

the battle.¹¹

Humorist Keillor in Maine

Portland hosts radio program

PORTLAND (AP) — President Bush, author Stephen King and the fine art of pain-free lobster cooking were targets of humorist Garrison Keillor as he brought his radio variety program to Maine's largest city.

Keillor and crew parodied the down-east accent and lifestyle in comedy skits and songs on "Garrison Keillor's American Radio Company," Saturday's two-hour public radio broadcast, which also featured regulars Ivy Austin, Richard Muenz and musical director Rob Fisher, drew a packed house at the City Hall auditorium.

In a skit poking fun at Maine's authors, Keillor tells how horror-fiction author Stephen King was eaten by a 90-pound lobster.

Keillor, playing King's cousin, Stan King, told the tale of the "Portland Packet," a ship which patrolled the Maine coast, picking up book manuscripts from authors to transport them to their New York publishers.

When the ship was no longer profitable, its owner, played by radio personality Bob Elliott, turned the boat into a condominium-restaurant complex. Keillor told the audience the sad tale of how Stephen King, unsuccessful as a comedy writer, loses his life as a cook in the restaurant when a giant lobster turns the tables and boils the author for his dinner — with lots of melted butter on the side.

In another lobster-related skit, Elliott, who summers in Cundy's Harbor, dished out a pain-free method of cooking lobster to a "liberal" who was worried she might hurt the lobster by boiling it alive.

"Lobster Bob" Elliott claims he learned this method from fellow Mainer Edmund Muskie: lull the lobster into a trance by humming into its antennae and then pop it into the microwave for a few minutes.

Part-time Kennebunkport resident President Bush failed to escape the Maine-targeted wit, as Elliott pitched "Bush Hair Tonic." Elliott explained to Americans concerned about total "hair collapse" during the recession that many of today's hair problems date back to "well-meaning hair programs of the '60s."

It was an obvious reference to the administration's recent criticism of President Lyndon Johnson's Great Society programs.

In more serious moments, Keillor paid tribute to author E.B. White, who lived in Brooklyn, Maine, and a Portland native, poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

Singer Austin led the music pieces of the show, and opened the program with a whaling song sung in harmony with Keillor and Muenz.

Keillor takes his weekly program periodically on the road. The show, usually broadcast from the Brooklyn Academy of Music in New York, was last broadcast from Portland in November 1988.

The Minnesota native is best known for "A Prairie Home Companion," which was broadcast on National Public Radio for 13 years and ended in 1987. Keillor started the "American Radio Company" in 1989 after living in his wife's native Denmark for two years.