

Surface and Symbol

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Sleeping in the park

Ashland isn't just the Festival

By Glen Gibbons

Spring drama at Ashland's Shakespearean Festival has its back against the wall.

But you can still live well in the Siskiyou. Curtains will fall Saturday for the final Festival/Stage II performances this year, although several of the plays will rise again within a month for the summer run. The remaining spring session stagings are sold out.

After this interregnum, this brief respite from the Bard's imagery, his florid blank verse will ring out once more. And into this binge of drama the pauperish theater hound may step confidently, knowing that the Chamber of Commerce hasn't wrapped up all the tricks.

Festival propagandists have festooned the streets with banners urging visitors to see four plays in as many days, but the more leisurely play-goer might want to lay

Visitors interested in delving more deeply into local architecture of the 1870s and 1880s might enquire at the SOHS museum at 206 N. 5th, Jacksonville, or call 899-1847. Museum hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday and Noon to 5 p.m. on Sundays.

Low-cost accommodations in Ashland, scarce as a monosyllable in one of Will's soliloquies, pose an early problem for the cost-conscious and dollar-wary.

For the hardy — or perhaps foolhardy — the slopes up back of Lithia Park near the Festival site offer an overnight (not necessarily dry) rest, if one's cheapo inclinations are more powerful than the hill's incline, as mine have been on occasion. The Volkswagen vagabond might note the presence of van space in a rest area off the southbound lanes of I-5 just north of the first Ashland off-ramp (Exit 21).

Other camping sites may be found in parts of the Siskiyou National Forest (unimproved) reached from Highway 99E as one leaves town and the Klamath River rest area 20 miles into California for those head-

After the nightly bed, Ashland provides a more generous prospect for the visitor's daily bread. Rather than recount the refined troughs and watering holes luridly advertised in promotional brochures, I'd like to mention a few modest meccas of inexpensive, but zestful stuffing.

Hamlet's Roost, 58 E. Main (just down the block from the Columbia Hotel), opens 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. weekdays (8 a.m. to 2 p.m. Sundays) with a variety of reasonably-priced breakfast specials for enthusiastic appetites. The cafe is also a favorite among Festival actors and production crews winding down from the night before.

No-nonsense fare at working class prices comes to the tables at the Wayside Cafe (numbers 1 and 2).

Until a few weeks ago, the same owners operated both restaurants, but #2 at 1253 Siskiyou Blvd. was sold. It's uncertain whether the dinner specials, which included soup or salad, homemade bread, vegetables and an entree often for under \$2, will survive the new ownership.

In any case, Wayside Cafe #1, 2075

Open from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. seven days a week, Big Al offers about the best drive-in style of food available in Ashland at more than reasonable prices. The root beer frosties and chocolate shakes are rich and thick as an adman's dream. A Big Al-burger with double hamburger patties, cheese, onion and ham arrives for under a dollar. Servings are indiscreetly generous.

The hard-core granola cruncher might want to score some of the local mix from the Manna Bakery, a wholesale outlet at 542 A St. Manna Bakery whole-grain breads and sweets — such as peach brownies — are sold in many Ashland stores and restaurants.

For those into arcane book-browsing, The Golden Mean Bookstore, in the same building as Wayside Cafe #2 at 1253 Siskiyou Blvd., contains an extensive selection of occult, supernatural, theosophical, fantastic and downright bizarre readings that span Sufism, the Kaballah, Reichian and primal therapy and neo-messianic Christianity. Hours there are 9 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. daily.



Drawing by Terry McBride

back and sample the area's other attractions as well.

That diversion might as well begin en route to the plays. Rather than burning tread straight through to Ashland on Interstate-5, one might turn off at Valley of the Rogue State Park (Exit 48) and pursue a casual and suitably winding trail along the Rogue River via 99E to Gold Hill.

Turning south at Gold Hill toward Jacksonville, the road wanders along the shoulders of foothills overlooking the valley in which Medford and Ashland lie. Striking homes with turn-of-the-century architecture, including one just at the north outskirts of Jacksonville, intersperse the pastures and pear orchards along the way.

In Jacksonville, the Old West kitsch of which received a healthy boost with a Hollywood movie filmed there some years ago, the Southern Oregon Historical Society Museum (SOHS) fills in some local background with displays of Indian artifacts, guns, minerals and china.

