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Dark matter pioneer Vera Rubin, 88, dies
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Obama makes final tribute to U.S. troops on Christmas

At Hawaii base he addressed a few hundred troops with their families

By Josh Lederman
Associated Press

KANEHOE BAY, HAWAII | For eight years, Barack Obama has led a military fighting in multiple theaters overseas, becoming the only president in U.S. history to serve full two terms with the nation at war. On Sunday, he sought to pay tribute to the men and women who sacrificed along the way in battles that will continue even after his presidency comes to a close.

There was a tinge of nostalgia as Obama visited U.S. troops on Christmas for the last time, and some solemnity, too. The president, who spent Christmas Eve calling troops serving overseas, pointed out that as Americans celebrate the holidays, U.S. troops are serving in dangerous, remote places like Iraq and Afghanistan.

He said some were carrying out missions against the Islamic State group even on Christmas Day.

"As tough as it is to be deployed, the people here in America, back home, understand that every single day you serve, you're fighting for our freedom," the president said, with first lady Michelle Obama at his side.

OBAMA continues on A-3



President Barack Obama, joined by first lady Michelle Obama, speaks at Marine Corps Base Hawaii, in Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii, Sunday. (Carolyn Kaster/Associated Press)

Over time, the city's 1960s purchase of Hanna Park has proven to be a smart move considering today's push for development

SMALL GIFT, BIG IMPACT



Gerald Dake was a consultant to the city and helped plan the project to build Hanna Park. He got out Dec. 9 to the city-operated park near Mayport. (Will Dickey/Florida Times-Union)

By Matt Soergel
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It was a small gift, almost 50 years ago, one that led to something so much bigger — something that, once gone, could never have been brought back.

In 1967, Jacksonville investor Winthrop Bancroft offered the state 5 acres in what was then Seminole Beach, between Mayport Naval Station to the north and Atlantic Beach to the south. His land was lush, with high dunes overlooking its 480 feet of oceanfront.

He asked for just two conditions — that his 5 acres be used as a park and that it be named for Kathryn Abbey Hanna, who had died earlier that year.

While she had no direct ties to Jacksonville, she was an advocate of preserving wild places, a professor

and historian who had written two books on Florida, among other subjects. She, like Bancroft, had been chair of the state's Board of Parks and Historical Places.

The state readily accepted the land, though it was deemed too small to be a Florida park.

Jacksonville, which in the next year grew massively as the city and county consolidated into one, took it from there.

The city began getting federal and state funds and putting in matching money toward buying more property near Bancroft's land. Plans were big, ambitious.

After all, if there was ever time for a newly minted Bold New City of the South to get a big chunk of oceanfront land, this was it.

THE WILD WEST

There wasn't much in Seminole

Beach in the late 1960s. A few houses, a set of tourist cottages and a section of Seminole Road that led to the back entrance of the Navy base. Its chief attraction was a strip of sand and dunes where surfers and revelers drove cars on the beach, while acre after acre of woods just inland were there for exploration.

Dick Rosborough, a surfboard shaper, grew up in Atlantic Beach and was among those who headed north for waves and fun. "When it was at its peak, you could build fires on the beach. In the summertime there would be a car with coolers and music, and you walk another 10 feet and there's another car, with chicks. It was a party. It was pretty Wild, Wild West."

Not everyone was happy about the city takeover of the land: A developer

HANNA continues on A-3

Pollution from lab mice unnerves neighbors

Animal carcasses at Dartmouth site might have tainted ground water

By Michael Casey
Associated Press

HANOVER, N.H. | Neighbors of Dartmouth College property where for years the Ivy League school disposed of mice and other small animals used in science experiments say they fear pollution from the site has contaminated their groundwater and they worry the school hasn't been completely up front with them.

The site has contaminat-

ed the well water of at least one family, that of Richard and Debbie Higgins, who blame a variety of health problems on it, including rashes, hair and skin loss and dizziness. Even their dogs were not spared, they say, with one urinating blood and another vomiting.

