



INSIDE:
Ann Landers/D2
Horoscope/D2
Weddings/D4
Travel/D5
Youth/D8

Life

SUNDAY, JULY 30, 2000



DAVE BARRY

The horror of dining out with a baby

If you're a new parent, there will come a time when either you or your spouse will say these words:

"Let's take the baby to a restaurant!"

Now, to a normal, sane person, this statement is absurd. It's like saying: "Let's take a moose to the opera!"

But neither you nor your spouse will see anything inappropriate about the idea of taking your baby to a restaurant. This is because, as new parents, you are experiencing a magical period of wonder, joy and possibility that has made you really stupid.

You are not alone: All new parents undergo a sharp drop in intelligence. It's nature's way of enabling them to form an emotional bond with a tiny human who relates with other humans exclusively by spitting up on them. Even very smart parents are affected, as we see from these two quotations:

Albert Einstein Shortly Before The Birth Of His Son: "To know that what is impenetrable to us really exists, manifesting itself as the highest wisdom and the most radiant beauty, which our dull faculties can comprehend only in their most primitive forms — this knowledge, this feeling, is at the center of true religiousness."

Albert Einstein Shortly After The Birth Of His Son: "Daddy's gonna EAT THESE WIDDLE TOES!"

After a month or so of bonding with their baby, the typical parents have the combined IQ of a charcoal briquette. This is when they decide it's OK to take the baby to a restaurant. I know what I'm talking about: My wife and I have a baby daughter, and we have repeatedly taken her to restaurants, even though by now experience should have taught us that it would be far more pleasant and relaxing for us to stay home and play tic-tac-toe on our foreheads with a soldering iron.

But we cannot help ourselves, and neither can you, if you're a new parent. That's why today I'm presenting these Helpful Tips For Dining Out With A Baby:

1. The instant you get to the restaurant, ask for the check. You want to be able to pay and get out of there as quickly as possible when your baby screams, or decides — as babies instinctively do, in restaurants — to grunt out an impossibly large output, such that you experience a dreaded condition known to diaper scientists as Projectile Huggies Leakage (PHL). So it's best to pay your bill as you enter the restaurant, adding a little extra (say, \$800) to compensate for the fact that after you're finished, your table may have to be burned. Some parents never actually enter the restaurant: They simply drive up to the front door, hurl money out the car window, then speed off, their baby wailing like an ambulance siren in the night.

2. Request a table in a location that will not disturb other diners. For example, if you want to eat at an elegant restaurant in New York City, you should try to get a table on the roof. Or, better still, at a Bob's Big Boy in Cleveland.

