

# Gift of Gab

## Tickets to Humorist Garrison Keillor's Show Prove the Perfect Present for This Mom and Dad

**O**ur daughters had a great idea — one that caught immediate favorable response from their parents. A couple of weeks before Mother's Day they handed us a large suspicious-looking envelope. Excitedly, we opened it and discovered a Mother's Day card, a Father's Day card and four tickets to the Garrison Keillor *Prairie Home Companion* Show in Clowes Hall, Indianapolis.

Well-known for his 13-year *Prairie Home Companion* radio shows, humorist Keillor has been a source of enjoyment to us for many years. His book, *Lake Wobegon Days*, also brought many laughs.

The girls thoughtfully gave us two extra tickets so we could invite a couple of friends to go with us, which we did.

Rev. John Paul Jones, associate pastor at High Street United Methodist Church, has



*Hope Barnes*

been a friend of Faithmate's since college years. The two, from the days of their early ministry, have exchanged not only concerns for life's deeper problems and sermon ideas, but also jokes.

In fact, it was John Paul who first introduced us — about 19 years ago — to Keillor's Saturday night radio programs. It was only natural to invite John Paul and Mary to go with us.

Upon arrival at Clowes, the first thing we saw was a jovial crowd of Muncie persons exiting from two buses parked in front of the building. We spotted and greeted several friends in the group of more than 90.

The Keillor fan trip was sponsored by WBST-FM, Muncie's public radio station, which broadcasts encore selections of *A Prairie Home Companion*.

The buoyant passengers had been invigorated during their trip by munching on Powdermilk Biscuits, the kind that Keillor used to talk about on his program when he would say, "They give a sky person the strength to get up and do what needs to be done."

The biscuits were baked by Kirk Robey, director of Foreign Student Programs at Ball State University's International House.

Keillor, the son of a minister, has a background that gives him insight into both everyday, down-to-earth experiences and basic moral situations. One can follow

his rambling gift of gab, laughing all the way through the maze of details, and end up feeling good about the human condition.

The stage setting at Clowes featured a picturesque Victorian house at center stage. On the left were the piano and drums, effectively enlivened throughout the evening by pianist Richard Dwozky and drummer Randy Hauser. These were balanced at stage right by an unimaginable number of sound-effect props, which Tom Keith directed during the radio show feature, "Buster the Show Dog."

The show began when Keillor dashed out of the Victorian house's front door and made a grand entrance on to the gingerbread-decorated front porch. Robin and Linda Williams and Kate MacKenzie joined him in song. From that moment to the end, he successfully held the attention of more than 18,000 persons for 2 1/4 hours. I

especially enjoyed the bass player, Molly Mason.

Keillor's folksy humor about life in the fictitious Minnesota Norwegian farm community of Lake Wobegon never fails to amaze me. If anyone else were to tell a story with such involved details, that person would lose me long before the finale. In attempting to figure out what it is that makes us hang on to Keillor's words, I've concluded: It's simply Keillor himself.

During his Clowes Hall monologue, much of his tale wound around the image of a 1957 pink Oldsmobile. He would relate a story connected to it, wander off, long and far, but eventually come back to the pink car. At that point he would again take off, and we all were hooked once more. And, this happened repeatedly!

His episodes occur in a "Lutheran" setting. The man sitting in front of us at the

program shook with laughter throughout the evening. His heaviest clapping always followed the Lutheran puns. As we were leaving after the show, Faithmate said to him, "I'll bet you are a Lutheran!" The man looked a bit dismayed at first, then laughed and answered, "No, but my wife is!"

Keillor recently announced that, following a 3-year absence, he's returning to the air Sept. 30 with a new radio show, *American Radio Company of the Air*. We shall look forward to hearing him this fall.

Thanks, girls, for the "different-from-the-usual" Mother's and Father's Day gifts. I'm still laughing about Keillor's fictitious minister's wife who had had it, and took off in her friend's 1957 pink Oldsmobile!

*Hope Barnes is a free-lance writer who lives in Muncie. Her column appears each Tuesday in The Star.*