

Garrison Keillor trades prairie home for Big Apple

By John Kiesewetter
Gannett News Service

CINCINNATI — Garrison Keillor, everyone's favorite prairie home companion, told public television executives here that he's found happiness as a city slicker.

"To be in New York, a city of my dreams when I was no older than my teen-age children are now, seems so magical to me," Keillor said at a PBS awards banquet recently.

Keillor, 45, ended his radio program of 13 years, "A Prairie Home Companion," in June. He moved to Copenhagen with his Danish wife, Ulla, and her three teen-age children.

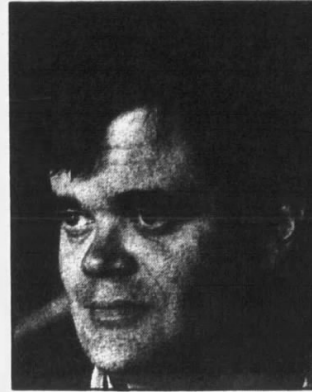
In the fall they moved to New York where the humorist works for the New Yorker, "a magazine that struck me with such beauty and class at age 17," he said.

Manhattan, he said, "is a city that is full of so many peculiar people that my true love feels at home."

At the ceremony, Keillor entertained the 250 people as if he were on the radio back in St. Paul, Minn. He recited a few love poems, sang a song, and delivered a monologue about living with "a woman who does not know the words to the Star Spangled Banner."

Having never been abroad, life in Denmark for Keillor was "a strange and difficult experience."

"You're obliged to defend American foreign policy," he said. "You have to be prepared to explain why Americans work so hard and eat so fast. You have to be prepared to explain



Garrison Keillor now works for 'New Yorker' magazine.

who Vanna White is."

Keillor, a private person who refused to grant an interview, called his decision to end the weekly public radio show "wise in retrospect."

He also joked about "A Prairie Home Companion's" 17-week run on the Disney Cable channel last spring.

"It seemed to be a great disappointment to almost everybody, including myself.

"Ever since I did that television show, people recognize me on the street, and they don't seem as excited as I might wish," he said.

Keillor, in his dry, deliberate manner, said that his relative anonymity spurred him to spend time in bookstores.

"I lean up against the humor section. Next to my books. People come up to me and say, 'You're Garrison Keillor, aren't you?' And I say, 'Yes.' And that seems to satisfy them."