Keillor warms Miami book fair

By MIKE SAUNDERS
Special to the Sun-Sentinel

The town of Lake Wobegon, Minn., (population 942) is usually cold and gray come November, but author Garrison Keillor brought warmth into the hearts of a capacity crowd at the Wolfson campus of Miami-Dade Community College Monday night with a two-hour, 15-minute monologue.

For more than a decade, Keillor parlayed the gloom of his mythical hometown into three best selling novels, a popular radio show and most recently his packed presentation at the fourth annual Miami Book Fair International.

His tender, hilarious stories were the highlight of the second day of the fair, a week-long exhibition of more than 350 authors, publishers and booksellers.

Keillor drew his first applause as he surprised the audience by entering from the rear of the 600-seat auditorium. The hall was filled 30 minutes prior, and an overflow crowd was redirected downstairs to view the reading via a closed-circuit TV broadcast.

"I'm glad you're in a good mood today," said Keillor as he awkwardly fiddled with the microphone stand to accommodate his 6-foot-4 frame.
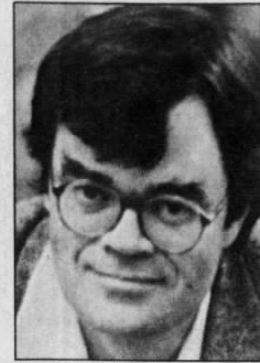
After his introductory remarks, Keillor premiered two stories, written last week, with his well-timed delivery — honed by 13 years of live shows of *Prairie Home Companion* on American Public Radio.

Keillor deftly shifted between recollections of life in Lake Wobegon and recent real life adventures — a summer spent in Denmark, his wife, Ulla's, native land, and his move to New York City from his home state of Minnesota. Many of those adventures formed the introduction to his latest book, *Leaving Home.*

His bittersweet story of a beggar on the New York subway digressed into a description of the noise, crime and other unpleasantries of the subway system, but his main point was "a little bit of humor makes everyone brothers."

Throughout, Keillor showed that

Garrison Keillor

although he's left home, he hasn't lost his ability to present the news from Lake Wobegon.