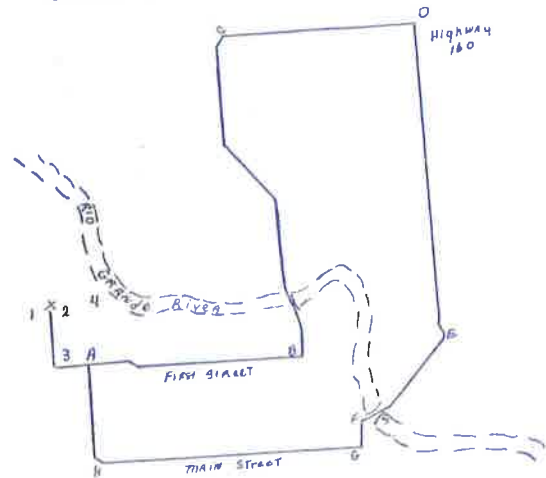




ALAMOSA INVITATIONAL MARATHON COURSE

Certified by AAU Standards Committee 1967



50-YEAR OLYMPIC MARATHON CELEBRATION & ASU CROSS COUNTRY/TRACK & FIELD REUNION JULY 27-29, 2018

Friday, July 27

- **Special guest speaker**

Saturday, July 28

- **Race with the legends:** An 8K run that largely follows the same marathon course Alamosa set up for the 1968 U.S. Olympic Marathon Trials.
- **Banquet:** \$50 per person

Friday, July 29

- **Campus Cafe cinnamon rolls** in Plachy Hall

RESERVATIONS

To register for the event, book a room to stay, attend the banquet, or get additional information, please contact the Adams State Alumni Office at 719-587-8110, 1-800-824-6494 (ext. 8), or email: alumni@adams.edu.



The top three finishers in the 1968 Olympic Marathon Trials: George Young, Kenny Moore, and Ron Daws.

Runners, reunite!

THE GREEN BAY PACKERS WON SUPER BOWL 11, RICHARD M. NIXON WAS ELECTED PRESIDENT, MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. AND ROBERT KENNEDY WERE ASSASSINATED, THE VIETNAM WAR RAGED ON, AND MADISON SQUARE GARDEN OPENED IN NEW YORK CITY.

THE YEAR WAS 1968, AND CLOSER TO HOME ADAMS STATE CROSS COUNTRY COACH JOE VIGIL '53, '59, BARELY IN HIS THIRD YEAR ON CAMPUS, AND BUDDY EDELEN '66, A YOUNG PSYCHOLOGY PROFESSOR, WERE PREPARING TO PUT ADAMS STATE AND ITS HOMETOWN OF ALAMOSA ON THE MAP.

Vigil and Edelen were busy throughout 1968 preparing Alamosa and Adams State to host the first-ever U.S. Olympic marathon trials, with the top three finishers going on to compete in the Olympic Games in Mexico City.

The two, along with athletic director Jack Cotton, had convinced the AAU Long Distance Running Committee to select Alamosa as the host city for the marathon trials. Their pitch was Alamosa's high altitude, and the benefits high-altitude training would bring to U.S. distance runners in preparation for competing at a similar altitude in Mexico City.

Edelen, who at the time held the American record in the marathon, had become convinced of the benefits of training at altitude and had been writing about it. To bring world-class runners to Alamosa, and have them train at altitude, would be an incredible advantage.

The U.S. Olympic Committee became convinced, and the rest, as they say, is history. The marathon trials were

a huge success, and Adams State, under Vigil's close supervision, rose to prominence as the pre-eminent distance running program in America.

Now 50 years later, Vigil and Damon Martin '87, who succeeded Vigil at the helm of the Adams State cross country and track and field program, are planning a reunion in July to remember 1968 and how the U.S. Olympic marathon trials set the stage for Adams State to become known as *the* place for high-altitude training.

