

## Wobegon writer wows Bountiful

BY MELINDA WILLIAMS

Clipper Staff Writer

**BOUNTIFUL** — From the moment Garrison Keillor opened his mouth, he had the audience in stitches and hanging on his every word.

Keillor, best known for National Public Radio's Prairie Home Companion, was in, of all places, the auditorium of the Bountiful City Library Monday, regaling the audience with tales from his latest book, "Lake Wobegon Summer, 1956."

The small facility was packed; not a seat was available, and others stood in the back, willing to stand for the near hour-and-a-half address, for the chance to hear Keillor's wry sense of humor.

The gracious Keillor arrived early and signed books for about a half hour before launching in to stories of "Gary," the 14-year old hero of this somewhat autobiographical novel.

While not all the stories were straight from Keillor's life, he tells the tale so that the listener can almost see a young Keillor writing poetry to impress his teachers and writing a somewhat raunchier poetry telling of mucus and flatulence to impress the boys at school.

Coming from Keillor, even that raunchy poetry was not offensive, but brought memories of the immaturity of being a young teen.


Keillor read an excerpt concerning the boys Gary wrote his raunchy poetry for, "I could write them (the poems) as fast as those two could read."

And then there was the story of Gary's lust for his 17 year-old cousin Kate, who wasn't really pretty and was a little heavy, "but she was so sophisticated and she wrote poems. She introduced me to the New Yorker and explained the cartoons to me." Later, he wrote another attraction for her was that "she swore expertly."

Keillor showed up dressed all in black, except for a pair of bright red socks. They

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were prominently displayed as he put his feet up on a desk while introductions were made.

Later, in answer to a question from the audience, Keillor referred to his looks derisively explaining videos made for the Disney channel and the Public Broadcasting Corp., had not been available for sale very long. "Most people prefer the audios and I guess you can see why!"

During the question and answer time, Keillor was asked to sing "Babes in the Woods," a song which he said shouldn't be sung to children because it deals with death. When he was asked to sing it, Keillor invited the man who requested it up to sing a duet, which the audience got a kick out of.

As is usual, he sidestepped the issue of where Lake Wobegon really is, telling the audience it was in the geographical center of Minnesota. He offered a confusing explanation as to why maps don't show the mythical town.

On a more serious note, Keillor spoke of the events surrounding September 11, speaking of the aid and comfort New Yorkers shared in those first few hours after the terrorist attack. In his deep melodic voice, Keillor described the candlelight vigils and neighbors clinging together as something they had to do in a city where neighbors don't know each other.

He said he doesn't share the great gloom of the event. Instead, he said, "There's something in us that welcomes tragedy. It's not the end of innocence. It's not the end of New York. It's still a thriving city."

Keillor said he found consolation in the messages people left loved ones from the planes as they headed towards the towers and death. They called home and left messages, not about fear or anger, but about love and taking care of the kids and moving on with their lives.

He also spoke of the similarities between Salt Lake City and Lake Wobegon, so well known to Keillor fans.

He said he sees some of the same elaborate politeness and kindness in the two cities, but in Utah, people are more likely to look you in the eye.

He told one lady that his favorite Jell-O™ dish is raspberry Jell-O™ with shredded carrots. "And while I wouldn't eat it this way in front of you, I like a big dollop of Miracle Whip™ on top."

He said he got the idea for *Lake Wobegon Summer 1956* the last time he spoke in Salt Lake City.

At that time, he spoke to a gathering at Red Butte Gardens in a downpour: "It was one of the most amazing nights of my life." He said he was thrilled and amazed that people stayed in the rain in their ponchos to hear him speak.

**Garrison Keillor reads to a capacity crowd at the Bountiful Library Monday. The "Lake Wobegon" author signed books for hours.**