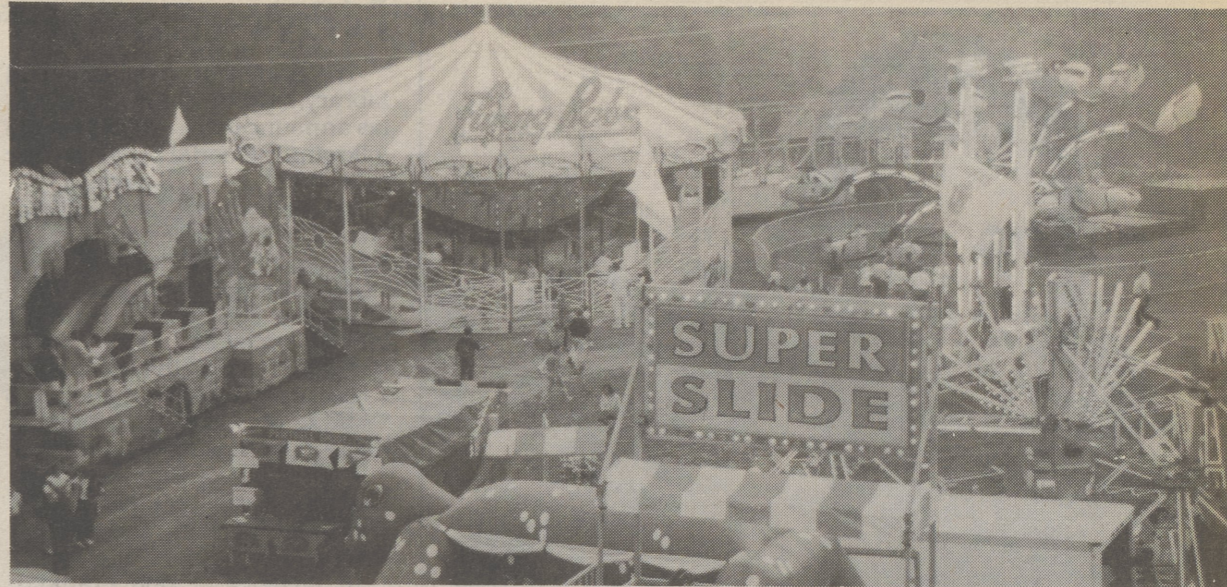


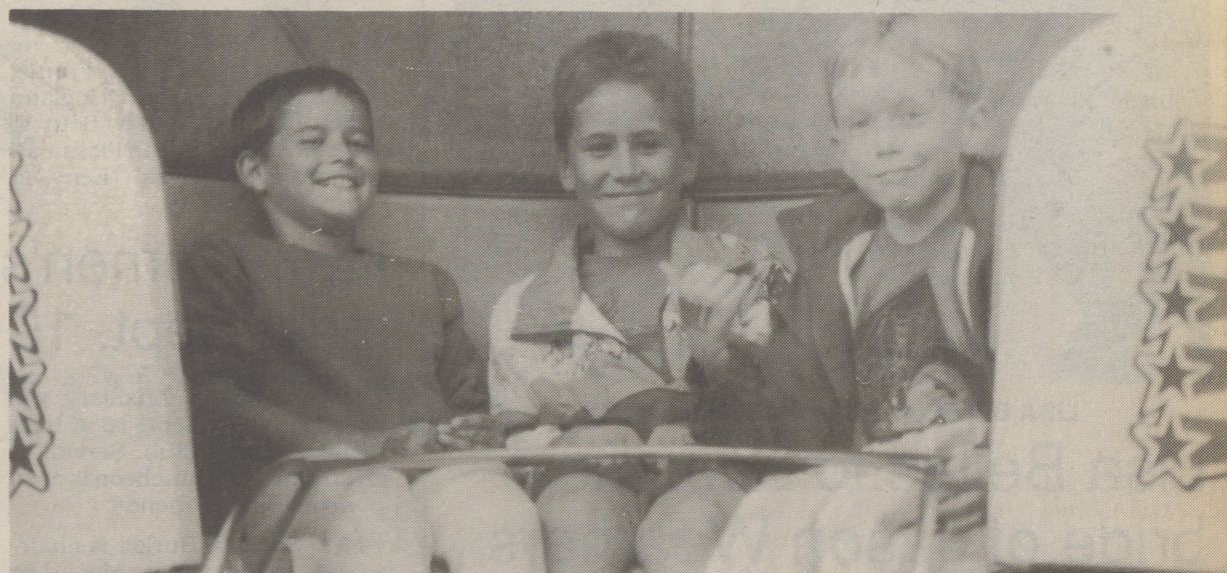


T H E F U N A T F A I R

Jim Warman of Centermoreland with 'Tawny,' which won first place in the 4-H class and third place in open competition.



