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DAILY NEWS, BOWLING GREEN, KENTUCKY

## Resident of fictional town visits WKU radio station



Although Western Kentucky University has played host to "travelers" from many strange and exotic lands, not until this week did Western receive a visitor from a fictional place.

Garrison Keillor, who hosts "A Prairie Home Companion" on National Public Radio, took leave of his imaginary home in Lake Wobegon, Minn., and came to Bowling Green Monday to take part in the NPR affiliate WKYU-FM's open house Monday afternoon.

Keillor was honored at a luncheon meeting of the University Advisory Board when he received the Bowling Green-Warren County Chamber of Commerce Golden Key Club Award.

Keillor also received a George Peabody Award for Excellence in Broadcasting on May 4 for his work on "Prairie Home Companion," which is broadcast over NPR every Saturday afternoon. In addition to news and gossip about the residents of Lake Wobegon, the program is noted for its presentations of folk music, dixieland jazz, old timey music, bluegrass, poetry and prose.

By his own admission, however, Keillor—a tall, slender man with a resonant voice and a somewhat distracted manner of speaking—had a most undistinguished beginning in radio.

"I started out at the University of Minnesota radio station doing the morning newscast," Keillor told his audience of about 25 people in the Executive Dining Room in Downing University Center. "This was a closed circuit station—that is, we transmitted to a transformer in each of the dormitories and the broadcast was carried through the buildings' electrical systems.

For the first six months I worked there, the staff was building a new control room. It was a very expensive operation and was to be the most modern control room in the campus area.

"After six months, it was done and I began transmitting from the new control room while the staff went to the various buildings and made their first checkups of the transformers in quite some time.

"They found that all of the transformers were out of order and had probably been that way for five or six months. As a consequence, my debut on radio had had a pretty short shot. The only people who ever heard my news broadcast were the engineers who sat in the radio station with me and they never seemed too interested in what I had to say."

Keillor, however, was not discouraged and eventually started the "Prairie Home Companion" in the World Theatre in St. Paul, Minnesota. The live radio broadcast—which is sponsored by such Lake Wobegon businesses as Jack's Auto Repair (located in Jack's Auto Repair Mall quite close to Jack's Correspondence School of Thought), Earl's "As You Like It" Barbershop and Powdermilk Biscuits.

The radio program regularly plays to a full house of 650 people in the World Theatre and the audience is encouraged to make its presence known to the radio listeners by applauding, singing along with the performers—unless the performers are reading poetry—and substituting announcements of interest to Keillor for his on-the-air perusal.

Although Lake Wobegon exists only in Keillor's mind, it has developed a great deal of popularity with NPR audiences. Keillor believes this is because the community (and the radio program) celebrate the simple things in life.

"Lake Wobegon has survived by the fact that all the women are strong, all the men are good-looking and all the children are above average."

**GARRISON KEILLOR**

**KET announces new hours**