

# Life remains quiet in Lake Wobegon

By Scripps-Howard News Service

**SAN FRANCISCO** — It was a quiet week in Lake Wobegon, so Garrison Keillor bugged out for Frisco.

Of course, "every" week in the mythical hamlet of Lake Wobegon, Minn., is on the restful side, as Keillor reminds listeners each Saturday on his National Public Radio show "Prairie Home Companion."

Lake Wobegon is the home of Dorothy's Chatterbox Cafe, "where the coffeepot is always on, which is why it tastes that way."

And Bob's Bank, "the friendly bank in the green mobile home right on Main Street where every check you write has a picture of Bob on it and the inscription 'Cash this. They're friends of mine.'"

Keillor, possibly the best monologist in America, has been delighting listeners with news from Lake Wobegon since "Prairie Home Companion," radio's only live variety show, hit the air as a Minnesota Public Radio series more than 10 years ago.

Now heard across the nation, "Prairie Home Companion" has attracted a fanatically faithful cult following. Keillor, the soft-spoken Minnesotan, is now a certified celebrity.

Most listeners, presumably, are fans of intelligent, wry and warm-hearted chatter. Keillor's monologues are sometimes funny, sometimes poignant, usually both. They range from topics like how to look cool while smoking a cigarette, to the mysteries of death.

"Prairie Home Companion" is broadcast from St. Paul, the "big city" to which Keillor moved after leaving Lake Wobegon. It's performed in front of an audience of 1,000 (up from about 25 in the beginning) and brought to us by the above-named businesses—but the prime sponsor is Powdermilk Biscuits, "a little cheaper than the other brands, and just as good in their own way."

Keillor's persistent praise of Powdermilk Biscuits is so sincere that

tourists to Minnesota have sought them out in grocery stores, though they are as mythical as the town where they are made "from whole wheat raised by Norwegian bachelor farmers."


Listeners sometimes write to Keillor in the community he invented. "The post office gets a few letters which they're very nice to send on to us," said Keillor.

Keillor was inspired to create "Prairie Home Companion" after visiting the Grand Old Opry

Keillor's only frustration is that he wants to be a stand-up comic.

"I'm not very good at it, but I think about it," he said. "I think I ought to work up an act, hone this thing down to 45 minutes or so of stand-up stuff. Doing this show for 10 years I've said a lot of funny lines, you know. It's just that they tend to be kind of far apart from each other."

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