"We have been drinking the water for years and we had no idea, absolutely no idea," Debbie Higgins said.

LAB continues on A-3



Debbie and Richard Higgins, whose well water has been contaminated, look at a map on their kitchen table in Hanover, N.H., which shows where the contamination has spread. (Michael Casey/Associated Press)

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DAILY DEAL!

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OBAMA

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Obama has made it a tradition to spend some time on Christmas at Marine Corps Base Hawaii, not far from the rented house that he and his family have made their winter home away from home. As Obama spoke, a few hundred troops sat around tables in uniforms, many with their families, in a mess hall hosting their

Christmas meal.

"I just want all of you to know that it has been the privilege of my life to serve as your commander in chief," Obama said.

He said even though he wouldn't be addressing them again as president, he wanted to convey that as a private citizen, "my gratitude to you will remain." He said his wife felt the same way.

"Our commitment to standing by you every step of the way — that won't

stop," Obama said.

Obama ran for president eight years ago as an opponent of the war in Iraq, then inherited conflicts there and in Afghanistan. Though he declared the end of the U.S. combat missions in both countries and drastically ramped down U.S. involvement in those conflicts, some 8,400 troops remain in Afghanistan and 5,000 in Iraq.

He leaves office in January with the U.S. military

also fighting in Yemen, Syria, Somalia and Libya. The brutal civil war in Syria shows no signs of ebbing.

Yet as he bade farewell to troops in Hawaii, Obama ended on a lighter note, pointing out that it might not be his final goodbye.

"I understand that I still have a little bit of rank as ex-president," Obama said. "So I still get to use the gym on base and, of course, the golf course."

CANDIDATE

Continued from A-1

say, of President Barack Obama, who defeated Clinton in the Democratic primaries in 2008 in part because he appealed to voters' desire for change.

"You can't get those qualifications, get that resume, while also being able to present yourself as a change candidate," said Kelly Dittmar, an assistant professor of political science at Rutgers University-Camden and a scholar at Rutgers' Center for American Women and Politics.

"Men aren't held to the same standard of proving their credentials."

Clinton's experience won her plaudits from voters who throughout the campaign saw her as best prepared to assume the presidency. That may have helped her win the popular vote, but she lost the electoral college to a man who had never before run for elective office or served in government.

Most damaging, she was unable to fully benefit from the advantages that usually flow to a woman candidate — being seen by voters as more honest, trustworthy and both a unifier and the one who most cares about constituents' concerns.

That has left a puzzle: How much of the loss reflected



Clinton

Clinton's particular vulnerabilities, how much involved opposition that any future woman candidate may face?

Unquestionably, Clinton faced unique problems: her decision as secretary of state to use a private email server, which led to extended controversies; media coverage of separate Democratic emails now believed to have been hacked by Russian operatives; and a relentless line of assault casting her as corrupt, first by primary challenger Bernie Sanders and later by Donald Trump.

She also faced a unique opponent, Trump, whose image of swashbuckling masculinity shaped the campaign more than any of Clinton's milder efforts to use gender to her advantage.

Clinton's supporters have been left counting smaller victories, like the fact that she won more votes than any candidate ever, apart from Obama.

They are also casting Clinton's reach for history as part of a decades-long effort that, by definition, includes stumbles.

"It's been a struggle, it's always been a struggle — that's the nature of the fight for equality," said Sen. Barbara Boxer, the California Democrat who was elected in 1992, a year when the number of women senators tripled.

"The fact that we got to have first woman nominee of a major party is an enormous breakthrough, and we'll build on that," she said.

But others suggest that this year's campaign portends trouble for whichever women come next.

At a recent panel discussion at Harvard's Institute of Politics, which included representatives from both campaigns, Trump's manager, Kellyanne Conway, argued that the country was ready to elect a woman president — just not this particular woman in a year in which voters demanded change.

