can see the piles of dirt and the narrow canal.

That's the home of Fort Lauderdale's newest park.

It doesn't look like much now, recreation officials admit. Nor has the fallow farmland looked like very much since the city and Broward County began acquiring the land in 1977.

But plans for development of the 125-acre Lake Lauderdale Park on property that was shared by a farm and the former Bradley Airport are finally within a realistic grasp.

City commissioners in April agreed to a joint contract with Broward County to begin to mold the land into a park that will include everything from nature trails to modern sports facilities.

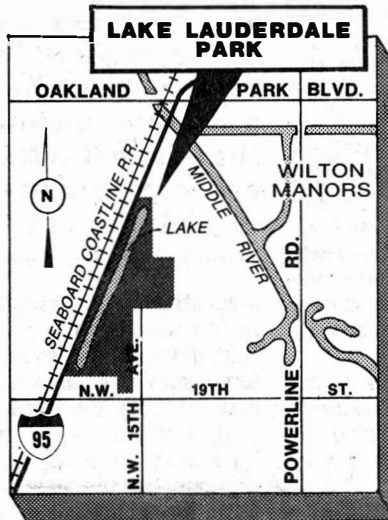
The pact now only has to be approved by Broward County commissioners. And that could occur as soon as Tuesday, a county parks official said. That would signal the development at a triangle of land within the boundaries of Northwest 19th Street on the south, I-95 on the west and the south fork of the Middle River on the east.

"It has been a long time in the running, but I think it worked out well," said Jamie Hart, the manager of Snyder Park and one of the city's Parks and Recreation Department officials working on Lake Lauderdale plans.

"Money was a major obstacle," Hart said.

The city never had the estimated \$7 million to \$10 million needed to develop its 85-acre portion of the park that it purchased for \$1.7 million in 1978.

Now an agreement for the Broward County government to contribute \$1.3 million to begin development of the park is being reviewed by the county's planners and legal staff.



Staff map

Map shows location of planned lakeside park.

In turn, the city has agreed to open the park to countywide public use and develop the remainder of the park.

The county's money, which includes about \$800,000 from a 1978 bond issue, would be used to build an entrance station, roads, electrical amenities and parking.

The county also would contribute another \$550,000 granted by the state's Department of Environmental Resources to develop 41 acres the county purchased adjacent to the city's portion of Lake Lauderdale for about \$1.1 million.

The county's land would consist primarily of a nature reserve. Plans call for about 2,000 feet of nature walks, a small classroom for nature exhibits and picnic areas.

"It's a real good venture from the city and county cooperative efforts," said Jim Clark, superintendent for planning and design for the county's Parks and Recreation Department. "We think it's in the best interest of the public to have one operator. They [Fort Lauderdale]

needed it for active sports, and we wanted to preserve it for our resources."

But while the county has the money to develop its portion of the park, the city's financial picture has not changed, Hart said.

Plans are on the shelf that call for at least six softball, baseball and soccer fields, a motocross bike-racing area and boating facilities. But a way to finance this portion of the development still has not been determined.

But the park's targeted opening date of June 1987 may provide the key for the city to carry out its development plans.

"It would open the park for activities such as concerts, mini-carnivals and events where we could generate revenue to proceed with other development such as ballfields and swimming," Hart said. "The key to the whole development of the park is the county's cooperation, and money, which is what we've lacked since 1978."

According to Hart, it will be the park that creativity built.

"I find it challenging. If someone gave me \$10 million it would be easy," Hart said. "You have to work with the resources you have."

Development of some of the sports fields will come from revenues raised when the park opens. But a major sports complex geared for adult softball leagues may depend on the success the city has striking yet another agreement.

"Since we don't have the funds for a softball complex, the second phase could be leased to a private developer," Hart said. "There would be no other facility like it around. It would have a restaurant, capabilities for social activities, almost as though it were a club for adult softball leagues. Private agencies can provide the funds for quality recreational facilities."

WHY THE JOHNSON PROPERTY IS A JEWEL (AND LET'S PRESERVE THE WINTER HOME OF THE GREAT GREY HERON)

By Vice Mayor Gary Resnick

On the west side of Powerline Ave, at the south tip of Wilton Manors, there is a small parcel of property known as the Johnson Property. This property is located just south of a convenience store. The majority of the City Council agreed with the City Manager's recommendation and voted recently to acquire this property – by eminent domain if necessary. We offered \$90,000 for the property. While the property is not very large – only about one-half acre – it is integral to my vision for the future of our parks and our City, and will truly be a beautiful addition.

