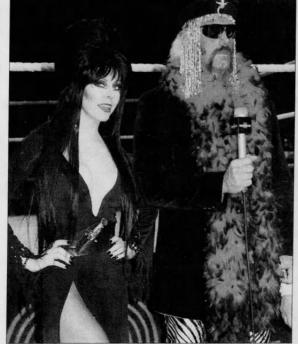
It's all about 'Me'

Garrison Keillor takes on rasslin' and politickin' with knockout satire



Jesse Ventura is living proof that the line between politics and show business has been erased. Above, "The Body" shared a wrestling ring with late-night movie hostess Elvira in 1986. Below, Mr. Ventura, now the governor of Minnesota, visited David Letterman's Late Show to recount his implausible journey.



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BY ROBERT SCHMUHL Knight Ridder News Service

At a time when anything ge and absurdity is ascendant, the marriage of politics and pro wrestling assumes a certain har-

wrestling assumes a certain har-monic logic. Nowadays, both callings require asbestos-lined egos, savy handlers, the stomach to take a punch, a flair for the dra-matic and carefully scripted con-duct. Winning and losing take a back seat to the continuing show and how it plays with the crowd watching. The election in November of Jesse (The Body)

Jesse (The Body) Ventura as Minneso-ta's governor consum mated the union of politickin' and rasslin' with a force that's kept the body politic in that state and else-where reeling. What does the future hold, and (more grippingly) which hold will the which hold will the governor affect to achieve results? With such local color in profusion, to expect Minnesota's

best-known humorist, Garrison Keillor, to remain silent would be as foolish as thinking

Bill Clinton will ever unburden his soul with a tell-all autobiography. In Me: By Jimmy (Big Boy) Valente as told to Garrison Keillor, Me: Version E College College

Valente as tota to Garrison Keutor, Mr. Ventura's life (Navy SEAL, wrestler, rock-group bodyguard, radio host, mayor and governor) serves as the inspiration for a slight yet side-splitting satire that

slight yet side-splitting satire that akevers not only its self-absorbed subject but everything else it singles out for sarcasm. Mr. Keilor makes himself the butt of several jokes in this scat-tershot send-up, having Valente at one point describe him as "a tired old hack with a gecko face and thinning hair and a body like a 6-foot stack of marshmallows."

Although billed on its cover as "a political satire," *Me* is more of a mock memoir. After scandal-hungry political reporters unearth the new gover-nor's illegitimate birth and subse-ment advection by decide to toil quent adoption, he decides to tell his story. Predictably, he over-comes youthful hardships as picked-on weakling Clifford



REVIEW ► ME. BY JIMMY (BIG BOY) VALENTE AS TOLD TO GARRI

SON KEILLOR Viking; \$15.95; 152 pages.

wins in a cakewalk. The new governor's first order of business? To set his sights on the presidency in 2000 by telling Vice President Al Gore. "You're obsolete, Al. The fringe is the center now. TV has made a joke of politics and a joker like me can beat a stuffed owl like you." Some might say that making fun of pro wrestling, politics and someone with a foot in both rings requires neither heavy liting nor

someone with a tool in both mass requires neither heavy lifting nor undue mental exertion. And, yes, *Me* has about it the aroma of a quick-buck instant book. But beyond the broad-shouldered bravado and buffoonery of this satire a cleflurks commentary about contemporary America with a deceptively clever punch.

Oxnard. The high school student responds to a body-building ad. Within a few months, he has a new body: "From dork to hunk." Physically and psychologically reborn, he changes his name to Jimmy Valente and enlists in the Navy to become a WALRUS (Water Air Land Rising Up Sud-denly).

(Water Air Land Rissing Up Sud-denly). Derring-do in Vietnam whets his appetite for action, leading to acareer in pro wrestling. The rest, of course, is history for "Big Boy" — and his real-life model. Mr. Keilior devotes page after page to the melodramatic may-hem of a "sport" that is more accurately understood as steroid-enhanced stunt acting with atitude.

Some readers who are not aficionados of this form of choreography may question Mr. Keillor's artisan-like devotion to describing it in exact-ing detail. But the rau-cous spectacle allows cous spectacle allow

cous spectacle allows the dry, understated humorist of *Lake Wobegon Days* and the radio program *A Prairie Home Com-panion* to shift to tall-tale mode in chroni-diage Big Bayle ring cling Big Boy's ring adventures. As Big Boy ages.

As Big Boy ages, suffers from 'a nasty case of testosterone poisoning'' and starts to get "numb above the neck, 'he listens to the entreaties of Earl Woofner, chairman of the Ethical Party in Minnesota, about running for governor — and wins in a cakewalk. The new governor's first order