View from atop the Ferris wheel



A trio of Harveys Lake boys took their turn on the Tilt-A-Whirl. From left, David Hughes, Josh Scanlon, Danny Fiorpuselli.

A. Case for conservation

These 'alien' invaders are here to stay

By ALENE N. CASE

Think of a pest that you wish would disappear. It may be a bird, an insect, a plant, or a mammal. I would wager that whatever it is, it used to live somewhere else. Let me give you several examples.

Carp were imported from Asia to eat unwanted water weeds. Now they keep many waterways so churned up that native species of fish cannot survive. Carp can, moreover, grow well in polluted waters and often give us a false sense of security about the health of a river or lake.

The common city pigeon was originally from Asia and Europe. In the wild, it roosts on cliffs, but it has easily adapted to use the ledges of buildings instead. Starlings and house sparrows were intentionally introduced from Europe during the last century. They also have adapted to city life and have taken over nesting sites formerly used by native birds such as woodpeckers, bluebirds and swallows.

Most people know that the gypsy moth was accidentally released by a scientist in Massachusetts. But, did you know that the common cabbage butterfly (the green "worm" that eats your garden broccoli) was also imported? So were the diseases that devastated the magnificent elm and chestnut trees earlier in this century.

Imported plants that have become nuisances include purple loosestrife which is taking over freshwater marshes, kudzu which chokes out all other vegetation in many areas of the south, and Japanese knotweed which is a continuing headache for those trying to restore riverside areas to a more natural condition. In our yard, we have several Norway maple trees. They are gorgeous in the fall and were really the only large trees on the lot so we have taken care of them. Several years ago, I realized that these trees are considered to be "weed trees" by most foresters and urban planners. They replace native maples that are stronger, more beautiful, and produce better lumber. (Eastern European foresters complain about black locust in the same way. It has tended to dominate after being introduced from America.)

But you say-I was thinking of more dangerous pests such as mice and rats. Although several kinds of rodents are native to North America, the house mouse and Norway rat are both aliens. Both are originally from Asia. Both were stowaways on European ships coming to the New World. The house mouse was here by the end of the 16th century.

Obviously, alien species do not always invade so as to become pests. Almost every yard or garden contains imported trees, shrubs, or herbs that originated somewhere else. Many of these do not reproduce naturally in the local climate. Even when they do, some are quite discreet about it - the date palm has not taken over Florida since its introduction from North Africa. The big problem is that one never knows what the consequences of an introduction will be.

There are many reasons that

introduced species often cause problems. They may not have predators (other animals that eat them) in the adopted region. The native plants and animals have not developed natural defenses against them. The invaders are frequently adapted to live in close proximity to humans before they arrive.

One of the most obvious reasons that aliens are so successful is that they are good travelers. That is usually how they got to their new location in the first place. The gypsy moth is a good example. If it were not such a good traveler, it would likely have eaten all the oak leaves in a localized area and then become extinct. But, the small caterpillars are blown long distances hanging by threads that they spin after hatching. Whole egg cases hitch rides on logs headed to sawmills, or in the wheel wells of camping trail-

ers. And, of course, the adult moths can fly. So, the northern hardwood forests never had a chance.

Most of these pests also reproduce rapidly and prolifically. The mouse is one of the more extreme examples. One female can have eight litters in one year. Each litter can produce up to one dozen young. These young mice are reproductively mature by the time they are one month old. Some basic arithmetic reveals a perpetual population explosion. And, these immigrants have not reduced the size of their families as their two-legged counterparts have done.

