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Humans turn furry, swim and eat fish in crazy 'Galapagos'

By Scott Schmidt
Staff Reporter

Imagine this. You are much like a seal, swimming in the ocean, eating fish and your body is covered with fur. But you are human.

According to Kurt Vonnegut's latest novel, "Galapagos," human beings will evolve into furry little fish-eating mammals during the next million years or so.

Movie Review

"Galapagos" is the story of man's evolution as seen through the eyes of Leon Trotsky Trout. Ah, you say, how can a man see the course of evolution spanning more than a million years? Simple.

He is a ghost. The setting for Vonnegut's novel is (where else?) the Galapagos Islands. What better place to follow the evolution of man than Charles Darwin's old stomping grounds?

The story starts in 1986. The world is in serious economic trouble. War and famine reign. But even in the worst of times, a few well-to-do people remain unaffected.

These "unaffected" people include Mick Jagger, Jacqueline Onassis, Walter Cronkite and Henry Kissinger, among others. They are about to embark on a cruise through the Galapagos Islands, "The Nature Cruise of the Century."

Little did the passengers know that they were about to become the sole progenitors of the entire human race.

Unfortunately, Mick, Jacqueline, Walter and Henry would never make it to the Galapagos Islands. The gene pool for the entire human race would be limited to a handful of less-than-significant humans.

The story is in true Vonnegut form: funny, crazy, and touched with the cynicism of which Vonnegut is so fond.

Galapagos has no real plot. It has no chronological order. Vonnegut moves freely from 1980 to 2300 without a flinch, taking the same attitude about time he did in "Slaughterhouse-Five."

The thing that holds his work together is the grouping of random characters fated to fulfill destiny.

The characters' lives are bound by this common fate, which is unknown to them. Coincidence groups them, and they stumble along toward their preordained lot.

More than this bind, though, is an idea that runs constantly through Vonnegut's novels. That idea is that man

eventually will destroy his world and himself with technology.

Nuclear bombs, ice nine, and, in "Galapagos," a more general cause for man's destruction. "Great big brains" take the rap this time.

Vonnegut assumes the role of Father Nature. He preaches as if he were the watchguard of science. We can listen, or we can perish as the result of our "great big brains" working overtime to assure our destruction.

Despite Vonnegut's lack of plot, his stories do have substance. Some of his characters are unforgettable, if not lovable.

If you have read Vonnegut before, you will recognize Kilgore Trout, appearing again in "Galapagos." He is the eccentric science fiction writer who has appeared in some of Vonnegut's other novels. The narrator of Galapagos, Leon Trout, is Kilgore Trout's son.

"Galapagos" is good, fun reading. But if you want to taste Vonnegut's style at its best, pick up "Cat's Cradle" or "Slaughterhouse-Five."

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'Out of Africa' still best seller

Not too long ago the best-selling books in the university and Nebraska Bookstores either were written by Stephen King, Gary Larson or Berke Breathed or were about Tom Osborne.

Now, "The Color Purple" and "Out of Africa" — recent movie releases — have topped the charts for the third straight week. King has dropped to No. 9 on one list and Osborne's autobiography, "More Than Winning," is missing from both lists.

Here are last week's top sellers from both student bookstores:

