

Keillor visits state fair

DES MOINES (AP) — One might wonder if Garrison Keillor wasn't at the Iowa State Fair Sunday to collect some ideas for his national radio show.

The host of "The Prairie Home Companion" sampled a

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pork chop on a stick, hitched a ride on a golf cart, signed autographs and found time to judge some 4-H projects.

"All fiction comes from a little bit of reality, otherwise it would have no relevance," Keillor said. "The fun is in innovation — take something real like this fair, and make it something larger than life."

Keillor's St. Paul-based public radio show was taped at the fair Sunday for broadcast at a later date.

Keillor spoke with many fans about small towns and their many characters and found a thread of commonality with everyone he met.

He said the pork chop on a stick gave him a chance to eat with his fingers, something his mother never would have allowed. As for the fair, he said it was the best he's ever attended.

"This fair is such a classic fair, where others tend to be more like amusement parks," he said.

Keillor's knack for mixing fiction and reality with humor and subtlety has made him one of the most recognized personalities on public radio, and it's given him a wide range of fans.

Glenn Pollock, a 64-year-old Army veteran from Omaha, Neb., has been attending the Iowa State Fair every year since 1947. He's a huge fan of Keillor's and came to the fair with his teenage grandson, who is also a fan.

"You might think his characters are not real," Pollock said. "But when you live in a small town in Iowa, Nebraska or Minnesota you know they are real — they just have different names, that's all."

Another longtime fan was Kathleen Heise, whose daugh-



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Humorist Garrison Keillor tries a bite of pork chop on a stick Sunday at the Iowa State Fair in Des Moines.

ter Anneka, also a fan, was recently awarded first prize for her Historical Family Heritage 4-H project — one of the entries judged by Keillor.

"It was great to talk to him," said Kathleen Heise, of Denver, Iowa. "Anneka really enjoyed it."

This was the first year a celebrity judge critiqued the projects.

Keillor spoke with the Heises about the importance of recording one's ancestry.

"There's so many people who move around our country and lose track of their own ancestry," Keillor told Anneka Heise. "It's nice to know where you come from."

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