"On gender, it wasn't a

hypothetical," she said of voters' options. "It was Hillary. So it's not just a woman; it's one that people had lived with for quite a while."

That drew a pained response from Clinton's media strategist, Mandy Grunwald, who suggested that Clinton had rare standing to be seen as a potential commander in chief, given her tenure as secretary of state, U.S. senator from New York and as a first lady deeply involved in policy matters.

"You may think the country is ready for a woman, any old woman, just a different one. There are very few people who will ever meet that test," Grunwald said.

Clinton's campaign was a real-world test that shined a bright light at some of the downsides of women's candidacies.

The degree of punishment she took from voters concerned about perceived ethical lapses was one of those. Throughout the campaign, prompted by broadsides from Sanders and Trump, voters were sharply critical of Clinton when it came to honesty and truthfulness.

The virulence of their sentiments suggested that women, usually held in high regard on those fronts, suffer more than male candidates when seen as not meeting that standard.

For women candidates, "that fall from the pedestal may be longer and harder," said Dittmar.

Clinton's perceived ethical difficulties, she noted, took more of a toll than Trump's arguably larger constellation of problems, which included repetitive falsehoods, wrongdoing by his foundation, tax issues and the fraud case leveled against Trump University.

"One reason could be that we expected it," she said. "We expect that men have those issues."

And while Clinton benefited to some extent from the prospect of being a historic first, Trump successfully made gender arguments of his own.

He made gender-based gibes at Clinton throughout his campaign, much as he had sought to diminish his primary opponents by mocking their height or lack of combativeness or, in the case of Republican candidate Carly Fiorina, her looks.

He talked tough, invoking the specter of violence, repeatedly and on a range of issues. His official health report listed his testosterone level, an atypical disclosure that stood out given the lack of detail he released on other health questions. His campaign did nothing to push back against vulgar references to women on T-shirts and campaign buttons at his events.

Whatever the motive for that style, it appealed to concerns that many voters still have about a woman commander in chief and women's role in society.

An April poll by PRRI/The Atlantic asked whether Americans felt society "has become too soft and feminine." Two in five voters said yes; among Trump supporters, 68 percent agreed.

In response to another question, two in five voters said society was better off when men and women hewed to traditional gender roles.

In October another PRRI/The Atlantic poll showed 56 percent of Americans believed society "seems to punish men just for acting like men."

Sentiments like that serve as a negative starting point for the next high-level candidacies by women.



Beachgoers crowd Hanna Park in the summer of 1974, before driving was banned on the sand. This was a crowded Hanna Park beach on a Sunday on June 30, 1974. (Lou Egner/Times-Union File photo)

HANNA

Continued from A-1

complained to the city commission of Atlantic Beach that little oceanfront land was left to be built upon, "and we need no more invasion of public ownership." Some real-estate people warned that the new park may become "a haven for undesirables."

The city also had to deal with the Navy, for whom the park would mean the closing of its back gate, a route that about one in 10 sailors took.

But the city plowed ahead with its plans, and within a couple years had accumulated 450 acres — 90 times the size of Bancroft's original gift. That included 1½ miles of almost virgin oceanfront.

Kathryn Abbey Hanna Park was on its way to becoming reality.

Jake Godbold, who went on to be mayor of Jacksonville, was on the City Council in those post-consolidation days. He says he wasn't a big part of the push for Hanna, but he remembers the excitement in the city government for the project. And why not?

"Who in the world has a park on the beach, with that much land?" he says.

The place is a jewel, says Gerald Dake, a land developer whose firm was hired by the city to design Hanna Park.

"No other city's got something that big, that nice," he says. "Not on the Florida coast, not on the East Coast. It's marvelous. It's very unusual to have that rural a natural area in an urban setting. It's kind of like Central Park in New York."

Site preparation at Hanna didn't begin until 1971, after the city had spent about \$3 million on getting the property. With few facilities, the park still had a freewheeling atmosphere, with crowds of cars on the beach and reports of fights and boozing.

