

Women in the Woods
 August 23-26, 2001
 A lesbian cultural event and retreat
 at Breitenbush Hot Springs
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- Experiment with your creativity
- Play volleyball
- Read, write
- Dr.
- Mi

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Counter Media

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Summer Pride Series is presented by a generous grant from the Hoover Family Foundation, Equity Foundation (Kregg Arnston & Theodore Feltig Fund, Peter and Erica Goodwin Fund), Fantasy Video/Oregon Entertainment and Just Out.

BOOKS

Talk of the town

Continued from Page 1

Sedaris makes it clear to me that being kind is not only the right thing to do, it is the smart thing to do—the goodwill he engenders helps sell his next book. He also disdains those authors who use their book tours as opportunities to get laid.

He doesn't mind picking up a few extra bucks along the way, however, and has been putting a tip jar on the table at his book signings. "Everyone else has one," he says. "Why not me?"

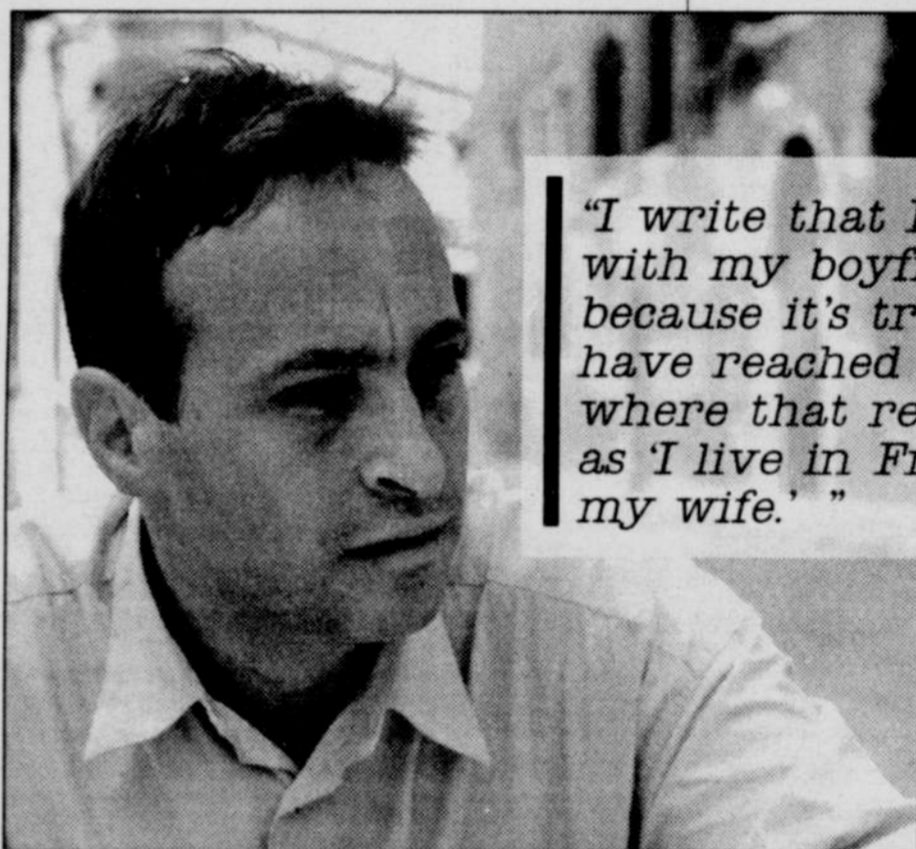
Portland fans will be pleased to know that the \$143 they donated (a record high for Sedaris) will be returning to the local economy. "I've been saving my tips for Mario's," he says. "It's my favorite men's clothing store in the United States." The unapologetic smoker adds that he's usually afraid to wear what he buys, however, for fear he'll burn a hole in his nice new clothes.

Glass first heard him and eventually put him on the radio to read his now-legendary account of working as a Christmas elf at Macy's.

The irony of being as famous for his voice as for his writing is not lost on Sedaris, who opens *Me Talk Pretty One Day* with his account of being tormented by an elementary school speech therapist trying to eliminate his lisp.

"None of the therapy students were girls," he writes. "They were all boys like me who kept movie star scrapbooks and made their own curtains. 'You don't want to do that,' the men in our families would say. 'That's a girl thing.' Baking scones and cupcakes for the school janitors, watching *Guiding Light* with our mothers, collecting rose petals for use in a fragrant potpourri—anything worth doing turned out to be a girl thing.... When asked what we wanted to be when we grew up, we hid the truth and listed who we wanted to sleep with when we grew up. 'A policeman or a fireman or one of those guys who works with high-tension wires.'"

When one considers the frankness with which Sedaris writes about his sexuality, his phenomenal mainstream success seems all the more remarkable, but he



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is unfazed by it. "I write that I live in France with my boyfriend in France because it's true," he told *The Advocate* recently. "We should have reached the point by now where that reads the same as 'I live in France with my wife.'"

Sedaris' relationship with Oregon goes back to his student days when, in a misguided *Grapes of Wrath*-inspired fantasy, he decided to pick apples in the Hood River Valley, a story he relates in his previous collection of essays, *Naked*. Like most of his adventures, his career as a migrant worker proved a complete failure, but it was during that time that he began keeping a journal, a habit he continued when he returned to art school in his native Raleigh, N.C.

"We'd have these critiques in art school that would go on for fucking hours, and it was like people talking to their therapists—it was so incredibly boring," he emphasizes in his distinctive nasal tenor. "I didn't really have anything to say about my paintings, so I started writing little stories that were like a parody of critique talk, and I'd get up and read those."

The other students found Sedaris' material (and his delivery) so funny he frequently was asked to give readings as part of other artists' performance pieces. It was under such a circumstance in Chicago that NPR commentator Ira

Any doubts about Sedaris' appeal certainly were laid to rest after his recent lovefest with David Letterman. Not only was it the first time an author has read from his work on the show, it might have been the first time any author has done a late-night reading in decades. Letterman, clearly a huge fan, even told Sedaris that although it was good to see him, he'd rather the author was home writing more stuff.

Critics are running out of superlatives to rave about his work and have compared him favorably with Oscar Wilde, Dorothy Parker, James Thurber, Mark Twain and Woody Allen, to whom he bears a slight resemblance. His reviews are so uniformly ecstatic I'd say they sound like his parents wrote them, but anyone familiar with Sedaris' books knows his parents never have had many nice things to say about him. *The New York Post*, however, recently trumpeted that the only reason Sedaris isn't the funniest writer in the United States is because he lives in France.

Much of *Me Talk Pretty One Day* deals with that move.