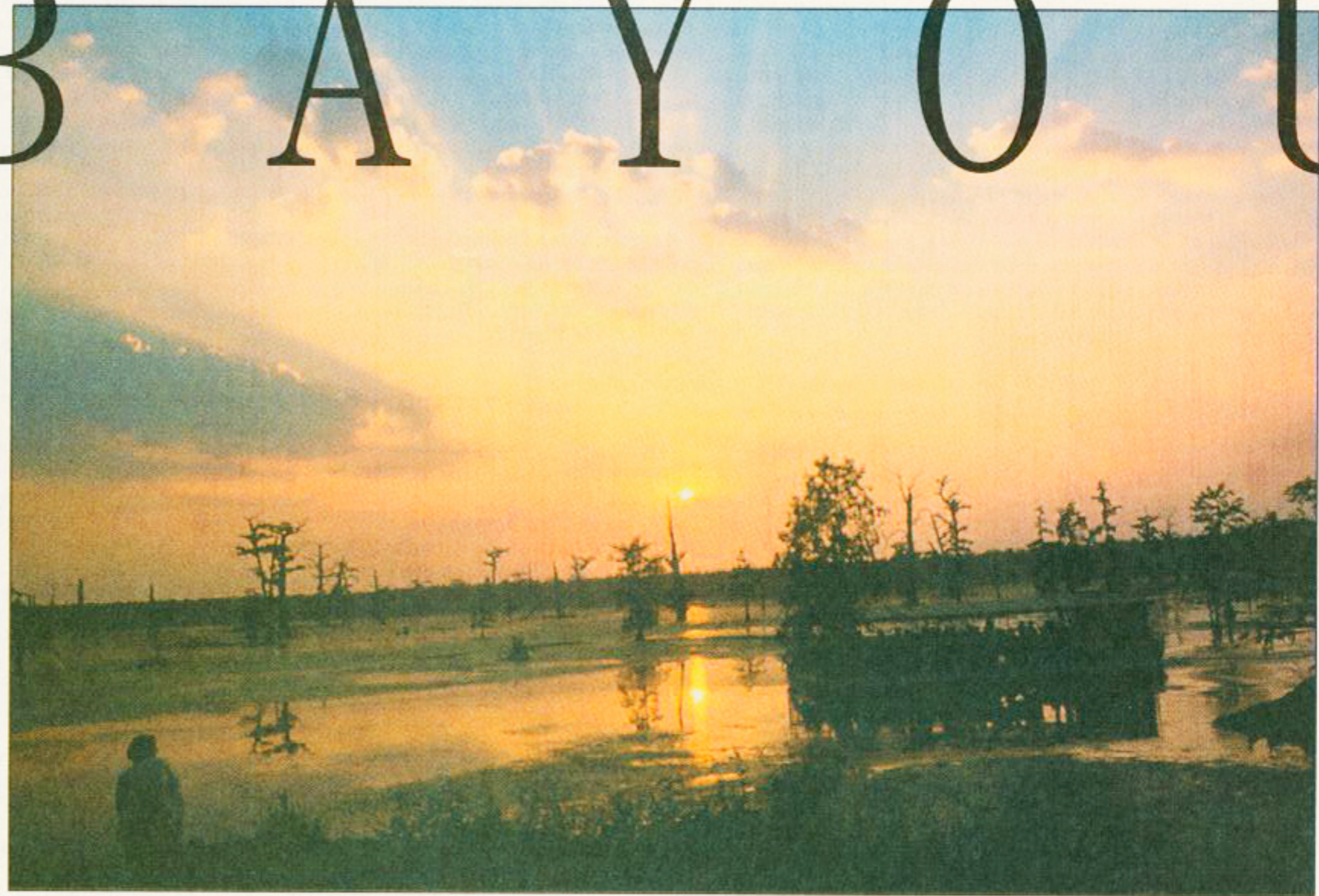
3. Select an appropriate cuisine. Of the wide variety of cuisines available today — Italian, French, Chinese, Tiny Portions Of Meat With Some Kind Of Inedible Decorative Stuff Dribbled On The Plate In A Pattern As If It Were An Art Project Instead Of A Meal — I would say that the best kind of cuisine, for the parent of a small baby, is a cuisine that you can eat with one hand. You of

BARRY, page D6

By airboat or pirogue, guides help you snake through Louisiana's swamps, history

BIG FUN ON THE

BAYOU



LOUISIANA OFFICE OF TOURISM

Swamp sunset: Tourists, on boat at right, make moonlit and sunset swamp cruises one of Louisiana's most popular attractions.

The shrill song of cicadas permeates the stillness of the Louisiana swamp as a flat-bottom boat glides through the shadows cast by century-old cypress trees draped in Spanish moss.

Frogs, invisible against the foliage's abundant green hues, trumpet the arrival of the outsiders. Turtles basking in the sun are jostled to attention, acting like angry old men awakened from their afternoon nap as they plop loudly into the still waters.



LOUISIANA OFFICE OF TOURISM

Walk on the wild side: The Creole Nature Trail through Jean Lafitte National Park gives visitors a view of flora and fauna of Louisiana swamps with their feet on solid ground. The park is located a short drive from New Orleans.

INSIDE

IF YOU GO: Information on Louisiana swamp tours. **page D7**

By **MIKE BAILEY**
Columbian staff writer

Louisiana's intricate wetland maze of bayous, swamps, canals and marshes is one of America's last wild places, a mysterious world of unusual flora and fauna that is fast becoming one of the state's most popular attractions.

Tourists still flock to the Big Easy, antebellum plantations and riverboats, but swamp tours are the booming tourism-related industry for the state, where one of six visitors will take a swamp tour this year.

