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Lake Wobegon is all around us

Garrison Keillor's "American Radio Company", broadcast from 5-7 p.m. Saturday at the Madison Civic Center, \$26, 266-9055.

The real Lake Wobegon is Daleyville or Oregon, Wis., or somewhere in southwestern Iowa.

Those are the places identified in the three winning entries to the Why My Town is the

Real Lake Wobegon competition. The essay contest, sponsored by Wisconsin Public Radio, is in celebration of the season finale of Garrison Keillor's "American Radio Company," which will be broadcast from Madison Saturday.

While the Capitol City may not resemble Lake Wobegon, it does have an important fan from that town.

"It's one of Garrison's favorite places," says Christopher Bannon, the program's marketing director. "We always have a good crowd in Madison."

That's why the season finale for the St. Paul-based show is

here. As of presstime, only limited-vision tickets remained. You still can listen to the broadcast from 5 to 7 p.m. on Wisconsin Public Radio. (In the Madison area, it will be carried on WERN-FM, 88.7.)

American Radio Company, the 4-year-old successor to "A Prairie Home Companion," is on more than 250 stations nationwide. The centerpiece of each music and comedy program is humorist Keillor's whimsical report on the news from his hometown, the fictional Lake Wobegon, Minn.

Or is it fictional? Wisconsin Public Radio listeners vied for

two free tickets to the broadcast by representing their towns as the real Lake Wobegon.

Oregon, Wis., is the real Lake Wobegon, according to Dorothy Kruse, because "the only major event we have is a woodtick race, which is a fund-raiser for the Lutheran church. That does breed some notoriety as it's the only woodtick race in the world."


Not so, says Jill Madsen, who grew up in southwestern Iowa. "Even though I haven't lived there for almost 20 years, I still love my frequent visits home," she writes. "My folks laugh as I lock my car doors. Not only do they keep their doors unlocked,

but they leave the keys in the ignition."

Ken Anderson is from Daleyville, near Mt. Horeb. He says that town is the real Lake Wobegon because, "walking home from school you usually saw neighbors drive by. You felt important when grown-ups waved. If they were going the same direction, they gave you a ride. That usually meant riding in the back of a blue Chevy pickup."

Anderson adds, however: "The people and places in Lake Wobegon are like the people and places in many towns. It's mostly just the names that are different."

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