

# Orlean no 'ordinary' writer

■ Susan Orlean spoke to an audience of 100 Thursday about making ordinary stories extraordinary

By Hank Hager  
Oregon Daily Emerald

Finding what is ordinary in life is not hard, but presenting it in a way that makes readers interested is what is most important, New Yorker magazine staff writer Susan Orlean told more than 100 students, faculty and community members who attended her speech Thursday night.

Orlean's speech, "Finding the Extraordinary in the Ordinary: Writing About Everyday Life," focused on her writing life and the misconception that celebrities are the only interesting people in the world.

Orlean is the 2001 Johnson Lecturer, a program sponsored by the School of Journalism and Communication that funds an annual speech.

"I'm particularly interested in the tiny master; the tiny domain where the person is the master," she said. "Quite often I'm interested in writing about people who are well-known, but not in the same parameter as celebrities."

Orlean said she began her writing career focusing more on writing about celebrities than the "ordinary" people of the world. After interviewing Tom Hanks for a story, she realized that she was not interested in writing about those who are well-known.

"This was my first moment of saying there is something seductive and fun in writing about celebrities," she said. Nevertheless, she said, people who are in the shadows are those who interest



Jon House Emerald

Magazine writer Susan Orlean takes questions after her guest lecture on Thursday.

her the most, and she believes it's important for her to use her gift to write about the unknown people of the world.

"Doing work you care about is an incredible privilege," she said. "That's a rare opportunity."

Journalism professor Lauren Kessler said Orlean possesses a curiosity about the world that lends well to her writing and makes the reader to want to read more.

"Susan Orlean is a mistress of the impossible lead," she said. "You read the first sentence and you have to read on."

Tim Gleason, dean of the school of journalism, said Orlean is an important speaker to the students interested in her field.

"She is very much a natural fit for our students in literary nonfiction and magazine writing," he said. "It's a rare opportunity for students and faculty to interact with a writer of her caliber."

Orlean said writing in her field is not easy.

"It's not always easy to convince an editor to run a story about nothing," she said. "[And] it's not always easy to people who are not used to being written about."

Orlean spoke of an instance in which she was asked to write about Macaulay Culkin, but instead chose to write about a 10-year-old boy who was considered ordinary by society's standards. She had a problem in the end, because the child had become so enamored with her that he was upset when she was done with the story. But, she said, writers cannot become attached to those they write about and should never show their stories to their subjects before they are published, because then people may doubt that the writer is objective.

Orlean said she has a passion for her stories and tries to show that to those who read her work.

"All I can bring to it is a passion of my own and say this is really an incredible story," she said.

## Arson

continued from page 1

crimes stemming from the June 2000 Romania fire.

The task force's first duty will be to continue the investigation into the March 30 Romania fire, EPD Capt. Thad Buchanan said.

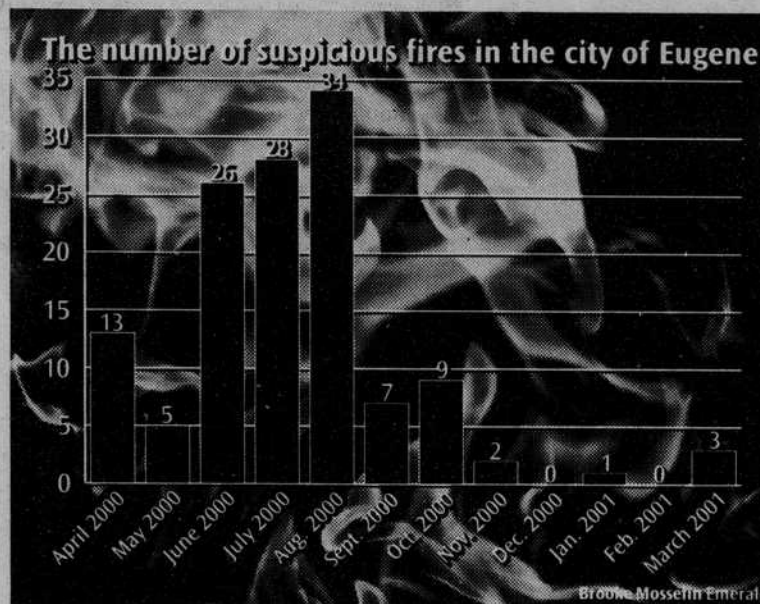
Early Thursday morning, the FBI executed a search warrant for Earth Liberation Front spokesman Craig Rosebraugh's Portland home, business and two automobiles. Buchanan said information from the Romania fire aided in the officers' being able to obtain the search warrant.

While the FBI led the Rosebraugh search, Eugene police, Oregon State Police and ATF officers participated in the execution of the search warrant. FBI spokeswoman Beth Ann Steele said Rosebraugh was detained for a short while during the search, but contrary to earlier media reports, was not arrested.

This is the second time in a year agents have searched Rosebraugh's possessions.

The FBI would not identify specific items seized in the search, and Steele said the information within the search warrant is still sealed.

As of Thursday afternoon, police continued to follow up on more



than 100 leads in the Romania fire. No suspects have been identified, and no arrests have been made.

A March 19 communiqué the ELF issued called for an International Day of Action on Earth Day, April 22. The communiqué "invites participation from all interested parties — cells of the Animal Liberation Front, Earth First!, antigeneix campaigners, and any other group or individual willing to stand

with us and declare, 'No compromise in defense of Mother Earth!'"

Buchanan said the task force will also continue the investigation of the March 20 arson attempt at University men's basketball coach Ernie Kent's house. No new information or leads have developed in the case, Buchanan said. The house, at 3335 Park Hill, was unoccupied at the time of the fire and was in the process of being renovated.

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