"There are absolutely no restrictions as to drinking, camping or using the beach at any time," said a police captain, who estimated that at least 60 percent of young people he saw there were drinking beer.

By the summer of 1974,

the toll entrance (it cost a quarter to get in) was opened. That was credited with making for smaller and less unruly crowds, and more families. Driving on the beach was later eliminated as well.

Mayor Hans Tanzler, a big proponent of the beach park, held a seafood cook-out there that year, praising those behind the effort. Yet he noted that it had faced some criticism. All told, the city had about \$5 million invested there, and that was a chunk of money then.

But he looked at it this way: "It took a heck of a lot of courage to spend all that money."

With the development of the city-owned property, Rosborough, the surfer, lost the wild west atmosphere up there in Seminole Beach. But he figures he — and everyone else in the area — gained an undeveloped beach that's going to stay that way. A fair exchange.

"Look at that," he says. "That's prime land. They did it right. That was badass."

CLOSE TO WILD

Rattlesnakes. Red bugs. Mosquitoes. Spiders. Ticks. Florida heat, its hellish humidity.

That's some of what faced Dake, the planner, and his partners, architect Bobby Woolverton and landscape architect Joe Zuber, as they hacked their way through the palmetto thickets at Hanna more than 40 years ago, dreaming of what this might become.

"We walked and studied it, every square inch. We must have walked it for six weeks," Dake says.

He's 80 now and was in his 30s then. "We were young, we were full of piss and vinegar. And this was just a great challenge. We knew we were doing something special ... we spent way too much time on it, we didn't make any money on the damn thing, but we were proud of it."

In the late '60s and early '70s, numerous proposals were floated for Hanna Park, including a golf course, a tram line, a fishing pier and an elevated pedestrian promenade.

Eventually, though, the park's backers decided to

leave the land as close to wild as possible.

"We were totally designed with nature," Dake said. "That was our whole push, to keep it as natural as we could but to get all the necessary improvements in to make it usable for the public."

Designers wanted to take advantage of the beach and of the lakes just inland, created by coquina mining operations. And they needed to put in certain things: access roads, parking lots, restrooms, beach accesses, a couple of concession areas and a campground with about 300 spaces.

But its default setting became nature: The woods were left pretty much as they were found, the dunes were left to stand up to storms. Most of the park was and still is a green refuge from the bustle just outside its gates.

The camping, a short walk to the beach, proved popular. Perhaps too popular: Years after opening, there was a stink about people who'd moved into the privately run campground and stayed ... and stayed.

Among them were two women, who said they were once opera singers in New York, who had lived at the campground for 20 months. They'd been there so long they had planted small gardens, provided day care, held art classes and church services.

Time limits were soon in place for campers.

The park added some amenities over the years, but it's stayed true to its back-to-nature philosophy, which hasn't always pleased everyone.

The Times-Union in 1978 quoted some teenagers from Ohio, camping there through July, who had long since tired of the beach and the trees and all that nature.

"Our parents like a place like this because they don't like doing things," they said. "But we'd rather have amusements."

THE BOLD CITY

Gordon Sprague was in his late 20s when he came to Jacksonville to its parks department, working his way up to division chief. He arrived just in time to

jump in on the city's big beach-park project, becoming one of the prime movers behind it.

And he was there in December 1969 when George B. Hartzog, director of the National Park Service, toured what would become Hanna and came away impressed.

"This certainly enhances your 'bold city' image," Hartzog told the locals.

Sprague, who's now 78 and dividing his time between Vermont and the Pensacola area, said the park's backers knew they had something special. He's happy with what came of it.

"You only have one chance to develop undeveloped property," Sprague says. "It's never undeveloped again. We took our time and I think we got it right."

Hanna Park has had more than 305,000 visitors so far this year, the city parks department says, people drawn by its fishing, its hiking trails and the best mountain-biking trails in the area. On many days, it has the best surfing as well.

