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BOOKS BY LOIS WADSWORTH

Sherm Alexie at UO

Stories to share.

TEN LITTLE INDIANS, stories by Sherman Alexie. Grove Press, 2003. Paperback, \$13.

Each of the nine stories in Sherm Alexie's latest collection stands alone, yet read sequentially, the stories build the reader's appreciation for Alexie's storytelling artistry. He handles language beautifully, creates characters we care about and ponders details that situate his stories in the real world, but Alexie is foremost a storyteller. Whether you sit around a fire and tell stories on a summer night or hole up in a house on the coast and take turns reading them to each other on a rainy day, Alexie's rhythmic language lends itself to being read aloud. These are stories to share.

When Alexie reads at 7 pm on May 12 in 150 Columbia on the UO campus, come prepared to experience a wordsmith and performance artist with a passion for telling stories.

"Flight Patterns" tells William's story, a husband and father who must leave his desirable wife and loving child still in bed on a Seattle morning. William, who is flying to a meeting in Chicago, feels that he's always leaving the people he most wants to be with. On this morning, his talkative taxi driver asks if his wife and daughter are beautiful and if William misses them when he's away. William shares his thoughts with the driver.

"I miss them so much I go crazy," said William. "I start thinking I'm going to disappear, you know, just vanish, if I'm not home. Sometimes I worry their love is the only thing that makes me human, you know? I think if they stopped loving me, I might burn

up, spontaneously combust, and turn into little pieces of oxygen and hydrogen and carbon. Do you know what I'm saying?"

William and the driver, an Ethiopian man named Fekadu, swap stories.

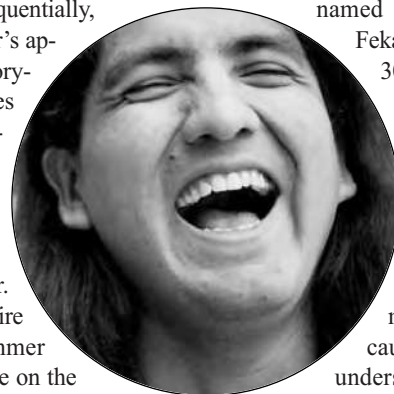
Fekadu left his wife and sons 30 years earlier when he defected from a dictatorship by flying his military plane to France, where he received asylum. He's never seen them again. By the end of their journey to the airport, the men have found common cause, laughed together and understood each other. And

William has found the resolve to follow his heart.

The first story in the collection, "The Search Engine," is about a Native American college student named Corliss, who discovers a book of poems by a man claiming to be a Spokane. No one knows anything about him. Her curiosity leads her to find him. The poet tells her he hadn't written a poem in 30 years, but when he did write it was to feel like he belonged, "to feel more Indian."

In each story, Alexie shows us how it is for his Native American characters to live in white America now. Sardonicly, often sadly or hilariously, Alexie gives us a perspective on our dominant culture that we need, a cure for a social illness we might not even know we have. But once we've taken in his words, the world seems better balanced than before.

I doled out these stories over a couple of weeks, savoring each one and allowing it to work on me as I slept. I'm grateful to Alexie for making me happy about his work. Alexie's exuberant yet lyrical stories shed light and love on our human condition. **EW**



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Book Notes May 6 - June 3 2004: The Spring issue of *Etude: the Journal of Literary Nonfiction* now available online at <http://etude.uoregon.edu> includes interviews, feature stories, essays, reviews and more. ...Poet **B.H. Fairchild** (*Occult Memory Systems of the Lower Midwest*), recent winner of National Book Critics Circle Award, reads at 8 pm on May 6 in 282 Lillis (the new Business building across street from UO Bookstore). ...**Dawn G. Stuart** speaks on "Book Marketing in the 21st Century" at 7 pm on May 6 in Baker Downtown Center. Mid-Valley Willamette Writers' members free; \$5 non-members. ...**Calvin Trillin, Mary Karr** and **Robert Stone** read "A Dramatic Dialogue adapted from the letters, essays and notebooks of Ernest Hemingway and Zeldia and Scott Fitzgerald" at 8 pm on May 8 at the First Congregational Church, Portland. Tickets (503) 227-2583. ...**Phil Condon** (*Clay Center*) reads at 7 pm on May 10 in Knight Library Browsing Room, UO campus. ...Former Eugene novelist **Diana Abu-Jaber** (*Crescent*) reads in Portland at 12:30 pm on May 10 in Annie Blooms (7834 SW Capitol Highway). ...**Sherman Alexie** (*Ten Little Indians: Stories*) reads at 7 pm on May 12 in 150 Columbus Hall. ...**Martin Prechtel** (*The Toe Bone and the Tooth*) reads at 7 pm on May 13 in Tsunami Books. ...**Mark Pearson** (*Europe From a Backpack: Real Stories from Young Travelers Abroad*) reads at 7 pm on May 17 in EMU International Lounge, UO. ...Poet **Martha Silano** (*What the Truth Tastes Like*) and personal essayist **Bette Lynch Husted** (*Above the Clearwater*) read at 7 pm on May 18 in Eugene Public Library downtown. ...Essayist **Kathleen Dean Moore** (*Pine Island Paradox*) reads at 7 pm on May 20 in 100 Willamette Hall, UO campus. ...**Ana Maria Spagna** (*Now Go Home: Wilderness, Belonging and the Crosscut Saw*) reads at 2 pm on May 22 in UO Bookstore. Spagna also reads at 7 pm on May 21 in Corvallis at Grass Roots Books. ...Radio commentator **David Barsamian** (*Louder Than Bombs*) speaks at 7 pm on May 24 in Eugene, First United Methodist Church, sliding scale \$5-\$10. Barsamian also speaks at 7 pm on May 19 in Corvallis, Oddfellows Hall; and at 4 pm on May 22 in Florence, Siuslaw Public Library. ...**James Frey** (*A Million Little Pieces*) speaks at 7:30 pm on May 26 in Portland, Powells Books. ...**Tom Cantwell** (*The Seminole and the Slave*) reads at 7:30 pm on June 2 in Sheldon Community Center (2245 Willakenzie, next to Sheldon H.S.). ...Essayist **Brian Doyle** (*Leaping: Revelations and Epiphanies*) presents the four award winners in *Oregon Quarterly's* Northwest Perspectives Essay Contest at 7 pm on June 3 in Gerlinger Alumni Lounge.