

Miserable Enough?

Tips from a master for aspiring humor writers

"Nothing bad ever happens to humor writers," Garrison Keillor told 300-some of us aspiring authors at a recent humor writers' workshop. "It's all material."

Nothing bad? You mean bad like last night when my 75-gallon Sanipac recycling bin tipped over as I wheeled it curbside, whacked me in the shins on its downward trajectory with its hinged heavy-gauge plastic lid knocking me off balance into a head-first lurch toward the gaping maw where I'd been poised to dump two more paper grocery bags stuffed with tomato sauce cans, crushed cereal boxes and no-longer-reusable aluminum foil, but instead careened headlong into the bin's nest of junk mail, paper towel cores and not-quite-thoroughly rinsed cardboard take-out containers that gave the bottom of the bin where my face landed the distinct aroma of old garbage, my legs and feet sticking out



Garrison Keillor and Sally Sheklow

Did my childhood qualify me to become a successful humor writer? Keillor gave me hope.

the open end like the last half of some helpless prey going down the gullet of a hungry anaconda — you mean bad like that? Is that material?

The great humorist stood on the keynote stage in his trademark red sneakers, red socks and matching red tie. We laughed and took notes. He extolled the prerequisite of an unhappy childhood for good humor writing.

Unhappy? Like years of dreary 112-degree summers in my 1950s pre-air conditioning Southern California desert home with nothing to do but read *Little Lulu* comics and learn the hard way that a garden hose through the window would not turn my bedroom into a swimming pool, this misery interrupted only by the arrival of a new little sister who would replace me as baby of the family and who looked nothing like the smooth-cheeked, shiny-haired Calamity Jane doll I'd expected, but instead came home from the hospital all bald and red and pimply with a rotten banana peel where her belly button should be and a soft spot on her head I wasn't allowed to touch — but did anyway, engendering in my tired, hard-working parents a constant wariness that caused them forever after to withhold the affection which otherwise flowed freely to my sibs? Unhappy like that? Did my childhood qualify me to become a successful humor writer? Garrison Keillor gave me hope.

"You need to court disaster," the Wobegon idol of contemporary American literature advised us humor-writing aspirants. "Where there's suffering, there's comedy."

Suffering? Like living without equal civil rights protections in a country where people like me are thrown out of their homes, outcast by their religions and subjected to all manner of rejection, harassment and violence while our nation undergoes yet another election year with not one single presidential candidate willing to endorse marriage equality for same-sex couples, and right-wing evangelicals petition to place initiatives to overturn our state's hard-won nondiscrimination and domestic partnership laws onto the November ballot which will be decided by the very same electorate who passed Oregon's one-man/one-woman constitutional amendment, voters who don't give a rip if my partner of 20 years isn't entitled to my social security benefits in the event of my death — you mean that kind of suffering?

In that case, yes, I believe I do measure up.

Thanks, Mr. Keillor. I look forward to someday autographing my best-seller for you.

Award-winning writer Sally Sheklow hones her craft in Eugene, Oregon. Award-winning writer, humorist and musician Garrison Keillor comes to Eugene June 30 for the Oregon Bach Festival. Tix at www.hultcenter.org or 682-5000.

Wandering Goat Coffee Company
THIS WEEK!

Fri May 16th • Understory Prod. FIMSKOOL Benefit @ 7PM • Free Shot Friday!
Sat May 17th • Fall of Snow, Sweetheart Parade, Mood Area 52 @ 7PM
Sun May 18th • DJ Disston @ noon-ish
Wed May 21st • Heckler's Night! @ 7PM • This week: "Southland Tales"
Thur May 22nd • YOU BET YOUR ASS TRIVIA @ 8PM, Fred Van Vactor @ 9PM

268 Madison Street • 541-344-5161
m-f 7am-11pm, Sat 9am-11pm, Sun 9am-9pm

ENTER TO WIN
A PAIR OF TICKETS TO:

MICHAEL FRANTI & SPEARHEAD
CUTHBERT AMPHITHEATER • SATURDAY MAY 24TH
ENTER AT EUGENEWEEKLY.COM

Astrology

A Guide to Your Authentic Self



What does your birth chart reveal about your life purpose and destination?

Wednesday Evenings
June 4 – July 16

With Demetra George
A Healing Space in Eugene – 343-1887

How Can I Keep From Singing?



Soromundi
Lesbian Chorus of Eugene

Spring Concert
Saturday, May 17
7:30PM at the Hult Center

Tickets at the Hult Center Ticket Office, 682-5000, or www.hultcenter.org

NOW SERVING DINNER!

Authentic Korean Menu 5-9pm

BEST HANGOVER BREAKFAST!
FOR THE 4TH STRAIGHT YEAR • 2004 • 2005 • 2006 • 2007



Breakfast all day
Two Kitchens – NO WAIT!

Since 1948
Brails
RESTAURANT

MON-SAT 7am-3pm • 5pm-9pm SUN 7am-3pm
1689 Willamette • Eugene • 343-1542