

## Jesse Owens Park funds

Money for the Jesse Owens Park came from a variety of sources. Those include private, corporate and government funds. Owners gave to the park through donating materials and their time. Most private and corporate contributions came from the area. The following is an incomplete list of donors, what they gave and where it went.

### Corporate and private donations:

- ▶ Coca-Cola, \$15,000
- ▶ BellSouth, \$7,500, landscaping
- ▶ Champion International, \$3,500

plane tickets, hotels for Owens family

- ▶ Bankfirst \$1,700
- ▶ Barrett Shelton Jr., publisher of THE DECATUR DAILY, welcome center

▶ Wymon and Ann Warren, rock for welcome center

▶ Thurston Hill, rocks for welcome center

▶ Hoover Industries of Decatur, 1 truck loads of gravel, parking lots

▶ Stanley Construction, labor to pave parking lots

▶ Joe Wheeler Electric Member-

ship Corp., utilities

▶ West Morgan-East Lawrence Water Authority, water service

### Public funds:

- ▶ Tennessee Valley Authority, \$500,000
- ▶ Housing and Urban Development, \$250,000
- ▶ Land and water grant, \$80,000
- ▶ Appalachian Regional Commission, \$80,000
- ▶ State of Alabama, \$30,000
- ▶ Forestry Commission, \$20,000
- ▶ Alabama Council of the Arts, \$5,000

the finish line, most of their dream is real. The missing parts will be the track to be built this fall, and the museum, which will be built by June 29 but won't open until spring. A bronze sculpture of Owens and an 1936 Olympic torch replica are coming from Birmingham, but the sculptor won't say when.

Much of the \$15 million park is coming together in the final days. The park is crawling with construction crews and volunteer workers. "Right down to the wire, that's what it is," White said.

Construction crews building the museum and the Olympic stage top to meet the deadline. Volunteers thought the wood frame Owens' replica house was done, but returned to make it wheelchair accessible.

Sodding and landscaping will be completed in the final stretch. White and Pinion are there daily, laying sod alongside county jail inmates and cursing the weather when it slows them.

Pinion said if it rains again, the ground will be too wet to prepare it for sod. That could mean red clay for visitors, said Pinion, who knows that "the weather conditions can kill us."

Besides weather, building a park largely with grants slowed their stride. Paperwork had to be done, conditions met, bids let. "We were ready but we couldn't spend the money," he said.

But when the money was available, spending it was no easy task either.

"That's when the headaches start," he said. "If you think a husband and wife can build a house and have a marriage when it's over, think about building a park. There are so many aspects to think about."

Pinion and White said they also had to deal with people who wanted to tell them how to spend the money. "After we got the money, we suddenly became dumb and they became intelligent," White said.

But the men are proud of the progress.

"The good has outweighed the bad and we can prove it because the park is nearly finished and we've done something right or we wouldn't have gotten this far."

Pinion said he got grant money and raised money from corporate and private donations after the torch run was routed through Oakville. To get the money he told people that Lawrence County was inviting the world to Oakville and

although he had a plan for the park, all they had to show for it was a pasture.

"When we knew the torch was coming, it put pressure on all of us," Pinion said. "We had to quit chasing the dream and make it reality."

To keep the dream alive, Pinion started eight months ago talking to two to three "major" corporations about sponsoring an Auburn demonstration project on managing the park its first year. After that, the county — through the park board, which Pinion, White and Buchanan

are members — would have to hire a manager to promote the park and raise the \$65,000 needed annually to maintain and operate it.

The United Way has offered \$7,500 for the first year and White and Pinion are full of ideas on how to get the rest.

They hope for continued support from the state legislative delegation and the commission. They expect other money to come from the state tourism bureau, corporate sponsors and fund-raisers, from black tie events to golf tournaments. Park concessions and athletic events also

could generate funds.

"We will have to bring in our own resources," Pinion said. "We can't sit back and depend on people coming in and giving to us. We have to earn our own money."

After putting their own time and money into the park and "chasing the dream" for five years, the men say they won't let it get away.

"This is a showcase," White said. "We want to keep it that way."

Pinion said continued funding for the park will be another challenge. "But we like a challenge."



DAILY Photo by Gary Costly Jr.

J.C. Morris and Richard Tully apply marble sheets to form the base for the statue of Jesse Owens.

# Racing the clock

## Each day counts in finishing Owens park



DAILY Photo by John Goodbey

Therman White levels the shoulder of the road leading into the Jesse Owens Visitors Center at Oakville.

### By Lesley Farrey Pacey DAILY Staff Writer

OAKVILLE — It's about a week before the Jesse Owens Memorial Park opening and James Pinion, sweating in the mudday sun, has discovered another glitch in his plan.

Gravel trucks outside the park can't enter because construction crews are pouring tar on the only entrance. The road paving and the gravel for a parking lot mean progress, but happening together they spell "new problem" for the park project coordinator.

"It'll be glad when this is over," said Pinion, in frustration.

Pinion, who for five years has headed up the park project, didn't plan this way.

"I had in the plan that in June, I would sit back and wait for the

torch to arrive," he said laughing. "I would be enjoying myself."

But building a memorial park to Owens, the son of a Lawrence County sharecropper who crushed Adolf Hitler's myth of Aryan supremacy when he won four gold medals in the 1936 Berlin Olympics, has been harder than he expected.

Pinion "didn't have a dime" for the park until he and fellow Auburn Extension Service county agent Henry Buchanan convinced Olympic officials two years ago to reroute the Olympic torch through here June 29. Since then, turning a 175-acre pasture into a tribute to Owens in just two years has been an exhaustive race.

And as he and park committee chairman Therman White near

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