There are three reasons Johnson is so key. First and foremost, Johnson offers access to our waterways. The back of Johnson is on the North Fork of the Middle River, the western border of our City. In fact, we use the Johnson Property now as a canoe launch for our annual boat race. The waterway there is particularly scenic, and is home to numerous birds and wildlife, including a particularly loud Great Grey Heron that I have come to know over the years. This real "snowbird" makes its home here from December to May every year and probably began "wintering" in Wilton Manors long before many of us lived here. I truly look forward to seeing this magnificent bird every winter – it provides continuity and stability in the otherwise rapidly changing Florida landscape. In recognition of the importance of preserving this waterway, Broward Urban River Trails identified the North Fork of the Middle River as eligible for grants for beautification.

The second reason Johnson is so important is that it is in an area that needs the City's help. Many of the homeowners in and around Powerline have done a great job fixing up their homes and adding attractive landscaping, but with some neglected business and apartment buildings, this area is one of the City's most challenging. By taking over the Johnson Property, the City would protect it from further commercial development (the property is actually zoned commercial) and beautify an otherwise neglected area of Powerline. Because the owners pay relatively little property taxes (less than \$400/year), we would not be losing signifi-

cant revenue.

Johnson is also important because the property sits on the southwest border of Wilton Manors. One of my goals that actually came out of the visioning workshops several years ago is to create attractive entranceways to the City. The Johnson Property would allow us to create a beautiful entranceway, along the same theme of the other entrances to the City, so that visitors and residents alike would realize that they were in Wilton Manors.

As the "Island City," what makes our City's recreation areas so unique and particularly inviting is the water. (After all, Weston and Sunrise can't offer parks



with canoe access.) Colohatchee Park, on the east of the City, with its frequently used boat ramp just received a face lift. The majority of the Council approved the new boardwalk there specifically to provide a view of the River. With the opening of Donn Eisele Park off NW 29th Street, we now offer another park with a boat ramp for access to the River. The Johnson Property would further integrate our parks and the waterway, moving us further toward my vision of a park system that offers walking

and water trails around the entire City, something to truly celebrate.

The Johnson Property would add a gem to our park redevelopment. Of course, we would be using bond funds (Johnson was listed in the referendum among the parcels we would seek to acquire and was listed as a priority because of its water access), and the City will seek to obtain County and other funding that may be available.

If you have any questions about this issue, or about any other issues in the City, please do not hesitate to contact me.

As always, thank you for your input and support.

Lake Lauderdale: Will it survive?



Staff map

Map shows proposed park site.

By Andrew Froman
Staff Writer

FORT LAUDERDALE — The dream hasn't died yet, although it has withered since its robust birth five years ago.

The dream is an ambitious plan to carve a multifacility recreational park from 85 acres of fallow farmland in the city's northwest corner.

City officials agree the plan needs money to survive. They just can't afford the \$7 million to \$10 million bill.

"When you're in the position of having to cut back the police budget," said Mayor Robert Dressler, "you're not likely to have any funds to invest in a new project such as a park."

"It's probably going to take an extraordinary fund-raising effort to do

something with that park, sometime down the road," said city Parks and Recreation Director Thomas Tapp. "The city right now has no funds to do any work."

The city has never had any money to develop Lake Lauderdale Park on the property purchased for \$1.7 million in January 1978. It is located on a triangle of land within the boundaries of Northwest 19th Street on the south, Interstate 95 on the west and the south fork of the Middle River on the east.

City officials hope to reach an agreement with county officials to resurrect the park development in a joint venture.

"Getting the land was our number one priority," said Floyd Hull, a private attorney and member of the city's Parks Advisory Board. "Back when we acquired this

property we were more concerned with acquisition, and hopeful that maybe later the ways and means would be found to develop it."

The intent was to build a combined active and passive park, a recreational haven that could satisfy active athletes and passive nature lovers.

The park would relieve strained athletic facilities at the city's largest park — 86.5-acre Holiday Park on East Sunrise Boulevard — while also establishing for the first time a fresh-water lake for swimming, sailing and canoeing.

Besides the lake, there would be nature trails, a sophisticated four-field tournament softball complex, a children's playground, soccer fields, an outdoor bandshell, lighted tennis courts, basketball courts, racquetball

courts, football fields and a running track.

Those detailed development plans are still sitting on a shelf.

The park site now contains only piles of dirt, higher piles of rubbish, old tires and an unpaved roadway, scratched from the scrub brush by U.S. Army reservists on weekend training maneuvers last fall.

A city sign posted at the lone entrance, obscured by overgrown weeds, warns people against trespassing and dumping trash. The broken fence gate and festering pile of garbage indicate the sign, and enforcement of its warning, are ignored.

Hard times, in the form of an expected \$8 million city budget deficit next year, officials said, prohibit them from taking the plans off the shelf.

