

# Fox's Bill O'Reilly makes pit stop

## TV talk-show host greets his fans at ERAU

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DAYTONA BEACH — There was a lot of noise around Daytona International Speedway on Saturday afternoon, and not all of it was coming from the track or stands.

Bill O'Reilly was nearby, and he let everyone know loudly and clearly what he and his popular cable TV show are all about.

"It appeals to working Americans," O'Reilly said of his top-rated show on the Fox News Channel. "It's honest, and it makes you think."

The electric, opinionated broadcast journalist made a pit stop Saturday afternoon at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University as part of a town forum sponsored by radio station WNDB. Judging by the size and enthusiasm of the often-vocal crowd, it seemed O'Reilly had just won the Daytona 500.

Nearly 400 people filled ERAU's Instructional Center to hear O'Reilly speak and another 50 witnessed a live video feed in a nearby room. When the author was introduced, he was given a raucous standing ovation.

Tickets were free but had to be obtained in advance from the radio station. Radio personality Marc Bernier, who was host for the forum, said the station turned away hundreds due to seating restrictions. He said it was the biggest forum so far in the semiannual series.

O'Reilly's appearance even attracted a crew from C-SPAN, which airs public affairs programs on cable TV. The O'Reilly segment will air on the network's "Book TV" program in the near future, said a radio station official.

The impetus of O'Reilly's visit was the author's new book, "The O'Reilly Factor," which bears the same name as his show. Since its release in September, the book has reached the No. 1 spot on the New York Times best-seller list several times. And O'Reilly obliged his book-buying fans by signing copies before and after the forum.

But the book received little attention during the forum as O'Reilly discussed current events and the no-holds-barred approach he takes to his show. Unlike other TV news programs, he says, his show focuses on controversial subjects and doesn't let his guests, who are often elected officials and public figures, off the hook.

"You'll do OK if you think," O'Reilly said. "I come in like a prosecuting attorney and ask the hard questions. The show is not about scream-

ing and yelling. It's analytical. We want to turn our guns on the establishment."

O'Reilly, who takes a middle-of-the-road, populist stance on many topics, says that if Americans are upset with the disputed results from the 2000 election and with their elected officials, they should do more than just talk about it.

"Write letters and petitions to your congressmen and tell them how you feel," O'Reilly said. "They're public servants. They should be serving us, not the other way around. If we come together and don't like what they're doing, then let's get their butt out of there."

O'Reilly also vouched for a 2 percent national sales tax to replace Social Security and Medicare taxes.

"The government takes out 40 percent of our take-home pay," he said to loud applause. "We shouldn't have to depend on the government for anything."

When asked a question from the audience about former President Bill Clinton and his senator wife Hillary in regards to the mishandling of White House gifts, O'Reilly had a quick reply.

"Their relationship is based solely on furniture," O'Reilly jested. "For their birthday, send them Pledge."