



Garrison Keillor runs through his program at the Flynn Theater in Burlington, Vt.

GLOBE PHOTO/PAM BERRY

Garrison Keillor Live from Vermont

Green Mountain State wants more than a holiday tour from the king of public radio

By Joseph P. Kahn
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BURLINGTON, Vt. — There is an old Vermont proverb that says you have to hoe a row of corn with a man to know him. When that man happens to be Garrison Keillor, best-selling author and public radio's reigning Saturday night corn artist, Vermonters are demonstrating that they not only wish to know the fellow better, they would be thrilled if he put down roots here.

Beginning last weekend, and for the next two Satur-

day evenings, Keillor and his American Radio Company crew are broadcasting three special Christmas shows live from Burlington's Flynn Theater. To welcome the bard of Lake Wobegon to the shores of Lake Champlain, and because Keillor has dropped hints that he would like to find a permanent, non-New York City base for his nationally syndicated show, Green Mountain Staters have been rolling out the gold carpet in what might be considered a massive effort at gilt by association.

Newspapers from Bennington to Burlington hailed Keillor's arrival and chatted up the advantages of relocating to these verdant, culturally aware hills. A local restaurant featured Chicken Wobegon on the menu. On Saturday, Gov. Howard Dean was on hand (and on-stage) personally to greet the lanky Minnesotan with the folksy ways and international following. Even the short, six-block walk between theater and hotel had been targeted by state lobbyists. Picking Keillor up at his room before the show to drive him over to the Flynn was none other than James Jeffords, Vermont's junior

US senator.

"I hope in some small way I can influence Mr. Keillor to bring the show here," the senator said humbly, after admitting that he had failed to rehearse any stump speeches in that regard. "His dry, rural humor makes a great fit with our state's image. We'd love to have him."

"Coming to New England would be a good idea," agreed guest star Bob Elliott, surviving member of Bob & Ray, the comedy team that practically invented dry radio humor. "In my opinion Garrison's has never been a New York kind of show, anyway."

Lack of rehearsal time and concerns about location were uppermost in the host's mind, even if he wasn't inviting the Bureau of Tourism in for tea, exactly. After visiting six cities in five days ("Garrison has been off doing the NBA Western Conference tour," quipped one of his roadies) to promote his new novel, "WLT: A Radio Romance," Keillor had breezed into Burlington sometime Friday afternoon. For the next 24 hours he re-

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