



SARAH ARONSEN/The Globe Gazette

Garrison Keillor speaks of growing up in Minnesota during a performance at the North Iowa Community Auditorium Thursday night. Keillor's appearance was part of the 2006-2007 NIACC Performing Arts Series.

Keillor delivers the news from Lake Wobegon

□ Fans of famed storyteller pack North Iowa Community Auditorium

By JOHN SKIPPER
Of The Globe Gazette

MASON CITY — Garrison Keillor delighted a capacity crowd at North Iowa Community Auditorium Thursday night, spinning one tale after another about life on the shores of Lake Wobegon.

For 90 minutes, he wove one story into another as if he was speaking one long, continuous sentence, discussing the Minnesota weather, airline security, secrets to a happy marriage and hilarious tales about many of his relatives.

"Don't ever talk about your marriage," he advised, "especially to the person you're married to. You'll just dig the hole deeper."

Instead, said Keillor, think of the rules for marriage as the same as rules for riding in a lifeboat: no sudden

moves; don't crowd others; and keep all disastrous thoughts to yourself.

Keillor won over the North Iowa audience early when he opened his performance by singing Meredith Willson's "Lida Rose" and talked about Willson's early success in radio with his "Big Show" program.

"After the 'Big Show' faded away, radio had to wait a long time for the 'Prairie Home Companion' to come along," said Keillor, referring to the radio program he started that catapulted him to fame.

He talked about Minnesota winters in which the blizzards were so bad that residents strung clothes lines from their homes to their mailboxes and from their mailboxes to the road so that

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ing. Highway 18 shortly before received 4 inches of snow on mary.pleper@globegazette.com.

Keillor: Underwear-sniffing dogs are coming soon

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people could find their way to pick up the mail or catch the school bus.

"People had bigger families in those days," he said. "In case you lost a few kids, you had backups."

He said in winter children in Minnesota ate "horrible hot Ralston" and turned on the radio hoping to hear of school closings. "The schools never closed because once it started, where would it end?" said Keillor. "They only closed schools in Iowa."

Keillor thinks the United States might have over-reacted in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. He mentioned the media coverage given to the fifth anniversary of the attacks and said he doubted if anyone paid much attention to Dec. 7, 1946, five years after Pearl Harbor.

As for airport security, he mentioned the changes that have been made all because one man boarded a plane a with a bomb in his shoe.

"Now, even the elderly wives of Minnesota soybean farmers must remove their orthopedic shoes," he said.

"Some day, a terrorist will come to the airport with an underwear bomb — and you and I are going to have interesting lives. We'll go to the airport three hours early and have to deal with underwear-sniffing dogs," he said.

Keillor strolled across the stage as he talked, using no notes and often looking at the floor as if he was conjuring up his next tale.

A recurring theme was the humility of the people of his beloved Lake Wobegon. "They believed," he said, "that no matter what happened — things could be worse."

"We weren't too proud," he said. "If we won a gold medal, we would have had it bronzed."

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