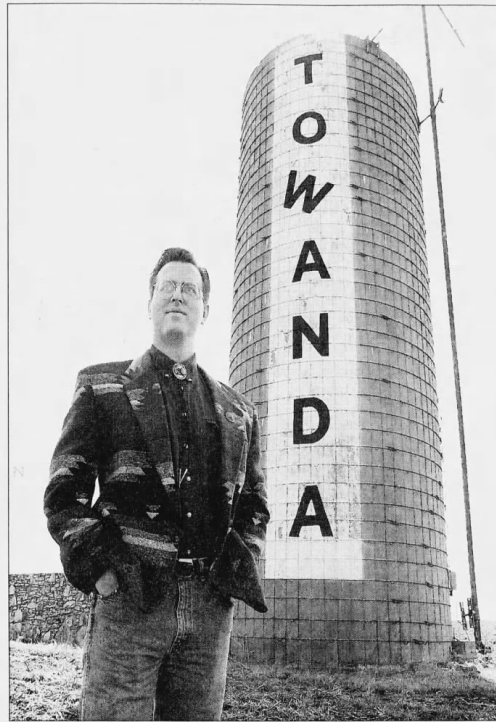


RADIO DATE



Andy Newbrey will perform on Garrison Keillor's "A Prairie Home Companion" on April 21. He was selected out of about 2,500 applicants from around the nation to appear on a segment called "Talent from towns of less than 2,000."

'Prairie Home' show to air Towanda man

■ Tax preparer Andy Newbrey will perform live on national radio with Garrison Keillor on "A Prairie Home Companion."

BY ALEX BRANCH
The Wichita Eagle

TOWANDA — Andy Newbrey has sung in concerts in Kansas and Oklahoma.

He's put his gospel tunes on a CD that is occasionally played on area radio stations.

But his next gig — live radio on Garrison Keillor's "A Prairie Home Companion" show — has his nerves a little jangled.

"I usually don't get nervous," said the Towanda tax preparer for 1BRB Block. "But singing live on national radio — that does make me a little nervous."

Newbrey learned this week that he had been chosen to perform April 21 on the syndicated radio program, which reaches nearly 2.6 million listeners each week.

He was selected out of more than 2,500 applicants nationwide to perform in a segment called "Talent from towns

of less than 2,000."

"I just sent in my demo tape to see what would happen," said Newbrey, who has listened to the show since he was in college. "I thought there must be a lot of people

out there who are a lot better than me."

But on Monday, he got a call from programmers telling him his tape had been chosen. He immediately called his wife, Michelle, who owns a veterinary clinic in Towanda.

"She's been listening for a long time, too, so she thought it was pretty neat," he said. "She yelled in my ear."

Newbrey will be flown to St. Paul, Minn., on Friday, April 20, for a few hours of rehearsal. On Saturday, he'll sing a couple of gospel songs and tell Keillor, a broadcaster and author, a little about Towanda.

His segment could appear anytime during the two-hour program. It airs from 5 to 7 p.m. every Saturday on KMLW-FM 89.1. It's rebroadcast from 8 to 10 p.m. Sundays.



Keillor

Programmers say he'll have 15 to 20 minutes of air time to sing songs like "Swing Down, Sweet Chariot."

He's not sure exactly what he'll say about his town of about 1,500 people.

"Oh, probably just tell them what it's like, what's here," he said. "We've got the Rusty Bucket, Red's Cafe, Willbur's Market. It's a nice little town."

If he wants to recount the city's history, he'll have some help. Longtime residents Emery Bever, Gene Thomas and Hank Burchard are putting together a short, historical summary of Towanda for him.

"It sounds like a pretty good deal," said Thomas, president of the Towanda Historical Society. "Hopefully, he'll get to tell everyone a little bit about our town."

Folks sipping coffee at the Rusty Bucket Cafe on Thursday morning have April 21 marked on their calendars. It's not often one of their own gets on national radio.

"I'm sure we'll all be listening," said Betty Austin. "Everyone around here knows each other. It's exciting."

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