It literally will be a who's-who of the running world descending on Alamosa for the 50-year celebration of the marathon trials. Frank Shorter, Billy Mills, Amby Burfoot, Bill Clark, Hal Higdon and other U.S. distance running greats will join Coach Vigil and Coach Martin for the 50-year celebration that will commemorate what became the start of a running boom in the United States and an emphasis on the benefits of training at high altitude such as Alamosa's 7,544-foot elevation.



FAR LEFT: They're off!
NEAR LEFT: The starting line.
Archival photos courtesy of the Nielsen Library.

"We are very excited to host the 50-year celebration of the very first U.S. Olympic marathon trials," said Martin. "I believe that this event played a very instrumental part of beginning what our Adams State cross country and track and field legacy has become."

The reunion weekend will kickoff on Friday, July 27, with a special guest speaker. Then on Saturday morning, all the legendary runners – and any runners who want to join in – will participate in an 8K run that largely follows the same marathon course Alamosa set up for the 1968 U.S. Olympic marathon trials.

Saturday evening, July 28, a banquet will be held at Plachy Hall to honor the running legends and reflect on how 1968 came to be. More memories will be shared, and more will be created.

"It will be a once-in-a-lifetime event to have so many of our distance-running legends return to Alamosa," said Martin. "When you sit and ponder the impact of this event being in a small, rural southern Colorado town and how history unfolded for distance-running success at our university, it is astounding. Coach Vigil, Buddy Edelen, Doc Cotton, along with the entire organizing committee, brought one of the premier Olympic qualifying events to our community. We today still benefit from the push we received from this historic Olympic trials event so many years ago."

When Adams State University initially publicized the 1968 reunion



The *Valley Courier* ran this photo of members of the Alamosa Olympic Training Project Committee as they prepared to journey to Chicago for the United States Olympic Commission meeting. They successfully pushed Alamosa as the best training site for the U.S. team in preparation for the Summer Olympics in Mexico City. Clockwise from lower left are Sandra Modisett, physical education instructor; local businessman Gene Fullerton; Coach Joe Vigil; and Leonard "Buddy" Edelen, former Olympic marathon runner.

on its Facebook page earlier this year, Valley residents and alumni of the university fondly recalled that period of time. They also took us down memory lane with stories of other U.S. Olympic qualifying events that were staged in Alamosa in the summer of '68.

In addition to the marathon trials, Alamosa's rarified air prepared U.S. wrestlers, basketball players, and race walkers for the Mexico City Games. Both the 20- and 50-kilometer race walk time trials were held in Alamosa. At the time, the town was abuzz as residents scratched their heads at the sight of race walkers training across the city.

In fact, in the summer of 1968 Alamosa resembled an

Olympic training village, with athletes showing up from all the across the United States to train and to mingle with residents.

Even the great Jim Ryun, then the world record-holder in the mile, showed up in Alamosa to train that June. In fact, Ryun broke his own record in the mile when he ran in Bakersfield, CA, three weeks after training in Alamosa, lending even more credence to the notion that training at altitude has a tremendous benefit on runners,

and really all athletes.

For Coach Vigil, who was hired to teach and coach at Adams State College in 1965, the marathon trials were a life-changing moment.

"Because of the great athletes, researchers, writers and knowledgeable people, I immediately became aware of what it took to compete at that level and the level of knowledge required," he said. "This activity motivated me to go and get my Ph.D. It also motivated me to develop a lifestyle of study and acute observation of how athletes adapt to their training."

He went on, "I have for 50 years been motivated to study the

physiological and psychological variables involved in training to become the best that a person can be. It is this basic philosophy that has allowed ASU to become the most successful distance running school in America.

"The bulk of this work has been carried out by several coaches, who share a common philosophy, that have produced winning results."

Race day for the marathon trials was Sunday, Aug. 18, 1968. The weather was an easy 73 degrees, cool for August but perfect for a marathon. Residents and others who ventured into Alamosa to catch a glimpse of the distance running greats lined the streets of town and cheered on the runners as they competed.