Bancroft, who donated the initial parcel, got to see the park grow: He died in 1988, at the age of 95.

If the city hadn't bought the land around that first 5 acres, it would have all turned out far differently, says Dake, the planner.

"You would see all kind of high-rises there, true as the world," Dake says. "Or it'd have been a bunch of houses up there, single-family homes."

Don't get him wrong. He likes high-rises, golf courses, nice houses. After all, he designed high-end developments over his career, including Queen's Harbour Yacht & Country Club, which grew up around the home he built there in the 1970s.

But Hanna Park?

"You forget how special it is," Dake said one recent day, touring his park for the first time in years. "It's a pretty neat place."

He wandered once again through its dunes and paths, telling stories about how it all came to be. Then he smiled. "Pretty smart guys that designed this place, huh?"

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LAB

Continued from A-1

Few nearby residents even knew the half-acre plot on the college's Rennie Farm was used from the 1960s until 1978 to dump carcasses from "tracer experiments," in which scientists used radioactive compounds to see how things moved through life systems. A nearby site also contained remains of human cadavers and stillborn fetuses used in medical classes.

The obscurity of the fenced site changed in 2011, when Dartmouth chose to clean it up, removing 40 tons of carcasses and soil from scores of unlined pits that were legal at the time they were dug. That led to

the discovery of hazardous waste and low-level radioactive materials and eventually evidence that at least one chemical used in the animal experiments, the suspected carcinogen 1,4-dioxane, had leaked into the groundwater.

It was initially found at 50 times the state standard of 3 parts per billion on the site and more recently as high as 600 parts per billion in the ground. The chemical has been linked to eye, nose and throat irritation and, in long-term exposure, to liver and kidney damage, according to the Environmental Protection Agency.

The 1,4-dioxane was eventually found to have migrated off the site and contaminated the Higginses' well across the street,

about 800 feet from the site — at twice the state standard. They learned in September 2015 that their well was polluted, and now depend on bottled water supplied by Dartmouth for cooking and drinking.

The news has rattled the semi-rural neighborhood, sparking anger and fear among dozens of homeowners who worry the plume will reach their own wells and damage their property values. Many contend Dartmouth was too slow to respond once it found the contamination and has been reluctant to provide full details of what was on the site — something the college denies.

"Right now, everyone is very confused and concerned," said Ellen Waitzkin, a radiologist who lives

across from the site. "They are trying to determine on what basis they should feel threatened or not."

The Higginses and other residents argue an alert about the spreading contamination should have gone out earlier. New Hampshire environmental and Dartmouth officials said initial test showed the levels of 1,4-dioxane were declining on the site and were projected to remain on the farm site — though state officials now concede there could have been more aggressive monitoring.

Now, Dartmouth is working to regain the trust of Higgins and the other residents. It apologized in September for its handling of the case, established a neighborhood advisory panel and sampled

110 drinking wells in the neighborhood; no others have tested positive. It also offered 20 households bottled water.

It is also finishing construction on a system at the dump site to capture and clean the contaminated water. When it begins operating in January, wells will pull contaminated groundwater into the system and filter it. The treated water will then be returned to the ground, a process that could take several years.

"We are committed to protecting the health of our neighbors, addressing their concerns, and communicating regularly and openly with them about the project," college spokeswoman Diana Lawrence said of the cleanup, which so far has cost \$8.4 million.

But for the Higginses and their neighbors, the college hasn't gone far enough. Some want more soil removed, while others want Dartmouth to offer compensation for their deteriorating property values — demands the college says it is considering.

The Higginses say their health problems have mostly disappeared since they switched to bottled water. But they call that a short-term fix and want the college to move them to a new home a safe distance from the site of the contamination.

"We want to become whole if there is such a thing," Richard Higgins said. "We want to get on with our lives. Right now, our life is in limbo."