

# Tale of 'mist gorillas' to be told

By Cami Swanson  
Emerald Reporter

As "Gorillas in the Mist" plays at local theaters, one of Dian Fossey's former colleagues will lecture tonight on the "Mountain Gorillas of Africa."

Stuart Perlmeter, who graduated from the University in 1978 with an anthropology degree, worked as one of Fossey's graduate student assistants for nine months in 1980. He will speak about his experiences at Karisoke, Fossey's research camp in the Virungas mountains in Rowanda, Africa. But most of the emphasis of his lecture will be on the gorillas themselves.

"I will present the gorillas as they are in the wild," Perlmeter said. "I want people to leave with an understanding of how endangered they are."

Perlmeter estimates there are only about 450 mountain gorillas left in the wild.

His lecture, sponsored by the Eugene Natural History Society, will begin at 8 p.m. in Science I Room 123. Slides of mountain gorillas, including some of the animals shown in the film "Gorillas in the Mist," will accompany the lecture.

Fossey was mysteriously murdered in 1985. The murder, combined with publicity from her book "Gorillas in the Mist," spawned increased tourism to the area. Some people are adamantly opposed to the

tourists. Perlmeter has a different view.

"It is my personal belief that if the gorillas (in the Virungas) are to survive, then tourism must be an integral part of any conservation effort," Perlmeter said in the Eugene Natural History Society's newsletter. The tourism helps Rowanda's economy, and "without their support and encouragement, no amount of money or anti-poaching patrols will save this species," Perlmeter continued.

Perlmeter attributes the rare chance of studying the mountain gorillas at Karisoke in 1980 to Dr. Russell Fernald, a University biology professor.

After Perlmeter completed his undergraduate degree, he took graduate classes in animal behavior from Fernald. Fernald submitted Perlmeter's name when he discovered the opportunity for graduate students to work with Fossey.

"She sent a wire and said be there in one month — and I went," Perlmeter said.

While Perlmeter was in Karisoke, Fossey left the camp for about three months to teach a class at Cornell University. During her absence, Perlmeter was left in charge of the poacher patrols, which Fossey had established to defend the gorillas.

"She liked him very much," said Tom Ellis, a member of the Eugene Natural History Society's board of directors. Ellis said that in addition to maintaining poacher patrols, Perlmeter

was instructed by Fossey to keep another researcher, Dr. Sandy Harcourt, from taking over her facility.

"According to Stuart, the pressure was really intense," Ellis said. "He found himself caught in the middle."

One of Perlmeter's biggest accomplishments at Karisoke was reintroducing "Charlie," a female orphan gorilla baby rescued by Fossey from poachers, into one of the gorilla groups at Karisoke. Perlmeter would not elaborate on his experiences in the Virungas mountains, but Ellis stressed the importance of such an accomplishment.

"It requires a really strong intuitive understanding (of the gorilla group)," Ellis said. Turning the tables, he asked, "Would you accept a human baby from a subhuman?"

Returning to Eugene after his experiences in Africa, Perlmeter began teaching handicapped children for the Lane Educational Service District. He is currently teaching science at Springfield Middle School.

Ellis said he expects a large turnout for Perlmeter's lecture, partly as a result of the success of the movie "Gorillas in the Mist."

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#### Friday, Oct. 21

•The University and Associated Artists presents "Woman's Work," a free gallery showing at Warehouse Gallery, Fourth Avenue and Lawrence Street. An open reception for the showing will be held at 7 p.m. Gallery hours are 1-5 p.m. daily.

#### Saturday, Oct. 22

•Learn the art of origami at the EMU Craft Center's Origami Mask Workshop. Class will run from 1-4 p.m. and is limited so pre-registration

is advised. The cost is \$7.

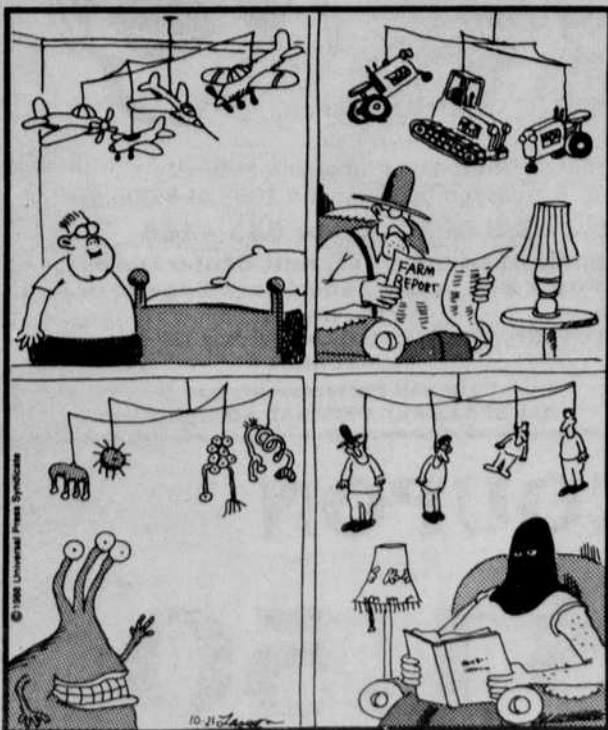
#### Sunday, Oct. 23

•The Survival Center will host a Riverfront Community Picnic on the South bank of the Willamette River near the Autzen Stadium footbridge from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. The event is free and open to the public.

•Discussion of social relationships between male and females in various cultures 7:30 p.m. in the EMU's International Lounge. The discussion is part of the United Nations Day celebration.

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Martin Thompson's appearance made possible by a grant from the Register Guard.