

The news from Lake Wobegon: Keillor to return

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The Associated Press

ST. PAUL, Minn. — It has been quiet in Lake Wobegon since Garrison Keillor went away. But the tall, soft-spoken writer who gave voice to the town and its denizens is coming home.

On Saturday, Keillor plans to return from his five-year, self-imposed exile from Minnesota, stand on the stage of the World Theater in St. Paul and begin his monologue: "It's been a quiet week in Lake Wobegon. . ."

He'll tell listeners that Eloise Krebsbach, who not long ago bore a child out of wedlock, has become the mayor, replacing a succession of old guys in plaid shirts with hair in their ears.

That a bear has been seen around town this past week.

That if Art's Bait and Night O'

Rest Motel finally folds, guests no longer will stumble upon the owly owner's written admonishments: "DON'T CLEAN FISH HERE! WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU? WERE YOU BROUGHT UP IN A BARN OR WHAT?"

Keillor ended his celebrated radio show, *A Prairie Home Companion*, and left St. Paul in 1987 after a flurry of angry exchanges with the Twin Cities news media, which he accused of invading his privacy by, among other things, publishing the address and purchase price of his house.

Since then, he has spent much time in New York City and in Denmark, where his wife, Ulla Skaerved, is from.

Keillor resumed spinning tales of Lake Wobegon, the fictional Minnesota town populated by eccentrics of Scandinavian descent, when he

returned to the airwaves in 1989 with a show called the *American Radio Company*. But the show originated from different sites around the country, and Lake Wobegon was a comparatively small part of it.

Keillor has said he regrets escalating the dispute through letters to the editor and other comments. And he says he'll be happy to return because this time he expects to find privacy.

"To me, there's no place so large as the one that you're familiar with," Keillor, 50, said by telephone from Copenhagen, Denmark, where he has been working on a novel.

"Somehow, all of the stories that you know, all of the lives you're in touch with make it immense," he said. "Minnesota is a whole continent to me, so I'm very content to move back."

After Saturday, about half of Keillor's shows will originate in St. Paul and the remainder in New York or elsewhere.

Keillor, who grew up in suburban Minneapolis, plans to live in a log cabin on 80 wooded acres near River Falls, Wis., about 30 miles east of St. Paul.

"I think I'm going to move out there and gradually over the years become an eccentric," he said. "The sort of person who lives in an old house where the rooms are all filled with old newspapers going up to the ceiling with 16 cats and nobody's seen that guy for years."

Keillor says he'll concentrate on writing. His work in progress, *The Book of Guys*, is the story of a Greek god in the midst of a midlife crisis — a bawdy tale full of characters and events he says would be frowned upon in Lake Wobegon.