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**"You don't want to let people know how long you've been around. If you do, they'll think, 'Well, that's long enough. Pull the plug on that guy. He's had his chance. Let's have the next person come up.'"**

**- Garrison Keillor**  
celebrating 40 years of  
"A Prairie Home Companion"



# Faithful 'Companion'

Keillor celebrates 40 years of popular radio show

**By JEFF BAEMEN**  
The Associated Press

ST. PAUL, Minn. — Garrison Keillor has a new book out, a collection spanning his decades as storyteller, novelist and radio show host. On July 6 he celebrates the 40th anniversary of "A Prairie Home Companion." But the curmudgeonly creator of Lake Wobegon, the quirky Minnesota town where, well, you know the rest, insists he didn't want to mark either milestone.

"I'm not doing, so why would you put out a 'Prairie Reader' if Keillor is not done writing?" he asked during an interview in his book-lined office.

At last this book came. Keillor is scheduled to speak at 7 p.m. Sept. 22 at the Rose Center for The Arts, 26 N. Williams St., Crystal Lake.

"The Keillor Reader" includes monologues from "A Prairie Home Companion" as well as excerpts from his novels, newspaper columns and previously unpublished essays. Both the book and the show's 40th anniversary celebration were done, Keillor said, against his better judgment.

"Because you don't want to let people know how long you've been around. If you do, they'll think, 'Well, that's long enough. Pull the plug on that guy. He's had his chance. Let's have the next person come on,'" Keillor said.

Keillor, who turns 72 in August, hinted a few years ago that he planned to retire in 2013, and the show had indeed gone dark in 2011. But while he says the show "could definitely go on" without him, Keillor already has sketched the next season and has started talks about the series after that.

Despite his success, Keillor's weekly public radio show draws about 1 million listeners. Keillor remains his own best critic.

"It was very painful to put this book together because those old shows were really not any good. And I've written a lot that I wish I could delete, but it's not possible," Keillor said.

The book talks during the interview about his dad ("He did it for lonely people without much money"), performing ("You stand up in front of a crowd and you hope they'll like you and you don't sleep and you don't understand why?") and fiction ("I'm pretty sure I'm done writing it, and I think I'm mostly done reading it").


Keillor had a quartet show on Minnesota Public Radio when he founded "A Prairie Home Companion" on July 6, 1974, at Macalester College in St. Paul.

About a dozen people paid a dollar each to get in.

"Through the years, 'A Prairie Home Companion' has struck as a form of art, word and effects, like speeches such as Ponderbush Borealis, musical pieces and the show's centerpiece — Keillor sitting in a stool telling the latest news about Neve wiggle, huckster farmers and other characters from his imaginary hometown of Lake Wobegon, "where all the women are strong, all the men are good-looking and all the children are above average."

Gloria O'Brien of Minneapolis, now 70, attended that first show.

"Just [told him] he's," said O'Brien, who remains a regular



**Garrison Keillor (background) records installments of "The Writer's Almanac" with engineer Mark Smith in St. Paul, Minnesota. Keillor is celebrating 40 years of "A Prairie Home Companion" and has written a book (left), "The Keillor Reader."**

**AN EVENING WITH GARRISON KEILLOR**

**WHERE:** Rose Center for The Arts, 26 N. Williams St., Crystal Lake

**COST & INFO:** Spend an evening with the public storyteller. Tickets start at \$63. Information and tickets: visit [www.prairiehome.com](http://www.prairiehome.com) or go to the box office at (815) 566-9312. "The Keillor Reader" includes monologues from "A Prairie Home Companion" as well as excerpts from Keillor's novels, newspaper columns and essays. It is available wherever books are sold. Information: [www.garrisonkeillor.com](http://www.garrisonkeillor.com).

**WHEN:** 7 p.m. Sept. 22

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Thousands of fans were expected this weekend when "A Prairie Home Companion" returned to Macalester for the anniversary show on July 6. It included a concert, an expanded three-hour "Prairie Home" show, a sing-a-long and a re-creation of a "Living Play" from a Keillor monologue.

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