

Orator gives life to tales

■ A University employee's alter ego will try to set a record by reading aloud for 24 hours this summer

By Mason West
Oregon Daily Emerald

In a day when storytellers seem to be only beside your bed or on VH1, one man steps out of the silent crowd. This lone knight is known as Sir Readalot. But instead of inventing stories, this man chooses the classics of children's literature as his repertoire.

Sir Readalot's name is Rickie Birran and he works on the maintenance staff at the University. Birran always had a love for acting, storytelling, literature and working with kids.

"It just sort of evolved into this character: Sir Readalot," he said.

Birran vows to "show young readers in a unique way that reading is important." As Sir Readalot, Birran does selected readings and also holds marathon readings oc-

asionally. This summer, he will read aloud for 24 hours out of the first seven Oz books at the Wizard of Oz Centennial Convention in Indiana. This will establish a new record for length of a continued reading.

But Birran does more than just read the passages — he performs them.

"I sorta specialize in wild characters," Birran said.

For his reading of the Oz books, Birran is currently working on 72 different character voices. He says he goes through all this effort because, "I want the characters to be alive. As soon as Sir Readalot says his name, you don't know what's going to happen. I become the characters and the characters lead to the stories."

When Birran recently performed in front of a second/third grade class at Howard Elementary School, the children were very entertained, he said. Now, whenever those students are not having fun reading aloud in class, Birran said the teacher asks, "How would Sir

Readalot say that?"

To see the man in person, go to Borders bookstore on Saturday at 7 p.m. for his first CD release party. Birran will be reading excerpts from literary selections such as "Alice's Adventure in Wonderland," "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn" and "Treasure Island." Birran has performed before at Borders reading aloud the first book of Oz.

"His performance was fantastic and the kids there really enjoyed it," said Lillian Knutsen, community relations coordinator for Borders. Knutsen said that many kids stayed the entire four and a half hours it took to read the book.

While this all sounds good, the question lingers: Does the world really need a Sir Readalot? Birran certainly thinks so.

"We tell kids that reading is important, but can you think of everyday examples that show the value of reading?" he asked.

With Sir Readalot around, the answer is yes.

Food Service

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Dreyer's Cart and The Hearth Café.

Miller said that EMU Food Service projects to break even this school year, even though May and June are two traditionally volatile and difficult months to project profitability.

EMU Food Service's projected budget for next year is a total income of \$1,448,150, Miller said. He added that they also project to break even next year.

At the beginning of the school year, Food Service was losing money because the staff wasn't receiving information about waste and labor management. Miller said a new time card system was installed, and more programming events, such as poetry slams at The Buzz Café and Lounge, were added to increase revenue.

According to Miller, the loss in revenue occurred partly because Food Service was focused on finishing building renovations and getting the building open. The staff had to adjust to running its new eateries.

Miller said that during the transition, the staff was still being challenged by personnel moves. The baker and manager for The Greatful Bread, Peter Lohr, was not given a contract renewal. Miller said Lohr's release was not due to the financial situation of The Greatful Bread; EMU Food Service as a whole was losing money at the same time.

"The Greatful Bread baker was not terminated because the bakery was losing money," Miller said.

Miller said the largest fiscal turnaround for this school year

has come from The Greatful Bread and The Buzz. He added that this was because of the better control over labor, waste, cost of goods and what was produced. These improvements came from faster access to data and experience in meeting students' needs.

"We began to find more menu items and put them together in the way students appreciated," Miller said.

Customer revenue went up because of additions such as a soup and sandwich option at The Greatful Bread. Miller said students liked the fact that \$4 could buy them a complete meal.

"I think we became more in tune with students' pocketbooks," Miller said.

However, while food variety is improving, students are still complaining about the operation hours of EMU Food Service.

Sonya Moore, a freshman education major, said the hours of The Buzz are an inconvenience because it closes at 2 a.m. on Friday and Saturday and at midnight on Sunday and Monday.

"They should be open later on Sunday and Monday nights because people are studying and usually have projects due," Moore said.

Miller said that adjusting the hours of operation is a possibility for next year, including tentatively opening The Buzz earlier in the morning.

"I think we have to continue to survey their needs — what they expect, when they want it and at what time — and try to find out the best way to deliver that," he said.

As for further improvements to EMU Food Service, Miller will be

hiring a new Food Service director for next year and also assessing results from a nationwide satisfaction survey the EMU is taking part in, administered by the Association of College Unions International and Educational Benchmarking, Inc.

Teela Labrum opens The Buzz coffeehouse in the EMU on Monday, closes the coffeehouse on Tuesday and works during the middle of the day on Wednesday. The jumble of shifts is a taste of what it's like to work for EMU Food Service.

Labrum, a senior history major, has been an employee at The Buzz for two years.

"It's great to have short shifts between classes," Labrum said. "But it's a double-edged sword because you don't end up doing the same thing every day, and it gets to be confusing."

She mentioned that making changes in Food Service can be a difficult process. It took six months for price tags on pastries to be placed in the display case.

"It can get frustrating and make you not want to take an interest in your workplace, but things have gotten so much better than last year," she said.

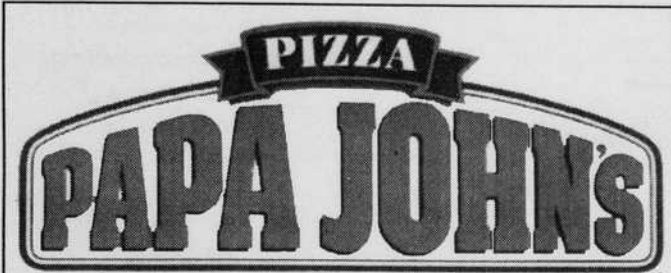
Labrum, who tried not to focus entirely on the drawbacks of working for EMU Food Service, said she enjoys interacting with a diverse group of student employees. She also mentioned that the staff is understanding of her need to work around issues such as a heavy load of schoolwork.

She said that this year, the number of customers she has seen at The Buzz has tripled due in part to better advertising and more selection.

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