



SMOKE SIGNALS

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A Publication of the Grand Ronde Tribe

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UMPQUA

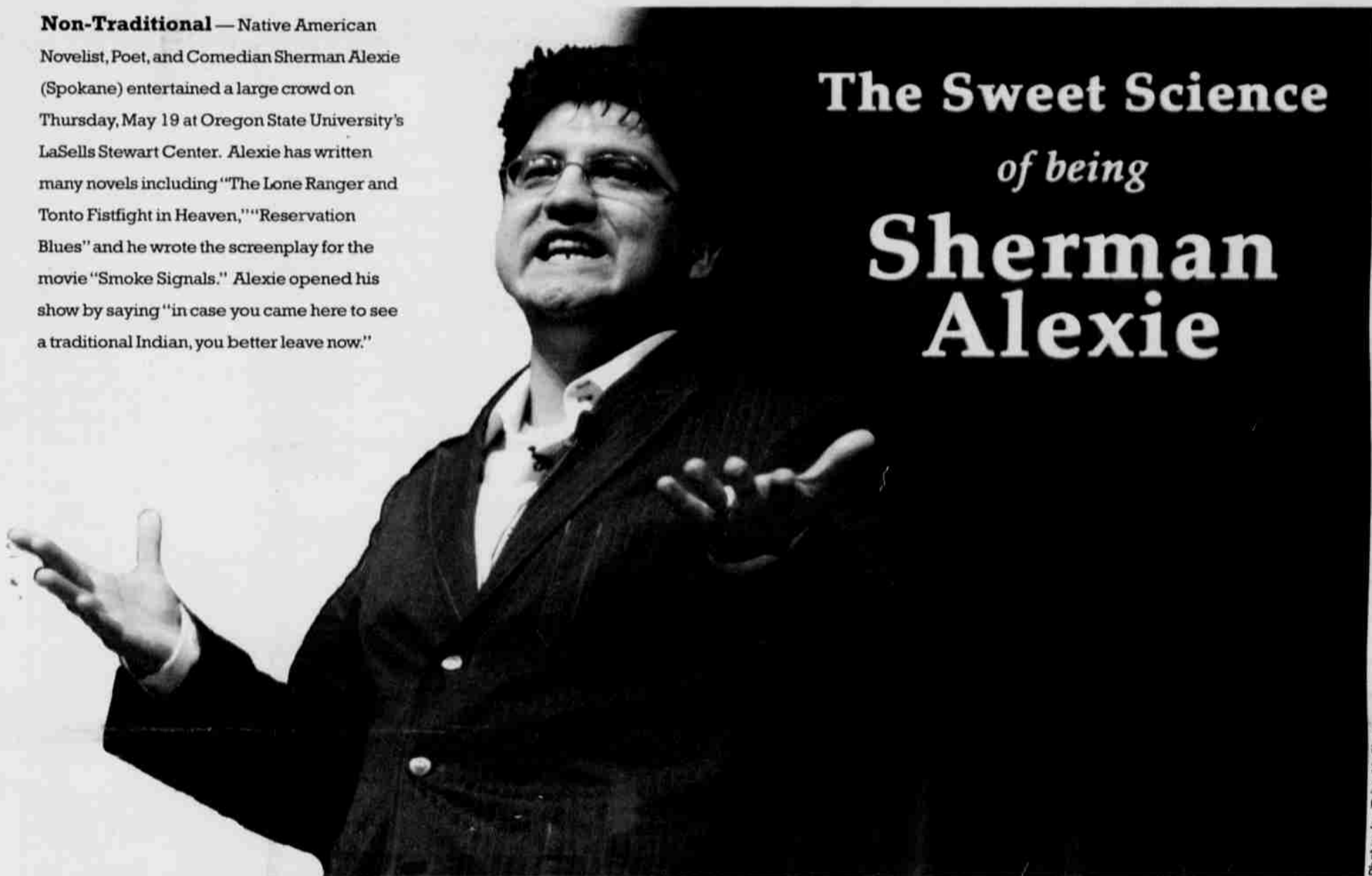
MOLALLA

ROGUE RIVER

KALAPUYA

CHASTA

Non-Traditional — Native American Novelist, Poet, and Comedian Sherman Alexie (Spokane) entertained a large crowd on Thursday, May 19 at Oregon State University's LaSells Stewart Center. Alexie has written many novels including "The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven," "Reservation Blues" and he wrote the screenplay for the movie "Smoke Signals." Alexie opened his show by saying "in case you came here to see a traditional Indian, you better leave now."



The Sweet Science of being Sherman Alexie

Photos by Toby McClary

■ Sherman Alexie brings down the house at OSU.

By Ron Karten

Looking back, you'd have to say that vegans took the worst beating at the hands of Indian Country's premier novelist and poet.

Sherman Alexie (Spokane) was merciless on them during his two-hour show at Oregon State University's LaSells Stewart Center on Thursday, May 19, and it must be a long-running shtick for him because, he said, "I've gotten death threats from vegans."

But he wasn't afraid. "What are they going to do? Throw their Birkenstocks at me?"

He took down liberals and conservatives with equal gusto, moved on to Oprah and the military, men with little pony tails, Indians acting tough, anti-war demonstrators doing anything, fundamentalism in general and in specific, and Indian casinos, too, just to let you know that he wasn't playing favorites.

"There's nothing better than expressing our sovereignty by participating in the worst excesses of capitalism," he said.

On the sweat lodge experience, he said, "Yeah, that's what I want to do — in flu season — crawl into an indigenous Petri dish."

Not even childhood escaped. "People who say that childhood is wonderful are full of shit," he said. "I fully understand why people throw kids out of car windows. You don't do it, but for a minute you think, 'They'll bounce.'"

He started the show with a nod to the two young women who signed his program for the deaf. They blushed frequently as they struggled to translate four-letter words

and to express such concepts as walking down the aisle of a plane in extreme gastric distress, but first, Alexie thoughtfully included them. He sidled up to the working signer, and asked her, "How do you say, 'I have a crush on the big Indian'?" Now, Alexie has perfect timing in his delivery, and he waited a beat



Sherman Alexie



Photo by Toby McClary

Tomorrow's Leaders Today — Students from the Class of 2005 at Chemawa Indian Boarding School listen to a speech given by Valedictorian Mercedes Cree Medicine (Blackfeet). The graduation was held in the Chemawa Auditorium on Friday, May 20. There were 85 graduates and Victory Black Lance (Rosebud Sioux) was the Salutatorian.



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