

Grunt, Gulp, Bonk, Spook, Stiff and More

WRITER MARY ROACH WILL VISIT THE EUGENE PUBLIC LIBRARY FOR A Q&A AND BOOK SIGNING

By Asia Alvarez Zeller

When science writer and humorist Mary Roach started her journalism career, she reported on health, medicine and the human body. “Science is the world,” Roach says. “Your body, your brain, your pets, your computer... it’s all science.”

Since 2004, Roach has been writing books, usually with one-word titles, on the human aspect of science. Her books include *Spook*, *Bonk*, *Gulp* and *Packing for Mars*.

On Sunday, June 23, Roach will visit the Eugene Public Library for a talk, Q&A and book signing. The 3 pm event is free and sure to be not only a scientific exploration, but a fun one at that.

“I’m not a hard core science writer,” Roach tells *Eugene Weekly*. “I try to keep it fun, so the talk should be fun.”

That Roach tries to keep it fun is an understatement. In her books, she dives deep into not just the mechanics of whatever scientific topic she’s exploring, but the often quirky human aspect of it.

Her first book, *Stiff: the Curious Lives of Human Cadavers*, explores the strange lives of dead bodies. Her newest book, *Grunt: the Curious Science of Humans at War*, takes you on the front lines of the exhaustion, heat and panic soldiers feel on active duty. As the book is described, “Take a tour of duty with Roach, and you’ll never see our nation’s defenders in the same way again.”

She says her inspiration comes from a “built-in curiosity” she has about the human body and the world around her.

“Because I’m almost always writing about the human body, I think my interest comes from the fact that I have one and I’m curious,” Roach laughs. “How does that thing work? You never get to see the inside of it, you never get to see your own skeleton, you don’t know how your guts work.”

Through her books, she finds things like this out, taking her readers along for the ride.

Roach calls writing a book “a magical key to doors you wouldn’t otherwise get to open,” and on Sunday she holds that door open for you. Stop in. ■

For more information on the event, visit eugene-or.gov/library. Find more information on Mary Roach at maryroach.net.



slant

• The **Clean Energy Jobs Bill** passed the House in the Oregon Legislature after hours of debate June 17. It heads for the Senate next, where we wish it a swift passage because we are long past due to act on the climate. Oregon Republicans might disagree — state Rep. David Brock-Smith of Port Orford accused Oregon of having “an epidemic of trees.” State Rep. Caddy McKeown, a Democrat from Coos Bay, voted against the bill, as did state Rep. Brad Witt of Clatskanie, but more locally our Dems made us proud. Springfield state Rep. John Lively spoke in favor of HB 2020: “The truth is that I got the opportunity to live most my life without the consequences of humankind’s contributions to climate change. I got my opportunity. I want other generations to have the same opportunity.”

• Oregon Sen. Jeff Merkley is ahead of the crowd when he talks about **“climate crisis” instead of “global warming” and “climate change.”** Those words are too mild, and they don’t really describe what is happening to this planet. *The Guardian* newspaper has been harping on this point, using “climate emergency” and “crisis” and other tougher descriptions. Too bad our president and too many Republicans don’t get it like Merkley does.



• **Portland is trying a new way to help its homeless.** Here Together is a new organization bringing together service providers, business leaders, elected officials and advocates “who believe homelessness in the Portland metro region is a solvable problem.” First step is hiring an executive director who is “bright, compassionate and driven.” If you’re interested, contact interim director Angela Martin at Angela@wheelhousenw.com or 503-810-9770. The work of Here Together is focused on public education, community engagement and “building a coalition to support a region-wide response that targets the roots of the homelessness and matches proven solutions with the scale and scope of the crisis.” Equally important, Mayor Ted Wheeler’s proposed 2020 budget “targets homelessness,” as *The Oregonian* puts it.

• Don’t let the security system at the entrance of the Wayne Morse Federal Courthouse scare you away from a fascinating art show that lasts until Oct. 15. **“Immigration Nation: celebrating the art of local immigrants,”** displays work by immigrants from Russia, India, Brazil, Chile and Costa Rica. The artists’ reception even offered a spread of food from those countries. Sponsored by the Federal Bar Association, the show is a welcome local counterpoint to the anti-immigrant fever that Donald Trump hopes will win him a second term.

• Lane Community College President Margaret Hamilton wants these programs in her college’s future: a **drone tech program, cyber-security technician training, data analytics training and training that addresses shortages in health care.** That’s what Hamilton told the City Club of Eugene June 14 in a high-energy presentation about her college, which enrolled 25,000 students last year. She also wants better connections with high schools, colleges and universities, and advances for the adult learner. After coming to Eugene from New Jersey two years ago to fill former LCC president Mary Spilde’s formidable shoes, Hamilton is still running, not walking, and we expect her to reach many of those goals. LCC has already announced that it kicks off a two-year degree program in cybersecurity this fall.