

OUR VIEW

Keillor back; Does anyone really care?

Five years ago we thought Garrison Keillor was one of the most humorous, most entertaining people in the world. Now he's turned into something of a bore.

It was Keillor with his public radio program, "A Prairie Home Companion," who created the almost-mythical town of Lake Wobegon with its colorful characters and unusual institutions, like Ralph's Pretty Good Grocery, Bertha's Kitty Boutique and the Church of Our Lady of Perpetual Responsibilities.

Every Saturday, millions would tune in their radios to hear Keillor's witty monologues about the "town that time forgot, that the decades cannot improve, where all the women are strong, the men good-looking and the children above average."

Then suddenly about two years ago, Keillor announced he was quitting.

Now, he has announced he is coming back to public radio.

We aren't sure if he ever really went away.

Since discontinuing "A Prairie Home Companion," and then leaving for Denmark in a huff, Keillor has had not one, but two farewell shows, while his old syndicators, American Public Radio, kept reruns on the air.

The self-confessed "shy person," who had once carried on a running battle with the Twin Cities press, has also done a remarkably good job of keeping his name in the news, popping up in print every so often to wax nostalgic about the good old days.

The well-publicized retreat to Denmark proved to be less than successful so Keillor then moved to New York City, which the shy person had no trouble adapting to.

Keillor, in fact, is a very public person who wants publicity on his own terms. He wants all the advantages his considerable talents bring without any of the drawbacks.

His new show, "American Radio Company of the Air," may very well prove a big success both for himself and for American Public Radio, but it won't be "A Prairie Home Companion." Tom Wolfe was right: "You can't go home again."