

Redmond's Andrew Kaza chronicles Oregon's biggest basketball game

BY JAYSON JACOBY
CO Media Group

Andrew Kaza always figured someone ought to make a movie about the most famous basketball game in Baker High School history.

Then he realized nobody had even written a book.

So Kaza, who lives in Redmond, decided he would fill this void in the annals of Oregon high school athletics, one that had existed for half a century.

Kaza's book, "High Contrast: A Story of Basketball, Race and Politics in Oregon 1972," was released in late August.

The author, who grew up in Beaverton and lives in Redmond, recounts the March 25, 1972, Class

AAA boys state championship basketball game in Portland's Memorial Coliseum, pitting the underdog Baker Bulldogs against the powerful Jefferson Democrats from Portland.

Not that there can be much suspense after 50 years, but Baker lost, 59-52.

The game was much closer, though, than many of the pundits had predicted.

Baker actually led for much of the game, and by as many as 7 points in the third quarter.

The Bulldogs' last lead, 50-49, came with less than 4 minutes left in the game.

Yet it wasn't just the surprisingly competitive contest that made that Saturday night, inside what was then Oregon's biggest arena, so memorable.

A combination of other factors, some hinted at in the title of Kaza's book, gives that 32-minute game the powerful legacy that lingers, in the memories of those who were on the court and in the stands.

And it's a game that retains a fascination even for some who weren't there.

Kaza, for instance.

The author, now 63, was 12 then. And although he was a rabid sports fan — he attended all the games during the 1969 state tournament — he didn't make it to the epochal 1972 championship.

But he said he came to understand, even as a boy, that the Baker-Jefferson game was extraordinary.

The main title of his book is a succinct explanation — "High Contrast."

There were in fact many contrasts.

It is all but impossible to depict the differences without resorting to cliché, but they're no less true.

Baker was rural and small town and white.

When you watched coach Gary Hammond's players you might be forgiven for wondering if the 1960s had ever happened.

The Bulldogs' crew cuts were as solidly 1950s as tailfins and Sputnik.

And Hammond's basketball style was as traditional as his tonsorial requirements. Baker played a methodical, precise game, one that relied on crisp passing to get open shots.

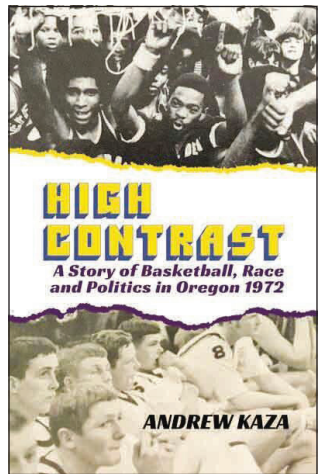
Jefferson was urban and metropolitan and all the players were Black.

Some of the Democrats



Photo Courtesy of Ann Ross

The 1972 Baker High School boys basketball team. Top row, left to right: Head Coach Gary Hammond, Rick Scrivner, Craig Erickson, Wes Morgan, Daryl Ross, Mike Davis, Mark Johnson, Randy Daugherty, Assistant Coach John Heriza. Bottom row, left to right: Statistician Gerry Steele, Tim Wood, Fred Warner Jr., Greg Sackos, Dick Sheehy, and manager Verl Cote.



Andrew Kaza's new book chronicles the 1972 Oregon Class AAA state championship basketball game between the Baker Bulldogs and the Jefferson Democrats.

sported Afros.

And they played at a frenetic pace.

This collision of disparate styles no doubt contributed to the unprecedented interest in the championship game.

A total of 13,395 people crammed into the Coliseum — 729 more than the listed capacity for the arena where the Portland Trail Blazers, the city's year-old NBA franchise, played.

It was the largest crowd to watch a high school basketball game in Oregon.

And never had so many people watched a Baker team play.

Both those records remain unchallenged half a century later.

Kaza, in a phone interview about his book on Friday, Sept. 16, said he understood the allure of high school sports.

His dad was a teacher in Portland schools for 25 years, and he also was a band and orchestra leader, taking student musicians to perform at games.

"As a kid I got to tag along to a lot of football and basketball games," Kaza said.

In his book he explores the popularity of high school sports in 1972 — a level of interest that is difficult to imagine today.

The Blazers, Kaza points out, were a new franchise, and had not yet become the Oregon institution they would be five years later when they won their only NBA title.

The Oregon and Oregon State football and men's basketball teams were not national contenders — and in any case college sports weren't yet the nationwide ratings behemoths we're accustomed to.

"High school sports was just the top of the pile," Kaza said.

And so the 1972 championship game, with its myriad con-

trasts, was all but irresistible.

"The whole state was captivated by that state tournament," Kaza said.

A CONTEXT BEYOND SPORTS

Although the basketball game is the centerpiece of "High Contrast," Kaza said he sought to put sports into context with society, both in Oregon and in the nation, in 1972.

"It was a different era," he said. Americans were still fighting in Vietnam.

Richard Nixon was running for his second term.

The game featuring Baker's "farm boys" and Jefferson's more flamboyant team illustrated a term that Kaza said has only in more recent times become something of a cliché itself — "the urban-rural divide."

"And here we have it on the basketball court," Kaza said.

But he notes, too, that unlike Oregon's political divide, which tends to separate people into groups that have little to do with each other except for social media squabbling, the 1972 championship game brought people together, even if for only one night.

Kaza said he tells a comprehensive story in his book, including Oregon's sometimes sordid racial history, most notably the state serving as fertile recruiting ground for the Ku Klux Klan.

Kaza's own experience had also given him a perspective for race relations.

