



Celebration Week 2004



Best-selling author Augusten Burroughs talks to an attentive audience about his works. Burroughs was the keynote speaker of Celebration Week.

A Writer's Adventures

The New York Times best-selling author Augusten Burroughs swings by UNC to speak about his childhood, relationships and writer's block.

By David Ruskey

He wears designer blazers over casual T-shirts and trendy glasses under baseball caps.

He is the best-selling author of three books: "Sellelevision," "Running with Scissors" and "Dry."

He has been profiled in everything from Entertainment Weekly to The Advocate.

And April 6 proved that on top of it all, he is also an incredible speaker.

But the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender - Straight Alliance didn't choose Augusten Burroughs as the keynote speaker of Celebration Week based solely on his books, Details magazine column or even his unusual sense of style.

"We chose (him) ... in hopes that such a big name would get folks out from both the LGBTQ community on campus and the greater community at large," said sophomore Sarah Carucci, one of Celebration Week's lead organizers. "We really wanted to reach out to those people who don't typically associate themselves with GLBT-SA."

The plan, it seems, was a success. More than 100 students and community members attended the speech and book signing.

As Burroughs fiddled with a rubber band and overemphasized each blink of his eyes, he opened the speech by announcing his problematic dislike for actually speaking.

"Who wants to hear me talk?" he asked. "Everything I have to say, I say in a book. (Questions and answers) are really the most interesting part - for myself and for the people attending the event."

Burroughs went on to explain the unorthodox childhood he wrote about in "Running with Scissors." The book has remained nearly 50 weeks on The New York Times Best-Seller List.

"I spent all of my twenties running away from my childhood world," he said.

This world included a manic-depressive mother who sent him to live with a psychiatrist, a new house with an old electroshock machine beneath the stairwell, and a 34-year-old man named Bookman, with whom he shared a relationship.

"(That relationship) was never questioned or picked apart," he said. "It was as natural as being right- or left-handed."

But when Bookman left one day to get film and didn't return, Burroughs was never the same.

"I developed issues," he said, laughing and making quotation marks in the air with his fingers. "We all have events that define us. That was the biggest."

He did his best to move through life against these odds. Despite this childhood, Burroughs, who never learned long division and who once

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continued on page 7