

Erma Bombeck/2
Pet of the Week/3
Movies/6

Living


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The News From

OLD PUEBLO

Garrison Keillor (right) says of his decision to do a show in Tucson:

"The Sun Belt is a part of the country that I've made fun of for years. I felt obligated to go down there and look people in the eye. Coming from the Midwest, I have a certain bias in the matter. We don't see that there is any reason for people to live on the desert where there is no water. It seems perverse and obtuse. We also feel that winter creates character, and that only invalids would try to escape from it."



• Tucson will host public radio's Garrison Keillor and his 'Prairie Home Companion' this Saturday at UA's Centennial Hall.

By DANIEL BUCKLEY
Citizen Music Writer

Garrison Keillor wondered at the suggestion that the weather might be better in Tucson than in Minnesota.

"I don't know," he said, speaking by phone from St. Paul, Minn., of his pending Tucson appearance. "I'm mostly inside."

This Saturday afternoon, a sold-out house will pack the University of Arizona's 2,500-seat Centennial Hall to watch Keillor and his "A Prairie Home Companion" gang. Hosted by local National Public Radio affiliate KUAT, the program will be beamed to an estimated 2 million listeners nationwide.

The broadcast is one of about 12 on-location shows Keillor does each year for NPR affiliates.

Why Tucson? Partly because KUAT asked, and partly out of a need for variety.

"We like to go to places that sound good on the radio," Keillor explained in the same relaxed delivery of his "Lake Wobegon" yarns.

"Our show originates from Minnesota, so we like to go to places that are unlike Minnesota. We'll go down there and pick up a mariachi band and a chickenscratch band and somebody tuning in will immediately know this is *not* coming from Kansas."

A touch of guilt might enter into the decision, too.

"The Sun Belt is a part of the country that I've made fun of for years," he said. "I felt obligated to go down there and look people in the eye.

"Coming from the Midwest, I have a certain bias in the matter. We don't see that there is any reason for people to live on the desert where there is no water. It seems perverse and obtuse.

"We also feel that winter creates character, and that only invalids would try to escape from it."

Midwesterners, he said, don't take kindly to folks moving off somewhere.

"You have to stay put in one place in order to have any stories, or any history, or any real life," he explained.

Keillor has plenty of stories. Week after week, his monologues of small-town life strike at the heart of Americans.

"Some of them are more interesting than others," he said. "A week ago, I found myself out on stage discussing the price of corn. I thought I'd hit some kind of flat place there, and I needed to think of something else, or hang out with more interesting people."

Keillor loves his show, especially "about two minutes before air time."

"It becomes very peaceful and sweet, singing the opening theme song," he said.

"The News from Lake Wobegon" is one of his favorite parts of the show.

"To stand out there in a little pool of light. Everything else is dark around me. You talk

GARRISON continued/2B

IF YOU GO

- **What:** "A Prairie Home Companion," featuring Garrison Keillor.
- **When:** 3:45 p.m. Saturday.
- **Where:** University of Arizona's Centennial Hall
- **Tickets:** Sold out.
- **Hear the show broadcast:**
 - 6 p.m. Saturday, KUAT-FM (90.5)
 - 10 a.m. Sunday, KUJAZ (FM 89) and KUAT-AM (1550)

WHAT LISTENERS WILL HEAR

Along with Garrison Keillor's trademark "The News from Lake Wobegon" monologue, the live audience and "A Prairie Home Companion" fans in radio land will hear three bands from our neck of the desert — the Tohono O'odham walla band, Southern Scratch; International Mariachi America and western music greats Dean Armstrong and the Ranch Hands.

Garrison Keillor bringing his radio show to Tucson

Continued from 1B

rather slowly for 20 minutes and then you do the closing line.

"Some weeks are more distinguished than others, but no matter what you do, it seems calm, pleasurable, and worth it."

Keillor's monologues are written in the hours before the show.

"It sits and simmers all week, but I don't try to put anything down on paper until Saturday morning," he said.

"They start with little bits of

things you pick up from people you know, or people you might be in the vicinity of. People talk a lot - up here they do - and people are full of stories. I don't actually take other people's stories, but I sometimes get an idea from them about what's going on in Lake Wobegon."

What's on tap for his Tucson installment?

"I don't know, but maybe I'll get down there and run into somebody and find out something startling. And that'll be the News From Lake Wobegon."