



Will Jones after last night

Night-club comics undoubtedly are at work perfecting their Gerald Ford imitations. David Frye, the Nixon specialist, admits to having been working on his for months.

Meanwhile, the first comic to reach town since the resignation is Freddie Prinze, the 20-year-old wonder who specializes in Puerto Rican street humor, and who will star in a new NBC series for fall called "Chico and the Man." Prinze claimed he had his Gerald Ford impression perfected, and he tried it out on a group of interviewers at lunch the other day.

In the Prinze version, Mr. Ford steps out of his little house in Virginia on the night following the resignation speech and speaks very solemnly and humbly to reporters, calling for God's help in the difficult days ahead.

Then he goes back into the little house, closes the door, turns to his wife, bursts into a big grin, and goes: "Yip-peeEEEEEEEE!"

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Just a few days ago in this space, I was grinding my gut over the inanely bland assortment of citizens that the TV reporters had dug up for street interviews during the Nixon resignation crisis.

It took a cool head like Garrison Keillor's to explain how and why such a thing happens. Keillor laid it out calmly and reasonably for listeners of "A Prairie Home Companion" on the Minnesota Educational Radio network Saturday afternoon.

Keillor confessed to an addiction to crisis, and a fascination with the kind of network reporter who stands facing the camera on a deserted street and says: "The mood here in Dubuque is one of quiet."

"Well, it is," Keillor agreed, "because everybody's home watching TV."

Everyone who's really interested, that is. So the only citizens those street reporters can latch onto for comment are the saps who don't much care what's going on anyway.

Keillor recalled the days when, in time of great crisis, the big question would be: Where were you when it happened?

"Now nobody asks you that," Keillor said. "Everybody knows where they were when a great crisis happens. They're watching TV."

He went on:

"The wonderful thing about TV is not that it brings us history, but that it brings us the trivia. You don't remember the historical moment. You remember sweat on an upper lip.

"My most vivid memory of Richard Nixon is when Sammy Davis hugged him. Sammy was smiling, and Nixon was taken unawares, and for a split second there he had a look of terror on his face."

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