



Keillor ready 'to have a good time'

Humorist bringing act to Gettysburg College

By MARTIN SIPKOFF
Adams County Bureau

Garrison Keillor, whose myths create a lovely, ironic little world of smalltown life, says all humorists get less funny as they age.

"I'm a lot less funny than I was," said Keillor in a telephone interview, "so I have to make up for it with personal charm."

In a warm, quiet, somewhat woebegone voice, on a weekly show called American Radio Company of the Air, Keillor creates the Minnesota farm town of Lake Wobegon — a place of large families and stubborn friends, like places alive in the imagination of many Americans, long gone, if they ever existed at all.

He will bring his world to the small town of Gettysburg on Tuesday night, in a sold-out performance at Gettysburg College.

"I am coming to Gettysburg to have a good time," said Keillor. "It is a town that is swathed in legend, which sets it apart from any other town its size. It has the mystery of the battlefield on its fringes and through some of its neighborhoods, created by an immense, brooding event. I like Gettysburg."

Keillor, 48, became famous with "The Prairie Home Companion," a radio show broadcast from 1974-87 from Minnesota, where he was born and reared.

In 1985, his book, "Lake Wobegon Days," became a best-seller, and around that time he got married and moved to Denmark.

About two years ago he and his wife moved to New York City, which this chronicler of small-town fables describes "as a terrific place to live. A good place to get away from and get back to."

Last year he began broadcasting the American Radio Company of the Air from New York.

It continues to feature stories of Lake Wobegon and what Keillor calls "classic American music" that "transcends ego and money, that is American art — Fats Waller, Jimmie Rodgers, Copland, the old hymns, Bernstein — all the great things that every American ought to hear at least twice." It can be heard on WITF-FM, Harrisburg's public radio station, from 6 to 8 p.m. on Saturdays.

"It was a struggle last year. We got good toward the end of the season," he said. "Last week was the greatest show of my entire life."

On that show, Keillor said he talked about "the most horrific Thanksgiving in Lake Wobegon history, in 1965, which was when my cousin Mary Ann vomited during grace."

This horrible thing happened, said Keillor, because of long unresolved family tension, "a misunderstanding (which) through silence . . . got bigger and bigger." And he compared that dramatic event to his favorite Thanksgiving, in 1986, "when I served my new Danish family a traditional Thanksgiving dinner of barbecued pork and linguini with clam sauce."

Keillor said that, first and foremost, he is a writer.

"That is what I am. I write every day, making slow progress on large projects." He will serve as writer-in-residence for two days at the college, telling students that "they should start out by writing humor . . . the only branch of writing where you know absolutely if you are communicating with your audience. If they laugh, it's funny. If they don't, it's not."

Keillor is a contributing and advisory

Photo by KEILOR, Page D12

"Lake Wobegon Days" author Garrison Keillor says he used to be funnier when he was younger.

■ KEILLOR

Humorist visits college

Continued from Page B1

editor for the Gettysburg Review, the school's literary review.

"He is a genius," said Peter Stitt, the Review's editor and a longtime friend. "Many people are familiar with his work, but are not aware of his scope. He ranges from the absolutely sentimental, folksy farm stuff to the most outrageous post-modernism, and does both very well."

Keillor's work in The New Yorker, Atlantic Monthly and Harper's has led to comparisons with humorists such as James Thurber, E.B. White and Mark Twain.

Twain is said to have become increasingly cynical as he aged — a condition Keillor said he will avoid.

"He got tired as he aged,"

said Keillor. "And he was struck by tragedy on a gigantic scale, the death of two beloved children and his wife. I'm not entitled to become cynical. Even if I intended to be, the reader would still be able to tell I lead a very sunny life."

Twain was forced by financial problems to perform publicly toward the end of his life — a chore he found humiliating, said Keillor, which marks another difference between the men.

"I enjoy performing in public," said Keillor. "It is a humiliation I seek."

Keillor has been described by critics as quintessentially American.

If so, then this quintessen-

tial American is saddened by some of what he sees happening in our country today.

In talking about the current crisis in the Persian Gulf, Keillor said he "pick(s) up the daily paper in trepidation along with everybody else. I guess every president feels he needs a war and this one decided to have his in his first term."

He describes America as "the most religious country of all industrialized countries."

"It's just the right wing that thinks we're godless," he said. "They have their own God, and they want us to believe in their God, but we're not likely to."



HOLIDAY DRESSES
1000 Gowns
Pendleton Suits
Largest Selection
"Beautiful Bridals"
COUNTRY STORE
Biglerville 677-7447



CG GC GENERAL MAINTENANCE CONTRACTING
Are You In Need Of A Carpenter To Do Small Jobs?
Concrete Slabs, Doors, Windows, Drywall, Flooring, Ceilings, Etc.
For Prompt, Reliable Courteous Service Call
717-428-2721
"We're Building Our Reputation On Good Work."