

Entertainment

Garrison Keillor

On Saturday, Lake Wobegon loses its radio companion

By Jill M. Schultz
CH Writer

ST. PAUL, Minn. — Folks in Lake Wobegon are misty-eyed these days because the humorist who created the mythical town of strong women, good-looking men and above-average children is leaving "A Prairie Home Companion."

"I want to enjoy the sweet life in my stories," said Garrison Keillor, who has been the heart and soul of the radio show for 13 years.

Keillor, 44, said he wants to return to writing after the final performance of his Peabody Award-winning "A Prairie Home Companion" Saturday. Then he and his wife of two years, Ulla Skaerved, will move to her native Denmark.

At a May 30 performance, Keillor told of sneaking into a grain elevator with friends as a teenager and on a dare being lifted up in the bucket.

When he leaned to look out and see the skyline, the bucket tipped and he clung to it for

dear life as his friends brought him safely to the ground.

"Doing this show has been what the trip up in the bucket was," he said. "I leaned and then I finally made it to the bottom."

Then Keillor used his weekly monologue — his visit to Lake Wobegon — to defend his decision to leave. He said he went to "see everybody before I go away" and was cornered by Wally the bartender, who warned him about the big mistake he was making.

"You better think twice, mister," Keillor said. Wally warned, "I know a lot of people who did what you're doing and they left a good deal. They found out they made a mistake and tried to come back and they couldn't — it was too late."

To which Keillor responded, "Wally is a bartender and bartenders are conservative. They believe in hanging on to what you've got. I'm not a conservative. I'm a romantic guy and I believe in the romantic beauty of the world and the endless

possibilities of the world."



Garrison Keillor: He'll sign off of "Prairie Home Companion" on Saturday.

strong, the men good-looking and the children above average. Its inhabitants are benignly average yet slightly wacky —

What: "Prairie Home Companion," the final show with Garrison Keillor.
When: At 8 p.m. Saturday on KHPR, 88.1 on the FM dial.

such as Uncle Ned, the Norwegian bachelor farmer; Betty and Carl Krebsbach, a poor couple with 11 children; Mayor Bunsen; Father Emil, the priest at Our Lady of Perpetual Responsibility Church; peace officers Gary and LeRoy; and poet laureate Margaret Haskins Durber. The town has its own baseball team, the Whippets.

The show's fictitious commercial sponsors ring of small-town America — Jack's Auto Repair, Ralph's Pretty Good Grocery, Bob's Bank, Bertha's Kitty Boutique and, of course, Powdermilk Biscuits, the ones that "give shy persons the strength to do what needs to be done."

Keillor, who has refused to give interviews, said in the May 30 show that he is unafraid of failing.

"Somehow failures make you love life more," he said. "When you start to fail, you start to notice other people. That's one of life's great gifts — to notice other people. But you'll only get it if you've failed at enough things yourself."

However, "A Prairie Home Companion" has been a major success. The program is broadcast on 278 public radio stations

and recently was added to the cable television Disney Channel. It also spawned Keillor's best-selling book, "Lake Wobegon Days."

Tickets for the final show had to be assigned by lottery because of an overwhelming number of requests for seats.

Sara and Ann Dibraccio, Brookfield, Wis., said they had a "long, hard struggle" to get tickets and had "a lot of help from a lot of people."

"I wrote in 10 times to get tickets," Dibraccio said. "Two or three months ago there had been a rumor going around that a creative poem would get their attention."

Dibraccio's poem only triggered another rejection letter, but eventually persistence paid off and the couple got tickets.

KAHALA
255-9224

RENOVATED, 6,500
SQA & 1100
DAILY RATES
STARTING FROM \$6
FOR FRI. CONT.
PASTURE SETBACK
ALSO @ AT PRINCE EDWARD THEATRE IN HONOLULU

"HOT WEATHER HIT!"
— JAMES HARRIS, NEW YORK TIMES

ishtar