As a fifth grader living in Beaverton, he was part of group of white students who joined a voluntary program to attend Martin Luther King Elementary School in Portland, where 97% of the students were Black. Kaza was one of two white students in his class.

"That experience forever impacted his world view of prejudice and discrimination," according to his author biography on the Nestucca Spit Press website.

RESEARCH DURING A PANDEMIC

Kaza, who worked as a sports-writer for the *Valley Times* newspaper in Beaverton from 1974 to 1982 before, as he puts it, "leaving journalism behind," said he initially decided to embark on a book project in the spring of 2020.

"I started realizing this was a story I could weave together," he said.

After living in England for about 25 years, he returned to the U.S. in 2016. He and his wife, Yee Cheng, bought a four-screen movie theater in Sisters.

Of course something else happened in the spring of 2020.

COVID-19. Kaza said the pandemic both helped and hindered his work on "High Contrast."

Although he certainly wouldn't describe this as a positive, because his theater was closed for 431 days — a number, he notes with a rueful chuckle, he will always recall with precision — Kaza had more time than he would have had otherwise for research.

But the situation also forced him to conduct interviews — including with several members of Baker's 1972 team — remotely rather than in person.

Kaza also talked with John Heriza, who was Baker's assistant coach in 1972 and lives in Baker City, and with Greg Hammond, Gary Hammond's son.

Gary Hammond died on April 26, 2008, at Pendleton. He was 88.

Two starters on Baker's 1972 team — Daryl Ross and Mike Davis, the top two scorers — have also passed away.

Ross died Jan. 7, 2015, at age 60 from ALS (Lou Gehrig's disease).

Davis died Jan. 4, 2016, at age 61.



Courtesy of Jehovah's Witnesses' Public Information

Justin Crofoot and his wife, Sarai, have resumed a door-to-door ministry since Sept. 1 in Sisters.

Local Jehovah's Witness return to knocking on doors

Jehovah's Witnesses resumed their trademark door-to-door ministry beginning on Sept. 1 after a 30-month suspension due to the global pandemic.

The decision marks the complete restoration of all pre-pandemic in-person activities for the nearly 1.3 million Jehovah's Witnesses in the United States.

Houses of worship (called Kingdom Halls) were reopened on April 1, witnessing in public places resumed on May 31 and in-person conventions are again being planned for 2023.

"It has been quite a long time, but we are really looking forward to conversing with our neighbors face to face," said Justin Crofoot, who returned to an in-person ministry with his wife, Sarai. "We have made an effort to reach as many people as we can through letter writing and over the phone, but really nothing compares to being able to visit in person."

The suspension of the public ministry was a proactive response by the organization to keep communities and congregants safe. The move was

also unprecedented. Jehovah's Witnesses had been preaching from door to door without interruption for more than 100 years through an economic depression, two world wars and global unrest, but COVID-19 demanded a different response.

"We believe that the early decision to shut down all in-person activities for more than two years has saved many lives," said Robert Hendriks, U.S. spokesperson for Jehovah's Witnesses.

The return to an in-person ministry coincides with a global campaign to offer an interactive Bible study program, available in hundreds of languages and offered at no cost.

The pandemic forced Jehovah's Witnesses to quickly pivot to virtual meetings and conventions while conducting their ministry exclusively through letters, phone calls and virtual Bible studies. This has led to growth in meeting attendance and the number of congregants, with more than 400,000 newly baptized witnesses joining the ranks of 120,000 congregations globally in just the first two years of the pandemic.

OBITUARY

DEATH NOTICES

Clifford Dale Harris

March 19, 1947 - September 23, 2022 of Redmond
Services: Celebration of Life to be held at a later time to be determined

OBITUARY DEADLINE

Call to ask about our deadlines
541-385-5809



GREGORY DALE PETERSON

June 17, 1956 - August 6, 2022

Gregory Dale Peterson passed away on August 6, 2022 at the age of 66. Surrounded by his wife and daughters, Greg passed peacefully at his home in Weiser, Idaho.

Greg was born to Ellsworth and Lois (Brown) Peterson on June 17, 1956 on Parris Island, South Carolina. Following his father's service in the Marine Corps, Greg spent the majority of his childhood in Wisconsin.

Greg was preceded in death by his parents as well as his son Lance Corporal Dale Gregory Peterson, who was killed in action in Fallujah, Iraq.

Greg is survived by his wife: Karen (Seagal) Peterson; his siblings: Mona (Timothy), Timothy (Liz), Sue, and Bud (Karen); his daughters and sons-in-law: Marci and Kyle Sullens, Melissa and Jake Davies, and Mandy Peterson, as well as his beloved grandchildren: Amelia, Olivia, Luella, Sophia, and Dalten.

Greg was a steadfast and God-fearing man who spent a career in service in law enforcement and his free time with those closest to him on the farm or out hunting and fishing.

A celebration of life is scheduled at 1:00 on October 15, 2022 to be held at the Redmond Grange located at 707 SW Kalama Ave, Redmond, Oregon.



**DERMATOLOGY
HEALTH
SPECIALISTS**

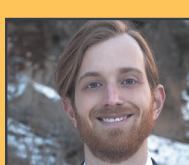


EARLY DETECTION IS KEY
Schedule your skin exam today
NOW IN REDMOND & LA PINE

**Comprehensive Dermatology
Advanced Skin Cancer Care**



Oliver Wisco, DO



Matthew Clark, MD



Jill Conway
PA-C



Sam Christensen
PA-C



Lindsey Clark
PA-C

Bend - Redmond - La Pine
DERM-HEALTH.COM



**Get great
service &
great rates.**



Joe A Lochner Ins Acy Inc
Joe A Lochner, Agent
www.joelochner.com
Redmond, OR 97756
Bus: 541-548-6023