A special exhibit of the museum sponsored by the Smithsonian Institute and a Medford newspaper, details the development of American printing. That display joins a collection of Peter Britt's photographic equipment.

Britt, a Swiss photographer who prospered in Jacksonville during the 1850s, donated the land which subsequently became the site of an annual music festival bearing his name. This year's program of classical music invokes the ubiquitous Bicentennial theme for part of its presentation Aug. 6-21.

ing on south.

A local park at Emigrant Reservoir which, the last time I was there, offered the discreetly depressing vista of a stagnant, man-made pond — lies east and south of Ashland and charges \$2 or so for overnight use. The showers there don't necessarily work.

For those who decide to break down and actually pay for a room, far and away the most economical — and funkiest — place is the Columbia Hotel at 262½ E. Main, located within a block of the Shakespeare theaters.

Rooms with double beds, often with aging brass or iron bedsteads, cost \$6 and lack showers but usually include some obsolescent furniture and satisfactorily peculiar neighbors to complete the boarding-house mood. Rooms on the Main Street side of the hotel cost \$8.50 for two double beds and \$10 with ample, old-fashioned bathtubs thrown in.

Reservations are only taken during the summer Festival season beginning June 16 and may be arranged by calling 482-3726. The last times I've stayed there, the Columbia was run by charming young Englishwomen whose soft accents sweetly complemented the old-inn atmosphere.

Other, more remote, lodging possibilities include a Motel 6 in Medford, 12 miles north of Ashland, and the Medford Hotel itself whose gently deteriorating ambiance provides double beds and an occasional steam heat symphony of banging pipes for under \$10.

Highway 99N (at the intersection with the northernmost Ashland exit off I-5), will continue under the previous management with the following hours: 6:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Thursday; 6:30 a.m. to 9 p.m. Friday and Saturday; 6:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Sundays. Wayside Cafe #2 operates from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily.

The following entries bracket the sublime/ridiculous gourmet spectrum but are both worthy of consideration, depending on the mood of one's maw.

Mum's Cottage, 2425 Siskiyou Blvd., opens for dinner from 5 to 9 p.m. daily with wholesome, natural foods-type cooking such as Eugene residents might expect from local eateries.

Spring theater at Ashland is almost finished, but the stage will come to life once again June 12. For details and deals, see story on p. 5b.

The "Cuisine from around the World" advertised by this unpretentious restaurant includes a full menu of Italian, French, Mexican, Chinese and Middle Eastern entrees during the week. The managers usually limit the weekend offerings to one area, such as Persian food, in order to expand the possible selections from that country's cuisine. Mum's Cottage isn't as cheap as some of the other suggestions, however.

For instance, Big Al's Dairy Bar at 474 N. Main.

Cook's Reception Tavern, 66 E. Main, serves as a post-performance refuge for both participants and spectators of the plays.

Open daily from 3 p.m. to 2:30 a.m. (11 a.m. to 2:30 a.m. Saturdays), this smoky unostentatious tavern offers draft Budweiser in 95-cent and \$1.85 pitchers and Michelob for \$1.10 and \$2.25. Happy Hours (9-10 p.m. Tuesdays, 8-9 p.m. Sundays) cut these pitcher prices to 50-95 cents and 55 cents to \$1.15 respectively.

Owners Betty and Gene Smith have begun adding formal entertainment to the bustling camaraderie at Cook's Reception. Belly dancing has been imported for 9:30-12:30 on Wednesday nights. Bluegrass and/or blues-rock bands play from 9:30 p.m. Thursday and Saturday nights with an open jam session after Happy Hour on Sunday.

Along this line, I might mention that Hilt, Calif., lies a brief 18 miles south of Ashland with a reserve of Coors beer and stouter California spirits.

Those worn out or not excited by a constant fete (or surfeit) of eating, drinking and play-going might roam Ashland's residential areas viewing the sturdy wooden-frame houses from an earlier era. Among these, I would mention: a two-story, 67-year-old white house at 715 N. Main; a century-old Italianate building at 153 Oak St. recently remodelled and converted into law offices; a former Eagle Roller Mills warehouse, built in 1862, since transformed into a private home at 1639 Jackson Rd.