

'Prairie Home Companion' to sign off

The Associated Press

ST. PAUL, Minn. — Garrison Keillor, host of public radio's "A Prairie Home Companion," announced Saturday at the start of the weekly program that he will make his last broadcast June 13.

Keillor, 44, author of the best-selling "Lake Wobegon Days," said he wants to return to writing full time and live in his wife's native Denmark for a while.

In late 1985, Keillor married Ulla Skaerved, whom he had met years earlier when she was a foreign exchange student at his high school.

His announcement leaves the future of "A Prairie Home Companion" uncertain, said Christelle E. Langer, a spokeswoman for Minnesota Public Radio, which produces the show.

Keillor told his audience: "The decision to close is mine, a simple painful decision that is cheerfully made. It is simply time to go. I want to resume the life of a shy person and live with my affectionate family a more peaceful life, a life in which there are Saturdays."

The show will continue as scheduled through the summer

with rebroadcasts. A contract to televise the program of music and storytelling on the Disney Channel beginning March 7 through the end of the season also is unaffected, she said.

Minnesota Public Radio President William Kling said a new variety radio show is being planned to begin July 1. He said it will not duplicate Keillor's work, but will, like "A Prairie Home Companion," be broadcast live from the 77-year-old World Theater in St. Paul.

Kling said he had had a feeling since the first of the year that

Keillor might be thinking about leaving the show.

"As the pressures mounted, he could begin to see it would be increasingly difficult to continue to produce the show every Saturday when you have a best-selling novel and the kind of visibility he has received from Time magazine and others," Kling said.

"A Prairie Home Companion" got its start in 1974, and Keillor has made an estimated 500 broadcasts since then, Langer said. In 1980, the program made its national broadcast debut and now reaches 3 million to 4 million listeners each Saturday.