Billy Mills, who had won Olympic gold for the U.S. in the 10,000 meters at the 1964 Tokyo Olympic Games, was among the favorites. Also toeing the line was a relative unknown named Frank Shorter. The marathon trials drew 113 competitors to the starting line, and the top three finishers

were George Young, Kenny Moore, and Ron Daws.

As fate would have it, Shorter had to wait until 1972 before he became a household name after winning Olympic gold in the marathon during the Olympic Games in Munich, Germany.

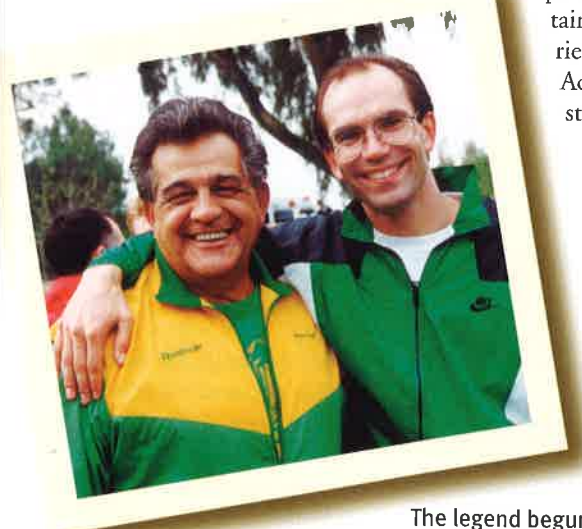
Like Young and Moore, Shorter is expected to be in Alamosa for the 50-year celebration in July. The influence of Vigil and his star power among the running greats is inspiring people to return.

In 1971, Adams State won its first collegiate cross country national title, three years after Vigil and Edelen put Alamosa on the map for high altitude training. Now with 54 running national championships – men and women combined – Adams State is among the most successful schools for national titles in any sport in any collegiate division.

Based on the running success at Adams State, the city of Alamosa now dubs itself the "City of Champions."

If you can make the 50-year July celebration in Alamosa, you should. It promises to be a special event. Certainly there will be many fond memories shared about Alamosa and Adams State as the place where great stories begin.

By Chris Lopez '84



The legend begun in Alamosa in 1968 led to Adams State's renown as a running powerhouse. Coaches Joe Vigil (left) and Damon Martin created a legacy of success that continues today.



ADAMS STATE AND ALAMOSA WERE FORTUNATE to have Leonard "Buddy" Edelen. When Coach Joe Vigil and Coach Damon Martin convene a reunion of the 1968 U.S. Olympic marathon trials, it will be the memory and legacy of Edelen that will drape over the festivities.

"The hardest part of training at high altitude is what it does for your confidence. Mine sometimes goes altogether," Edelen told *Sports Illustrated* in July 1966. "My training times have been so slow, and I haven't had enough real competition to know where I stand. But for distance runners I think this kind of training will be essential. What confidence will an Olympic runner have going to Mexico City if he hasn't tried running at 7,000 feet?"

Sports Illustrated spent the summer of 1966 in Alamosa writing about Edelen, America's best marathon runner at the time, who enrolled at Adams State to pursue a master's degree in psychology and to train and write about training at high altitude.

He earned \$150 a month as a graduate assistant on Joe Vigil's cross country and track and field teams. Once dubbed "America's great hope" in distance running, he put Alamosa on the map when he convinced Olympic organizers to bring their training sessions in preparation for Mexico City to the San Luis Valley.

"Quite frankly, I was scared to death at the idea of training at high altitude," he told *SI*. "I thought I might die of a heart attack or something. But I did want to try it for a year, to get an idea of how tough it was and how necessary it is if you hope to do well at Mexico City."

Edelen passed away on February 19, 1997, at the age of 59. He'll be missed when the rest of the distance running legends gather in July.