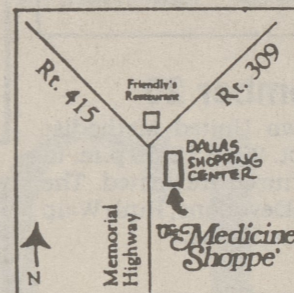
The aliens have invaded, and they are causing major problems for the native plants and animals as well as for human beings. And, there isn't much that any of us can do about it except to discourage new arrivals.

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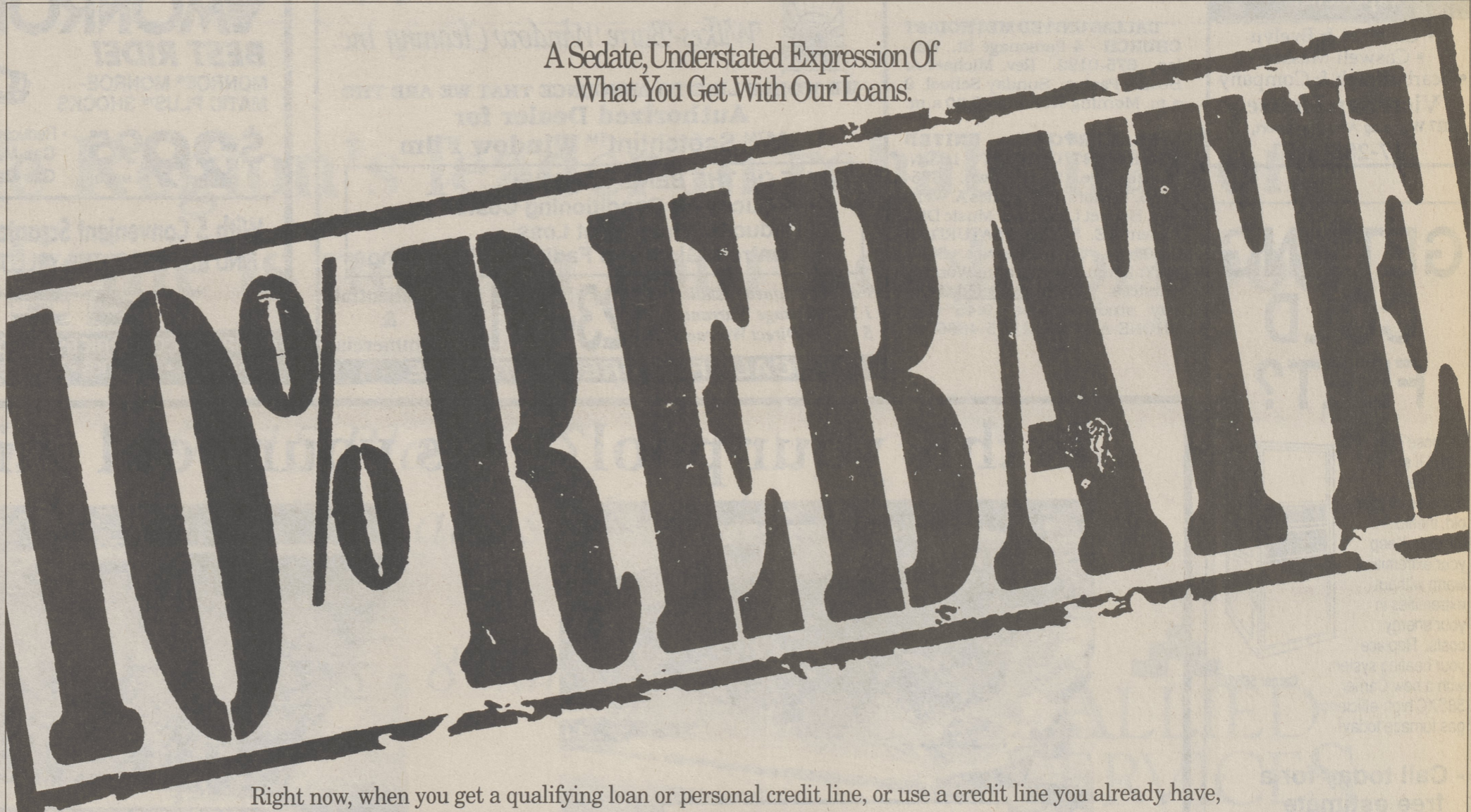
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