Three dozen swamp tour companies operate in the state, ranging from the traditional boat tours to guided walks and even aerial excursions through the 41 percent of the state officially protected as wetlands.

Tour costs range from \$10 to \$50, with the average around \$20 for adults and \$10 for children. The outings last from 90 minutes to two hours.

Guides can be as colorful as the scenery. Annie Miller, an 83-year-old Houma, La., resident, still takes tourists out on trips. Other guides speak French and Cajun but include just enough English to keep visitors up on what they're seeing. Some sing and strum guitars, and almost all provide a historical



LINDA REINEKE/New Orleans Tourism

Cajun history: The swamps of Louisiana were considered inhospitable by most who ventured through the wetlands in the 18th century. But Cajuns found the bayous and marshes perfect for their way of life.

perspective of how the region, once ruled by American Indians, the French and Spanish and later the Cajuns, evolved into this tourist attraction.

One fast-growing segment of the tour in-

SWAMP, page D7

Britt Festival ■ House of Mystery ■ Wildlife Safari

The Bard rules, but don't forget the rest of southern Oregon

Travelers can explore mysterious house, art, wild animal park

By **BRETT OPPEGAARD**
Columbian staff writer

ASHLAND, Ore. — While a visit to Ashland's Oregon Shakespeare Festival seems a worthwhile summer trip in itself, southern Oregon offers many other diversions to delight travelers.

A hot climate makes available virtually all outdoor summer activities, including picnics at parks, such as the 100-acre Lithia in downtown Ashland, plus plenty of places to bike, hike and take nature walks.

The Cascade and Siskiyou mountain ranges converge to provide a playground for butterflies and a beautiful backdrop of heavily forested hillsides. Rivers, such as the Rogue, mean white-water rafting, swimming

and kayaking. Crater Lake, the deepest in the country and one of the most scenic, beckons, as does the marble of the Oregon Caves.

Besides theater, this area also offers cultural opportunities such as the Britt Festival in Jacksonville, Ore., the Northwest's oldest outdoor summer performing arts festival. For its 38th season, which continues through Sept. 9, the Britt will bring to its 2,200-seat stage such musical talents as Marilyn Horne, Dave Brubeck Quartet, Clint Black and the Battlefield Band. It even offers a couple of touring musical productions, including "Grease," starring Cindy Williams (Shirley Feeney) and Eddie Mekka (Carmine Ragusa) from the television show "Laverne and Shirley."

Meanwhile, the 1850s Gold Rush-era town offers a nice mix of more than 90 restaurants, gift shops, art galleries and antique stores, plus



Courtesy of DAVID BJURSTROM STUDIO

Secluded, yet discovered: Despite its tiny size and remote location, Jacksonville, Ore., draws crowds.



Courtesy of HOUSE OF MYSTERY



Courtesy of WILDLIFE SAFARI

Who's tallest? Strange things seem to happen at the House of Mystery.

Left: Wildlife Safari, can't get any closer.

OREGON, page D6

Barry

Parents wander around the restaurant while others eat

From page D1

course need the other hand to keep putting things into your baby's mouth, so your baby can spit them out (a baby is not happy unless it is emitting something from somewhere).

In fact, you may need both hands for this activity, so you might want to order an entree that you can eat with no hands, sporadically lunging your face down to your plate and snorking up food Labrador-retriever style.

You will not have time to taste anything. Restaurant employees know this, and sometimes, for fun, they serve prank entrees to new parents, to see if they'll notice.

A Boston restaurant recently got a new father, distracted by a small baby, to eat a whisk broom covered with melted cheese.

At least he ate something. Sometimes I spend the entire



meal carrying my daughter around the restaurant, crossing paths with other nomadic parents carrying THEIR children around, each of us leaving a trail of drool.

Our big night out! It may not sound like fun to you, but we parents of newborns are able to enjoy it, because of our philosophy of life, which can be summed

up by the immortal words penned by William Shakespeare shortly after the birth of his first child: "Woogum woogum WOOGUM WOOGUM WOOGUM!"

DAVE BARRY is a humor columnist for the Miami Herald. Write to him c/o The Miami Herald, One Herald Plaza, Miami FL 33132.

