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"They would stroll home in the balmy air of August night, dreaming along Hennepin and Nicollet Avenues, through the gay crowd. Amory wondered how people could fail to notice that he was a boy marked for glory, and when faces of the throng turned toward him and ambiguous eyes stared into his, he assumed the most romantic of expressions and walked on the air cushions that lie on the asphalts of fourteen." - F. Scott Fitzgerald's "This Side of Paradise"

Hard feelings fade as St. Paul celebrates Fitzgerald's birthday

By Curt Brown Star Tribune Staff Writer

So much for holding a grudge. A century after F. Scott Fitzgerald was born in a St. Paul apartment building and almost 75 years after he abandoned his hometown for the brighter lights of New York City, Paris and Hollywood, St. Paul buried any lingering hard feelings Tuesday and toasted its homegrown literary giant. With the city's leading writers and politicians raising candles at Landmark Center, they toasted

Fitzgerald's birthday, his work and his roots launching a weeklong literary lovefest complete with sheets of birthday cake, marathon readings, a new bronze sculpture and postage stamp, Jazz Age dance lessons, flapper fashion shows and a

Turn to BIRTHDAY on B8



To mark the author's birth, Hamline University art professor Michael Price created a life-size bronze statue of F. Scott Fitzgeraid, which was installed in Rice Park on Tuesday. The statue's original head is at the left.

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BIRTHDAY from B1

literature festival aimed at young

"It didn't matter to me that he left and was famously uninterested in St. Paul and feit it was a boring place," St. Paul writer Patrical Hampls aid. "What mattered to me was that he was from here That incredible romantic urgency that I felt inside myself was his. thought: Look, he went on to write great books, maybe I could turn great books, maybe I could turn

Hampl, who lives in a Cathedral Hill brownstone where Fitzgrald's grandmother once dwelled, is the director of creative writing at the University of Minnesota. She won a 1990 MacArthur "genius" grant and her work includes "Spillville," "Burning Bright," "Romantic Education" and "Virgin Time".

Hampl started reading Fitz gerald when she was 15. By 16, she had nearly memorized his 192; short story "Winter Dreams, which is set at the University Club on Summit Av. "When I rea Fitzgerald's work. I felt this

provincial shell break away from me. . . . I had not only found an inspiration, I had found my first

Garrison Keillor, the radio im presario and author, told the fet hundred people who gathered fe the lunchtime birthday toast no to feel slighted because Fitzgeral left St. Paul at age 26 and never returned.

"It's always been painful for in St. Paul," Keillor said. "We a lonely people in the Midwest, as we crave approval and we cra praise. The fact that this you man flew off to New York. Pa and Hollywood and never dwrite a hymn or homage to t Midwest has always been painfu

"He left for New York becaus New York is what he wanted write about," Keillor said. "If ye were to walk down 59th Stree past the St. Moritz and the Plaz the hotels Fitzgerald knew as loved... you would see attracti people and hear intense convers tions that could come right out his stories and novels. His milli was there. His subject was they But in the end, this was his home.

and 59th Street are not going to and 59th Street are not going to read with the street are not going to read the street are not going to read with the street are not going to read '1's back in the 'lost Swede towns' of the prairies, that people cherish F. Scott Fiugerald, Who better than the street are not going to the street are not go

A bronze to

A call from Keillor's cellula phone a year ago to Hamline Un versity art professor Michael Pric sparked perhaps the most lastic

legacy of the Fitzgerald-fest.
"Garrison was on his way te
Fitzgerald's 99th birthday parry
and called from his car phone te
find out if I was interested," saidPrice, who painstakingly helpeplant his 400-pound sculpture o
Fitzgerald in a corner of Rice Party
on Tuesday. The life-size bronze

Fitzgerald casually holding an overcoat and top hat, will remain

Then he will glance from heneath a street lamp past the St. Paul Hotel toward the downtown library. The sculpture is not on a pedestal but right down on the ground, giving a 'one of us' impression to the work. As Price and his crew holsted the work into place with pulleys and straps Tuesday. Kellor joked. 'Kind of undignified to see a writer lifted undignified to see a writer lifted to be believed.

Of course, it probably wasn't the first time Fitzgerald needed to be hoisted up. His notorious alcoholic ways are a large part of his mythology, although Minneapolis biographer Scott Donaldson and Keillor said the issue has been

"For a long time, the impression of Fitzgerald was simply that of a Jazz Age writer who crashed and burned early." Donaldson said. "That side of the story still exists but is beginning to fade into

And none too quickly for Keil-

gerald's prose instead of his par-

"He redeemed himself from his perilous bad habits and his own extravagance," Keillor said. "He survived all that. It doesn't matter anymore that there were times in his life when it would have been painful to be near him. What matters is his writing."

And you can hear that writing knd you can hear that writing every day this week. More than 40 hours of free, public readings are being held over the lunch hour in the baroque majesty of the thirdfloor courtrooms at Landmark Center and again in the evenings from 5 to 9 p.m.

During Tuesday's first reading, Kellior's voice was interrupted by a cellular phone ringing once twice, three times. Kellior, twitching nary an eyebrow as he read from a short-story text, said: "He put a cellular phone in his [laugh ter drowned out his words]... and it rang more a laws continued.

'Fantastic' narrative

A host of prominent authors, including Jane Smiley, Bobbie Ann

Heller and Michael Dorris, will read more or less continuously from "The Great Gatsby" from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday at the Fitzeerald Theater

"One thing you learn about Fitzgerald after a while," said Price, the sculptor, "is that if you actually read the stuff out loud, it's much better. Its sense of narrative

Hampl, who helped divvy u the readings among local writer and actors, said. "I've always like his descriptive passages, but I not realize that he really had an ear fel dialogue and his conversation dance back and forth in an astor ishingth undered user."

An undated way that "began in ar midst 100 years ago," Keillor id in his toast. "He created out of so wan life writing that will last as ng as people care about prose ction. He was one of ours. We aim him because we love him. cre's to F. Scott Fitzgerald'a 00th birthday..." Not to ment.

Staff writer Kevin Duchse

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