Please see PARK, 5B

Fort Lauderdale News, Monday, May 16, 1983

HF 5B

Park

Continued from page 1B

"I cannot give you very specific information on our development plans," wrote City Manager Connie Hoffmann to County Administrator Floyd Johnson April 1, responding to Johnson's inquiry about city plans.

"No one knows better than you that the difficulties of balancing a local government budget are here to stay. For that reason, I really cannot tell you when and how we will develop that park."

City commissioners last summer discussed selling the land rather than developing it. Parks Advisory Board members talked them out of that idea.

Desperate for a solution, city officials are considering a joint development effort with the county, despite a historical pattern of poor coordination between the two governments.

The county in 1981 purchased 35 acres of 57 acres it wants on the eastern half of the same tract of land. It still has \$519,000 with which to begin developing its share of the park within the next year. The money would be used to build a bridge from Powerline Road spanning the Middle River to serve as the park's main entrance, some landscaping and picnic areas.

"We are going to go ahead and put in the bridge, the infrastructure, the picnic area," said county parks

"When you're in the position of having to cut back the police budget you're not likely to have any funds to invest in a new project such as a park."

— Mayor Robert Dressler

director Gary Bliss. "Time will tell if Fort Lauderdale will come in with us."

Parks and Recreation Director Tapp acknowledges the city certainly needs a new park. There are not enough parks presently to meet demand, he said, and their equipment has deteriorated with time and excessive use.

The city's financial crisis, Tapp added, makes him realize he has but one choice for spending the money he has.

"There are a lot of playgrounds throughout the community that are over 30 years old, that need to be taken out and replaced with newer, safer equipment," he said.

Sun-Sentinel

Metropolitan

Thursday, July 19, 1984

B

Apprentices give Lauderdale park a cleanup

By Helen Rojas
Staff Writer

FORT LAUDERDALE — Long abused as an illegal dumping ground, the city's Lake Lauderdale park is getting a free cleanup-and-clearing crew.

Forty-two apprentices in a program for heavy-equipment-operating engineers spend eight hours on Saturdays in the undeveloped park clearing land, digging a manmade lake and getting rid of hundreds of pounds of discarded concrete and trash.

In exchange, the students, between 18 and 35 years old, get valuable on-the-job training, said Bob Evans, assistant director of the apprenticeship program for the Union of Operating Engineers Local 675.

One class of students has been working in the park since March, Evans said. A new class will be added this week.

"It really helps everybody out," Evans said. "What we get is a place to train our people. And I think it's going to be a real nice city park."

Ownership of Lake Lauderdale, just east of Interstate 95 on Northwest 15th Avenue at a point north of Northwest 19th Street, has been shared by the city and Broward County since the late 1970s. But although the county was willing to

develop its 40 acres, the city couldn't afford to develop its own 100 acres, said Tom Tapp, the city's parks and recreation director.

As the park lay unused, Tapp said, residents began to dump trash, concrete and wood on the overgrown property, once called Bradley Park but never developed for recreation.

When union officials approached the city about volunteer labor, Tapp eagerly accepted.

"It's probably been the key for us to save this park for the people," Tapp said. "I was afraid we'd just end up with a dump there."

Two groups of apprentice operators alternate Saturdays and spend all day learning how to operate machines such as cranes, graders and loaders. The men and women also spend two nights a week in a classroom, with salaries for instructors subsidized by the union and the vocational department of the Broward County school system.

At the park, students experience the rigors of heavy construction work and weather conditions, including the relentless summer heat.

"They're going to get the full effect of the construction jobs they'll work one day and the weather conditions they'll work under," Evans said. "You can't teach these machines in the classroom."

The school system also pays for the

equipment and the union pays mechanics to maintain the mammoth machines. A concrete company, Lone Star of Fort Lauderdale, donated material to build a maintenance shop in the park.

Evans said each student spends three years in the program and must pass competency tests on three construction machines. After graduation, each new operating engineer can expect to earn between \$25,000 and \$30,000 a year, Evans said.

The placement rate for Broward graduates — usually about 25 a year — is 100 percent, said Carl Miller, curriculum supervisor for industrial education for the school system.

"When they get out, they get jobs," Miller said. Evans said he thinks it will take five to seven years of Saturday labor to clear land in the park for five baseball diamonds, extend the existing lake for waterskiing exhibitions and lay fill for picnic areas and nature trails.

The only use of the park so far has been practice sessions for the Gold Coast Ski Club. Tapp said he expects the club to make public performances soon.

Tapp said he hopes to raise money to speed development of the park. Eventually soccer fields, more baseball diamonds and running and bicycle trails at Lake Lauderdale will be devel-



Staff photo by JOANN VITELLI

Apprentices work for free at the Lake Lauderdale park project.