Oregon

Giraffes get close to cars during drives at wildlife park

From page D1

more than 80 Victorian homes and buildings listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

One of only eight towns designated as a National Historic Landmark, Jacksonville was merely a tiny tent of a place before 1852, when a gold rush in Rich Gulch Creek brought prospectors and prosperity, followed by farmers and settlers. Just a year later, Jacksonville was made the county seat and considered the center of commerce in southern Oregon.

A few miles away, near the dilapidated downtown of Gold Hill, another interesting attraction is found. American Indians reportedly considered the place "forbidden ground," but gold miners and eventually scientists in the early 1900s determined the House of Mystery placed there by early settlers was built atop Oregon's vor-

IF YOU GO

■ **WHAT:** Britt Festival, featuring dozens of concerts, including Clint Black and the Dave Brubeck Quartet

■ **WHEN:** Through Sept. 9

■ **WHERE:** Jacksonville, Ore., near Medford, about 280 miles south of Vancouver

■ **COST:** Tickets vary in price, depending on performer and seating, but roughly cost from \$20 to \$60

■ **INFORMATION:** For more information or to reserve seats, call 800-882-7488

■ **ON THE WEB:** www.brittfest.org

■ **WHAT:** Oregon's "House of Mystery"

■ **WHEN:** Tours available from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily in March, April, May and September, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. in June, July and August

■ **WHERE:** 4303 Sardine Creek Road, Gold Hill, Ore., between Grants Pass and Medford, about 270 miles south of Vancouver; just follow main road through Gold Hill to "House of Mystery" billboard, which directs traffic the rest of the way

■ **COST:** \$7.50 for adults, \$6.50 for senior citizens, \$5.50 for children 5-12 and free to those younger than 5

■ **INFORMATION:** For more information, call 541-855-1543

■ **ON THE WEB:** www.oregonvortex.com

■ **WHAT:** Wildlife Safari, a 600-acre exotic animal park patrons can drive through safari-style

■ **WHEN:** Open 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily all year; a recently completed geodesic-domed outdoor performance space offers 30-minute shows with animals at 1 p.m. and 4 p.m. daily.

