

Gwenda Blair (640)

## Delegate Keillor captures humor of convention

ATLANTA (UPI) — Garrison Keillor is, you might say, the delegate from Lake Wobegon and Monday night he was a perfect symbol of the apple pie-Old Glory image the Democratic Party is trying to establish to win back the White House.

Keillor, the Minnesota humorist who created public radio's popular "A Prairie Home Companion" variety show, was given two spots in the nationally televised opening of the Democratic National Convention, both designed to tug the heartstrings.

He underscored a theme — children and the future of the nation — the Democrats hope to exploit in their campaign against Vice President George Bush in November.

In his first appearance, Keillor, surrounded by a group of some 35 children from 6 to 8 years old, led the convention in the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag and the singing of "The Star-Spangled Banner."

In the second, following keynote speaker Ann Richards, Keillor was joined by actor Ed Begley Jr., and actress Ally Sheedy for a carefully choreographed reading of letters from children around the country on the theme, "If I were president."

"Politics is about the future and so we invited the future to be here tonight," Keillor said as the evening's televised portion began.

After Keillor led the multi-cultural group of children in the pledge, he also urged delegates to stand for the singing of the national anthem.

"Some people think this song is war-like," he told the kids, "but it isn't about war. It just asks if the flag is still there."

He reminded the children — and the delegates, and the national television audience — that America is a "nation of many nations" and a "nation of many cultures."

"As long as we see the flag is still there ... even if the dream is in danger, then there is still hope," he said.

As the lights came up at the end of Richards' stinging speech, Keillor — just as he might say of Robin and Linda Williams, among his favorite guests on the radio show — sighed into the microphone, "Ah, she's good."

Keillor, in his reminiscent style, spoke briefly about childhood beliefs.

"One of the things we believed was the president was a great man ... because we believed that to serve the public ... was a great thing," he said. "And about that we were absolutely right."

Playing off the conflict between childhood innocence and adult disillusionment he has made a trademark, Keillor added: "And if we got too smart and forgot it as we got older, then here's the Democratic convention to remind us that to serve the people is good and honorable work."

KITCHEN LINTS