

# Bake a tuna hotdish, it's goodbye to Wobegon

By Robert Barr

The Associated Press

Garrison Keillor is abandoning Lake Wobegon, "the tiny town that time forgot and the decades cannot improve," leaving about 4 million people homeless after Saturday night.

"A Prairie Home Companion" ends at the peak of its popularity. For a confessed shy person, who in recent years has been on the cover of Time, at the top of the best-seller list and courted by Hollywood producers, it had become far too popular.

"In order for you to gather this material and to have some sense of the life of this imaginary town, you have to be an ordinary person," the 44-year-old humorist

## 'Prairie' finale

The final broadcast of "A Prairie Home Companion" can be heard Saturday, 8-5 p.m., on radio station KUSP 89-FM in Santa Cruz.

told reporters in March, a month after he surprised his audience and the American Public Radio network by announcing his retirement.

"You have to have some semblance of anonymity, and I don't have that anymore in St. Paul. And so I really can't do the show here except as a caricature of

itself. And I really don't think I could do it elsewhere, so I choose to step out."

"A Prairie Home Companion" ends with two performances — a \$150-a-ticket benefit for the World Theater in St. Paul on Friday night and the regular show Saturday night — finishing a 13-year run on radio and 13 weeks on cable television's Disney Channel.

There will be reruns of "A Prairie Home Companion," but no more new tales from the Chatterbox Cafe, the Sidetrack Tap or the rectory of Our Lady of Perpetual Responsibility; no more secrets from the marriages of the Krebsbachs and the Bunsens or the aging, love-struck Senator K. Thorvaldson.

There will be no new jokes about Lutherans or Catholics or Norwegians, and none of them thinks it's a cause for relief.

"We will miss him very, very much, because of this love for people he conveys, for us and well as for everyone else," said Liv Lyons, fraternal director for the Minneapolis-based Sons of Norway.

"Pastor Ingqvist was probably better known to Lutherans than the pastor of their own church," said the Rev. Bill Bockelman of Minneapolis, recently retired from the national office of the old American Lutheran Church.

Other writers have found humor in religion, "but nobody

does it better than this guy," said the Rev. Tom Garvey of St. Andrew's Roman Catholic Church in St. Paul.

"But I like above all his gentle enjoying of people's lives, and the way we deal with our dilemmas," Garvey said. "I don't think a person, after listening to Keillor, needs to be ashamed of human frailty anymore."

Keillor's characters were nourished on tuna hotdish and bound together by forbearance, forgiveness and the certainty that — in a town of 942 people — there was no place to hide.

"I suppose everybody's home town is a little like Lake Wobegon, that's why we like it so much," said Ms. Lyons.



Garrison Keillor, host of 'A Prairie Home Companion.'