

Despite controversy, Safari Club remains center of Estacada night life

By Happie Thacker

Since it was built in 1970 the Safari Club restaurant in Estacada has become synonymous with the town. In fact, according to its owner, Mike Parks, there are people who come to the Safari Club who don't even know where Estacada is.

* "Originally the place was called the Sportsman's Club," said Mike. "My dad owned the building and leased and sold it several times. It was a real dive, a greasy-spoon. The facilities were really run down and my dad kept getting it back."

"Anyway, when he sold the mill (Parks Lumber Co.), Estacada didn't have a good place to eat so he decided to incorporate the animals and make the place nicer."

Park's father, Glen Parks, is also responsible for shooting most of the animals that have made the Safari Club unique and he has received both criticism and praise for his actions.

"Most of them (conservationists) don't know what they're talking about," said Glen, "they think if you hunt a few things that you kill everything."

"I'm a trophy hunter -- I may pass up game for three weeks before I find one I want to shoot. The guide with me will look at a big animal through the glasses and just shake his head 'I haven't seen one like that for three years,' he'll say but I'll pass it up and wait for a better one."

Contrary to popular belief that trophy hunters kill the game and take the head or hide and leave the rest to rot, Glen says that everything he's shot has been eaten.

"When you're in a foreign country it doesn't matter what you kill, someone will eat it," he said. "The waste here in the restaurant bothers me. Why, people in India and Africa would walk 25 miles just to eat our leavings."

Mike agrees with the fitness of displaying his father's trophies.

"My kids and my preference is this (to the Washington Park Zoo)," he said, "because the animals are close and in their natural habitat and people aren't throwing stuff at them."



The Parks family is very active in Estacada. They own quite a bit of real estate and Mike is the town's mayor. Mike also owns Park Distributing Co. which distributes institutional food throughout Oregon and Southwest Washington.

According to Mike, owning his own distributing company helps keep costs down in the restaurant because he is his own middleman. The people who were delivering to the restaurant before kept "ripping him off" and raising their prices higher and higher.

There are also plans to build a large warehouse-type grocery store in Estacada.

"The market will have produce, bulk foods, serve-yourself case quantity items and fast-frozen meat," said Ron McMahan, vice president of Park Distributing.

"People have a tendency to put us down," said McMahan. "They think we're trying to take it all, but we are supplying jobs and paying taxes."

Glen Parks has no sympathy for his detractors.

"Money's certainly easy to make in the world today," he said, " --if you're smart."



Photos by Marlene Clark

