

Book Review

Garrison Keillor's writing reminiscent of 'Seinfeld'

When "A Prairie Home Companion" came out in 2006, I just thought it was some random movie I had no real interest in seeing. Then a co-worker of mine started talking about how she wanted Garrison Keillor to be her grandpa. Why? He just seems like he'd be a good grandpa, of course.

Anyway, I had no clue who Garrison Keillor is, so I decided to look him up. Turns out, he's a author, storyteller, humorist, columnist, musician, satirist and radio personality. I suppose he is most well-known for his radio show, "A Prairie Home Companion," which airs around the nation on public radio.

Basically, it's a variety show performed live over the radio. Part of the show is Keillor's comedic news segment, "News from Lake Wobegon," the fictional town in which Keillor supposedly grew up. This particular segment has spawned several novels penned by Keillor, that latest being "Pilgrims: A Wobegon Romance."

Page turners



By Larissa Boyer

In Focus

Title: Pilgrims: A Wobegon Romance
Author: Garrison Keillor
Publisher: Penguin Group
Release Date: September 2009
Pages: 304
List Price: \$25.95

Margie Krebsbach is a native Wobegonian who had dreamed of far better things than living in central Minnesota her entire life. But here she is, teaching high



school English in her own Alma Mater, married for 35 years and mother to three fully grown children. And to make matters worse, Margie's husband packed his things and moved down the hall — leaving her sleeping alone for the past three months.

Things start perking up for Margie when a mysterious Italian woman calls seeking her roots in Lake Wobegon. Soon after, Margie, her husband, and 10 other Wobegonians find themselves traveling to Rome to honor a local hero who died in the liberation of Rome during World War II. But other than their patriotic duties, Margie hopes this trip will rekindle the spark in her marriage — or give her the signal that all is truly lost.

"Pilgrims" offers quite the cast of characters, including a mayor whose heart was recently broken by a scumbag boyfriend who dumped her for a younger woman, a priest having a secret affair with his nurse and, of course, Gary Keillor, the famous radio host whom all the locals loathe.

While the novel has its moments of humor, poignancy and drama, I couldn't help but be reminded of a certain sitcom I never had a liking for: "Seinfeld." Full of inane dialogue, you know there is

a plot, but it's hard to really grasp it. And the dust cover's blurb promises, "Dramatic adventures await Margie in Rome and also the pleasures of kinship that are the secret joy of travel. Far from home, the pilgrims' tongues are loosened and they say things they could never say in the Chatterbox Cafe. One night, in the rain, in a cafe on the Piazza Navona, on several bottles of Amaroni, they open up their hearts, as Mr. Keillor sits nearby, taking notes."

Ok, so there's some drama, but really that's the only part of that snippet that Keillor delivers. Not that it isn't an enjoyable read, and I'm sure there are plenty of people out there who would find Keillor's style of writing extremely to their liking — "Seinfeld" did pretty well, after all.

And now that I know who Keillor is, I bet he probably would make a good grandpa.

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