

Imagine bumping into your idol in Kinkos

By ROBIN CROSS

Special to the Sundial

Most people have to seek out their idols to meet them. Go to a performance and hope to get back stage. Drive to their home town. Lurk in their bushes. Loiter by their home or work place for hours. Get arrested once or twice.

For me, it was as painless as driving to Kinkos to make some copies. Actually, it was exactly like that.

Who would expect to find Garrison Keillor, famous writer, radio personality, performer and story teller extraordinaire at Kinkos Copies in (of all places) Flagstaff, Arizona?

Seeing him made me recall driving around Phoenix at my old job. Looking at the cactus and rock gardens. Watching the 112 degree sun hit the cement and radiate back up again. People swearing at me and making obscene gestures. Wondering to myself which would happen first. Would I roast to death in this rolling easy bake



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oven? Or be killed in a drive by shooting at the hand of some heat-crazed motorist?

I turned the dial on the radio as I pondered my demise, and there he was. Garrison Keillor.

As his melodic, soothing voice recounted events of his childhood and hometown life, I felt like I was right back in the safe, secure, quiet little town of Lake Wobegone. An amazing feat considering I've never even been to Minnesota.

Standing at the counter waiting for my copies, I tried not to stare. I wasn't doing a very good job. As he perused the cards he seemed to

be attempting to (blend). A face with that much character doesn't (blend) very easily.

Not bold enough to approach him, I was content to admire him from afar. I looked down for a moment to total up my order. When I looked up, instead of perusing cards, he was an arm's length away, waiting, like myself, at the same counter.

I looked straight ahead. He looked straight ahead. I waited. He waited. Moments passed, seconds, an entire minute. I could contain myself no longer. I leaned gently into his shoulder and in a low, secretive voice said, "You ARE Garrison Keillor." He immediately offered me a warm hand shake and said "Yes I am, it's nice to meet you!"

A chance meeting with someone you greatly admire is a wonderful experience. To discover that person is as genuine, unpretentious, and down to earth as you had envisioned them, gives you a memory you will always cherish.

What surprised me the most was he seemed as interested in my life as I was in his. He wanted to know what I was having copied, how I liked Flagstaff, the ages of my children, what my hobbies were. Assuming he was just being polite, I gave him short, concise answers. These did not satisfy him. He wanted details.

Luckily I did manage to get in a couple questions of my own. My first was, "What the heck are you doing here?" He explained he had recently finished doing a show in Albuquerque and was just passing through. When I asked if he'd be doing a performance in Flagstaff, he said he'd love to, but hadn't been asked to as of yet.

Whenever the focus of the conversation turned to him, I couldn't help feeling he was just a bit embarrassed by his own notoriety, a quality I found very endearing.

Feeling more comfortable, I

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Garrison Keillor has now come to KNAU. His show, "Prairie Home Companion," can be heard every Saturday from 6 to 8 p.m.

KEILLOR

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asked about his children. He explained that he did indeed have children, but they were all grown.

"Any grandchildren yet?" I inquired. In a very Garrison Keillor-like way he replied, "None that I'm aware of."

"Well," I said, "I'm sure they'd keep you posted?" He paused, and again in that famous Keillor tone said, "One would hope."

Just as I was about to invite him over for Hamburger Helper and Stove Top, the counter girl arrived. She presented him with his finished copies and apologized for the delay. He assured her it was no trouble.

As he turned to leave he said how nice it was to meet me. I returned the sentiment with enthusiasm. As he neared the door he turned back to wish me luck and was gone.

Actually, the only disappointing part of the whole experience was

afterward. Running around town bursting with excitement, I would have incredible conversations with complete strangers like this:

"Guess who I met? Guess who I met?" I'd squeal.

"Garrison Keillor!" I'd proclaim with pride.

"Who?" they'd say unenthusiastically.

I kept hearing it over and over! People around me seemed to sprout wings and grow big round eyes!

I'm hoping to remedy that! I am happy to report that Garrison Keillor's famous "Prairie Home Companion" show is now being broadcast by KNAU every Saturday evening from 6-8 p.m. For a nostalgic, funny, relaxing, captivating, entertaining and refreshing alternative to (the tube), curl up instead by the radio this Saturday night! Trust me! You don't want to miss it!

Cross moved to Flagstaff from Phoenix a year ago. She has two young children and is working on her pilot's license.