



GARY FANDEL/THE REGISTER

Alexandra Lundvall, 4, patiently waits atop the shoulders of her father, Tom Lundvall of West Des Moines, for Garrison Keillor to sign their copy of "Wobegon Boy," Keillor's new book.

## Keillor reels 'em in, despite the blustery winds and slick roads

By GEOFF COOPER  
REGISTER STAFF WRITER

West Des Moines, Ia. — Garrison Keillor wasn't a bit surprised to see nearly 700 people brave a few inches of snow and slick roads Saturday morning to hear him read from his new book, "Wobegon Boy."

It takes more than winter weather to keep a Midwesterner down, the writer, humorist and storyteller told beaming fans crowded into Borders Book Store.

Keillor, the imaginative storyteller behind the Saturday "Prairie Home Companion" radio show and nine books, stopped in Des Moines as part of his nationwide book-signing tour.

"I feel guilty doing something on Saturday mornings that isn't 'Prairie Home Companion,'" said Keillor, who has been doing the radio show for nearly a quarter of a century.

But Saturday morning's event might as well have been the radio show, as he followed the program's normal routine of opening with song and then spinning yarns of the fictitious community of Lake Wobegon, Minn.

He encouraged the crowd to join him in singing Irving Berlin's "God Bless America," then launched into some humorous barbershop-quartet-flavored tunes. Then he told a joke or two, cleared his throat

and spoke about his experiences as a young writer.

"I started to write in order to express my deep, inexpressible feelings," said the Minnesota native, in his distinctive deep, smooth voice. "I later found out I was just going through puberty."

Keillor said his interests then turned to telling tongue-in-cheek stories and writing comedy.

"Comedy is so precise," Keillor said. "Every word must be the right one. I wanted to write things that made people laugh out loud."

After a few more comments on his early writing experiences, Keillor, dressed in his trademark gray suit and bright red tie, settled down and began to read the first of three excerpts from his new book.

"Wobegon Boy" is the story of John Tollefson, a Wobegonian who leaves the quiet comforts of life in the upper Midwest to manage a public radio station in New York.

"Tollefson was looking for a life in New York, and it was there that he realized he didn't have one," Keillor said. "His life was back at Lake Wobegon."

Keillor said he has plans to write more books with Wobegon as the subject.

"My favorite books are the ones I have not yet written," Keillor told one fan, who asked which of his books Keillor liked most. "Those are the ones I think the most about."