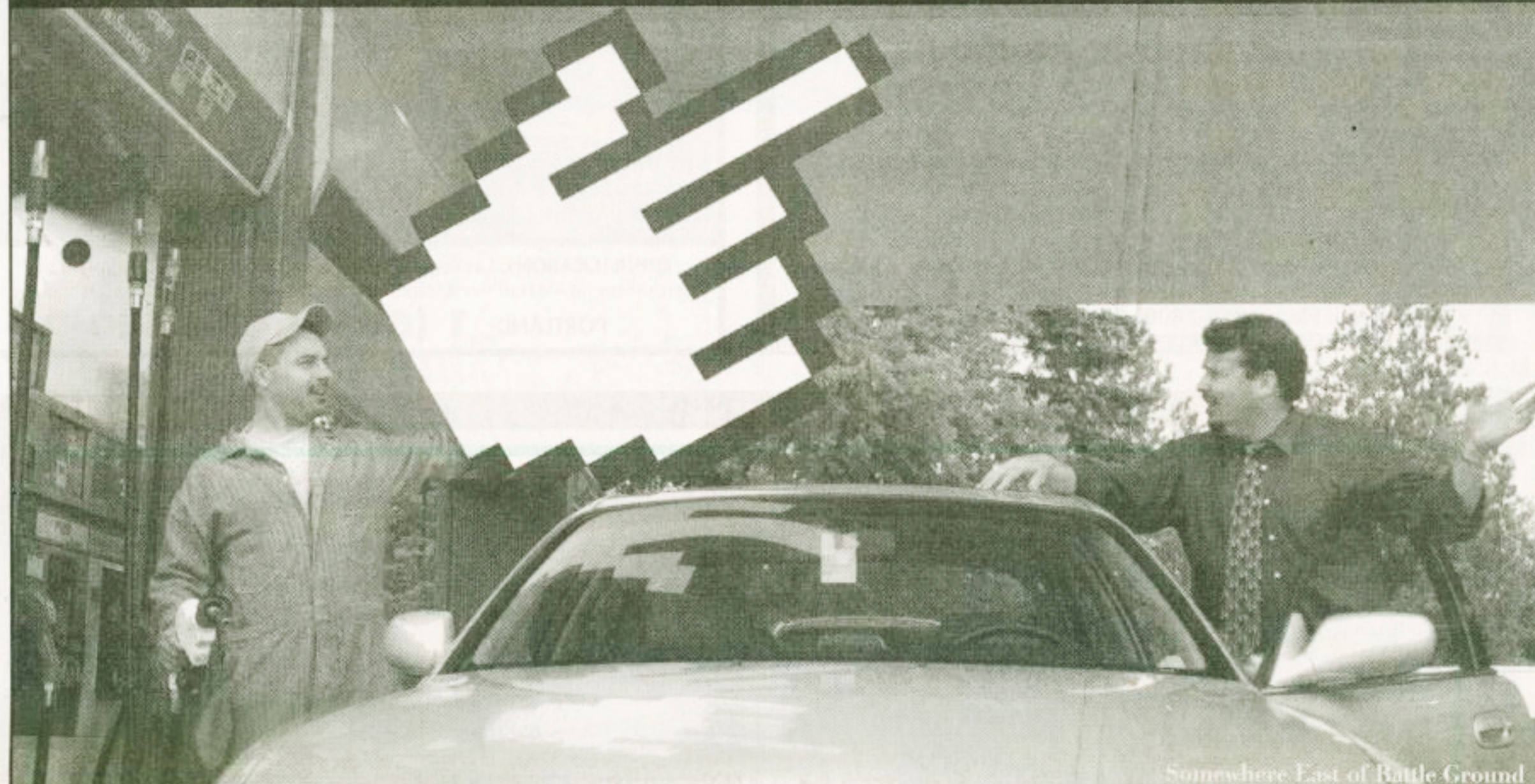
■ **WHERE:** Winston, Ore., near Roseburg, about three miles west of Interstate 5 off exit No. 119

■ **COST:** \$13 for adults, \$11 for senior citizens, \$8 for children 4-12 and those younger than 4 admitted free; admission includes entrance to the village and two driving trips around the park

■ **INFORMATION:** For more information, call 800-355-4848

■ **ON THE WEB:** www.wildlifesafari.org

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text, essentially a randomly occurring whirlpool of energy and force.

Opened to the public as an oddity in 1930, the "mystery house" appears to be nothing more than a crooked old shack slipping down a hillside. The structure isn't what's important, though, says tour guide Nick Nelson. It's the 165-foot-in-diameter sphere of energy that makes strange things happen around it. People appear taller or shorter, depending on where they stand. Brooms can be upright for several seconds before falling over. Balls and bottles can be rolled uphill.

This is not an optical illusion, Nelson says, like many of the copycat places found around the country, including Knott's Berry Farm's Haunted Shack. He adds,

"It's hard to believe, because you couldn't possibly see what you thought you saw here."

Visitors are encouraged to bring their own tools, including levels and measuring tapes, to try to figure out exactly what's causing this disturbance of scientific reality.

The place not to miss, though, when touring southern Oregon, is Wildlife Safari, a 600-acre exotic animal park visitors can drive through and explore. About three miles west of Interstate 5, from exit 119, this facility offers close contact with more than 80 species of wild animals, such as Bengal tigers, American black bears, cheetahs, Tibetan yaks, wallabies, African lions, zebras, white rhinos, hippos and African elephants, including Tiki, who has been featured locally in Portland Opera productions of "Aida" as well as Rose Festival parades.

Giraffes will wander within a few feet of cars rolling through the park, as will many of the animals. Ostriches and rheas seem especially bold, sometimes pecking on windows and at bikes that are hanging on car racks.

Gazelle herds make massive, yet graceful, migrations from hillside to hillside. Sometimes, these animals get a bit too close — hence the rule prohibiting convertibles in the parts of the park with the more dangerous critters. Such threat of danger, however minor, just heightens the experience, with the pleasure of watching free-roaming animals preferable to any zoo.

DUI

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