Luther English professor writes book about 'radio's tallest shy person'

king a good look at Garriso

ECORAH - Everyone knows Garrison Keillor.
Unauthorized biographies,
tabloid newspaper exposes, his
own best-selling novels, albums,
'Yorker magazine pieces and, of
se, the ever-popular "A Prairie Home
spanion" have made him a bona fide
onality.

personality.

Keillor's folksy style of wit, both satirical and sentimental, has been compared to those American bards of cracker-barrel philosophy and humor, Mark Twain and Will Rogers.

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The complexities of Keillor's private, often temperamental personality coupled with his prodigious creativity as a writer and abilities as a storyteller intrigue Luther College English professor Peter Scholl, who has written a scholarly book about "radio's tallets shy person." "I think of Keillor as a literary comedian a writer who performs what he writes.

"It hink of Keillor as a literary comedian
— a writer who performs what he writes,
and like Twain, Keillor is a strong regional
character," notes Scholl, who describes
himself as a student of American humor.
Simply titled "Garrison Keillor,"
Scholl's in-depth study draws parallels
between Keillor's public career, as a ratio
performer and his solitary life as a writer.
Scholl calls it "Keillor's duality, his doubleness. There is the celebrity and private
citizen, the writer and the performer.
"Gary Edward Keillor chose 'Garrison'
as his name when he was 13, growing up
in Minnesota. There's a Garrison, Minn,
which links him to a place, and it's also a
body of soldiers at a fort. His parents were
hostile to his ambitions as a writer, and
'Garrison' sounds like someone who is
formidable," he explains.

choll became interested in Keillor in the late 1970s. He wrote a paper on the humorist for an Iowa English Teachers meeting and, in 1982, made an academic presentation at a regional conference. "Somehow it bund it's way into Keillor's hands. He vrote me a nice letter and sent me a record hum.

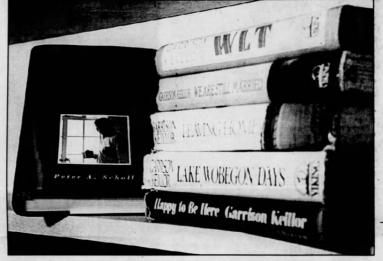
album.

"I felt encouraged and wrote an article about him which was published in an academic journal. Then, in 1989, I decided I'd write a book about him," Scholl explains. The English professor landed a book contract in 1990 with Twayne Publishers in New York, an imprint of Macmillan Publishing Co., which was preparing a series of books on great American writers. Keiller is skittlich about what is written

Keillor is skittish about what is written bout him, and Scholl was careful to

was going get access to good sources and gain their cooperation, I'd need Keillor's permission. I wrote him, he wrote back permission. I and said OK.

"He just wants people to be fair, and I



Photos by RICK CHASE/Courier staff photographer

Luther College English professor Peter Scholl, below prolific "literary comedian" and all-American radio person-right, has written a scholarly work, shown above, about ality Garrison Keillor.

right, has written a scholarly work, st wanted to do things in the proper way," Scholl explains. Scholl explains. Scholl explains. Scholl was given complete access to the Minnesota Public Radio Archives, and spent hours listening to reel-to-reel tapes and reading scripts. He also corresponded with and interviewed Kelillo associates and interviewed the man himself in August 1990 in Keillor's offices at the New Yorker. Keillor has revitalized the traditions of local color and literary comedy, Scholl maintains in his book." A Prairie Home Companion," broadcast every Saturday night on the American Radio Company," appeals to a similar audience.

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"His output is phenomenal. He did two hours of radio on Saturday nights, seven hours a week for a morning show he did for everal years, plus pieces for the New Yorker, radio talk and commercials, books, he was constantly drafting novels. I found myself wondering how he can do it all and keep sane," Scholl marvels.

he author touches on Keillor's often turbulent personal life, but only as it relates to his work. Scholl also examines how Keillor's work on the New Yorker "has affected the structure and nuances of his oral tales; they represent a cross-polination between traditional oral storytelling

and the verbal artistry of not only the New Yorker writers young Keillor so admired — James Thurber, S.J. Perelman, A.J. Liebling and E.B. White — but also such experimentalist writers as Donald Barthelm." Keillor boke with the

Keillor broke with the New Yorker when Tina Brown took over as edi-

ent. I'm in awe of his abilities. I consider him a

abilities. I consider him a major American humorist," Scholl adds. He hopes to see his lit-erary portrait of Keillor made available in high school libraries and used as text in American humor courses, as well

as text in American humor courses, as well as read and enjoyed by Keillor fans. The hardcover book is \$21.95, and is available by writing Twayne Pub-lishers, 866 Third Ave., New York, NY 10022.

