



'NUFF SAID
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Radio Captures a Down Home Evening

"The prairie *what?*" people are always asking us.

"The Prairie Home Companion," we tell them, usually by way of an explanation as to why we can't possibly go anywhere Saturday evening.

"We always listen to the Prairie Home Companion from 6 to 8," we say, turning down offer after offer to go out and be sociable.

Actually, I'm lying about the offers to go out. We are not in great demand on the party circuit. I am not lying about listening to the Prairie Home Companion, however. It's a ritual at our house.

"Oop, it's 6:00, turn off the tv, take the phone off the hook, grab the comfortable chairs and the popcorn bowls, and tune in the public radio station from Central Michigan University," we remind ourselves.

Out loud, we say to our children, "No talking until 8:00."

"Geez, you listen to that all the time," our son complains as he goes through the first phases of Top-40 withdrawal.

"No we don't," we say, defensively. "It's only on once a week, so that's all we listen to it."

Our daughter knows better than to argue with us. She just takes the phone upstairs with the secure knowledge that she can have a two-hour con-

versation without any parental interference whatsoever.

Maybe it's a sign of our times that we are content to sit and listen to a radio program on a Saturday night, rather than to raise riot in the hot spots. We are, after all, Middle Aged. I think it's more than encroaching senility, however, as I've heard many a young person rave about the series.

To borrow a phrase from program host Garrison Kiellor, we're just shy persons. Probably all we need is a bit batch of Powdermilk Biscuits, maybe with a pat of melting butter and a big spoonful of honey.

Kiellor has what I believe is among the most creative, original programs available on any mass media. His is a blend of traditional music and humor that tickles the memories of anyone who knows anything about small town living.

Clever advertisements are sprinkled throughout the program; advertisements for such ersatz sponsors as Bertha's Kitty Boutique, Bob's Bank, Home Defense Hardware and Ralph's Pretty Good Grocery, where, if you don't find it on the shelves, you can probably get along without it.

One of the most beloved portions of his program is a 15-minute segment called "news from Lake Woebegone," the imaginary Minnesota town Kiellor left behind. His folksy monologues deal gently

and humorously with such quintessentially honest small town issues as the rivalries between the churches, the newspaper that tells who went visiting but never what went on in city council chambers, the planting and harvesting and snow plowing, the rich aroma of pot roast and carrots, biscuits and gravy.

When Kiellor talks about being in the seventh grade boy's choir and having to sing his part alone in front of the whole group, you can feel the nerves rumbling in your own stomach. When he tells about taking his first cigaret to impress an older girl, you struggle with him to maintain his nonchalance as he wonders whether he will die from the smoke.

I am continually amazed to find the wide and varied collection of people who, like us, tune in national public radio every Saturday night to listen to the mellow-voiced man and the good things he brings us. Jazz musicians, psychologists, artists, muzzleloaders, teachers, nurses, even newspaper editors in fish shanties are linked by this invisible man to a community where "all the women are strong, all the men are good looking, and all the children are above average." Somehow wherever we listen to the Prairie Home Companion, we are home with friends.

Audrey Collins is a News-Review staff writer.