University Bookstore

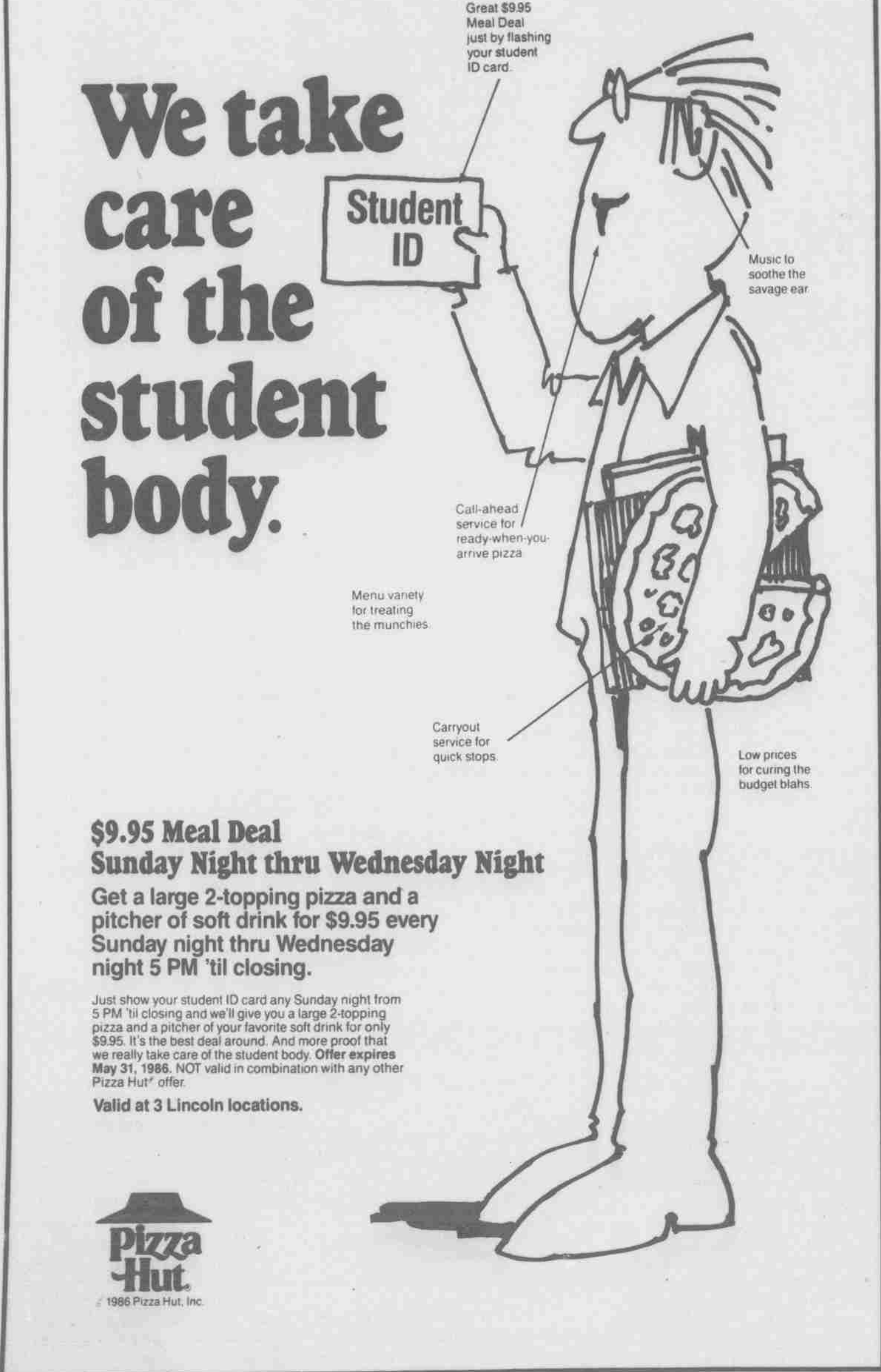
1. "Out of Africa," Isak Dinesen (Vintage, \$4.95)
2. "The Color Purple," Alice Walker (Pocket, \$3.95)
3. "The Original Hitchhiker Radio Scripts," Douglas Adams (Harmony, \$9.95)
4. "Lake Wobegon Days," Garrison Keillor (Viking, \$17.95)
5. "Valley of the Far Side," Gary Larson (Andrews, McMeel and Parker, \$5.95)
6. "Love Medicine," Louise Erdrich (Bantam, \$6.95)
7. "How to Massage Your Cat," Alice M. Brock (Knopf, \$4.95)

8. "Neil's Book of the Dead," Planer and Blacker (Harmony, \$8.95)
9. "White Noise," Dan Delillo (Penguin, \$5.95)
10. "Penguin Dreams and Stranger Things," Berke Breathed (Little, Brown and Co., \$6.95)

Nebraska Bookstore

1. "Out of Africa," Isak Dinesen (Vintage, \$4.95)
2. "The Color Purple," Alice Walker (Pocket, \$3.95)
3. "Breaking with Moscow," Arkady N. Shevenko (Ballantine, \$4.95)
4. "Surely You're Joking, Mr. Feynman," Richard Feynman (Bantam, \$4.50)
5. "Bridge Across Forever," Richard Bach (Dell, \$3.95)
6. "Love," Leo Buscaglia (Fawcett, \$3.95)
7. "Strong Medicine," Arthur Hailey (Dell, \$4.50)
8. "World Almanac and Book of Facts, 1986," (Newspaper Enterprise Assoc. Inc., \$5.95)
9. "Talisman," Stephen King and Peter Straub (Berkley, \$4.95)
10. "Third Garfield Treasury," Jim Davis (Ballantine, \$8.95)

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