

# Garrison Keillor CENTURY 2 IN PERSPECTIVE



**THE NEW YORKER**

**JACK'S GREBO**

**JACK'S AUTO NEWS**

**Jack**

Garrison Keillor is a one-man generation gap, standing apart from any other generation because his razor writing style and radio commentaries put all other generations under a special perspective.

Keillor, still just under 38, has won his place in the front rank of essay-writing humorists with frequent contributions to the highly sophisticated *New Yorker* magazine. His rare insights on the follies of the rest of us—whether we're garage mechanics, truck musicians, young or old—also provide chuckles to the audience of radio station KSPN, where Keillor speaks with a twist of language and ideas that is setting standards for other generations.

Before these professional accomplishments, Keillor was the student editor of an eye-catching, mind-blowing campus magazine, the *Icory Tover*, which established fresh standards for humorous and satirical writing at the University of Minnesota.

### Let's Get a few things straight

When I was young (briefly, in 1931) we had hard times. My six brothers and I went from house to house on Halloween begging for apples, candy and nuts. With these morsels plus the pumpkins, we kept the wolf from our door through those bygone winters. We felt, however, that someday life would be better. We read feature articles in the *Tribune* predicting that, thanks to Science, we'd live in plastic bubbles by The Year 1980 and ride through pneumatic tubes to work, where solar-powered computers would handle the heavy stuff, giving us plenty of leisure time to make quick trips to the moon or talk to our friends in Los Angeles over radio transmitters imbedded in our second molars.

I still believe in that dream, but since I'm now well-fixed financially after conning a bear market in 1946, I can take it or leave it. Today I own everything south of Portland Avenue, a large resort complex on Lake Agassiz, and 400 acres of blue sky over Fridley. I wouldn't have to work another day in my life, but I keep active as an example to the young.

Whenever I'm asked the secret of success, my mind wanders back to an autumn day in 1941 when the Golden Gophers met the Black Panthers—this was before artificial turf—and national honors hung in the balance. With the game tied and the sun setting behind the bleachers, the field was a sea of mud and everyone was going nuts. Gunnar "Back" Johnson rallied the locals on the 14. "Jimmy," he barked sharply to end Jimmy Hanks, "you go deep and everyone else block like crazy!" The ball was snapped, and Gunnar faked back. It was a game that is talked about wherever men gather. Today Gunnar is very successful in trees.

But something has happened to us as a people since then. Let's look at some startling statistics. When I was a boy, 99 per cent of American youth was honest, hard-working and clean. Today we often hear that "9 out of 10" (or 90 per cent) of them are—10 times as many rotten apples in 40 years! At this rate, few of us will live to be 100. Does this mean that I despair of the future? Quite the contrary. Recently one night I was strolling through a poor section of Minneapolis when I saw a well-dressed older man talking loudly to himself. "This is one of the great unfinished tasks that lies before us as a nation," he said.

Curiously I approached him. "Pardon me," I said, "what are you doing here?" As he turned toward me, his face was bathed in light. It was a famous living Minnesota politico.

"My dear friends," he confided, "I couldn't sleep a wink knowing that such conditions exist in a No. 1 country such as ours—and I will not sleep until more is done—for we can, and should, do more."

For several hours he gripped my elbow and guided me past scenes of urban unhappiness that I had never seen before. "Joe," he said quietly (how did he know that, although my name is Gary, many call me Joe?), "we've only made a little dent in the problem, just a kick in the bucket, but I'm pleased as punch to say I had a part in it. Since 1964, I'm proud to say, thousands of draftees from this neighborhood alone have been given free dental care, job training, and placement services. But we could do so much more."

As the sun rose, we found ourselves at the back door of his hotel. He shook my hand for a few minutes and I left. When I got home and opened my mouth, I found two cherry creasams in it (how did he know it's my favorite?).

No, I plead guilty to having a strong faith in the future, assuming our foundations stay firm and the sky remains at its present level. Recently, I was returning to Minnesota from Edina and noticed the pilot weeping. "I can't help it," he said, "I've made this flight a thousand times but whenever I look down there I get a big lump in my throat." It's that kind of spirit that makes an old guy hope.

**Northwestern National Bank of Minneapolis**

**CENTURY 2** 1872-1972  
MAY WE BE PART OF YOUR TOMORROW