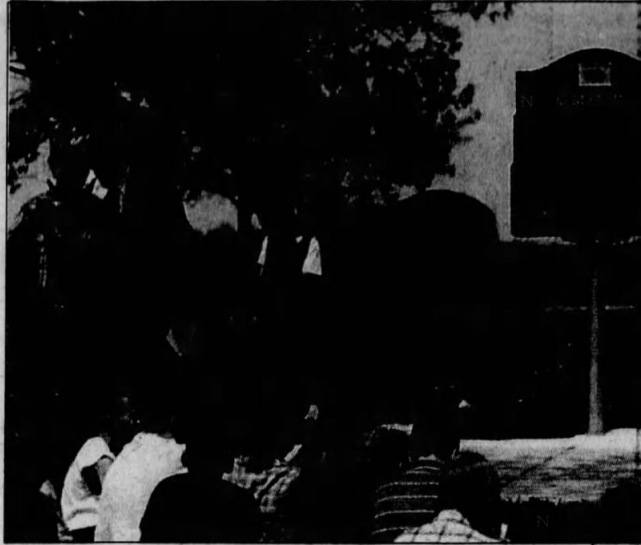


PEOPLE IN THE NEWS



AP photo
Jim Hanson, left, of Elgin, Minn., sings a duet with Garrison Keillor on Monday, during a dedication of a plaque at a rest stop on I-90 15 miles southwest of Rochester, Minn.

Garrison Keillor honors highway poet

STEWARTVILLE, Minn. (AP) — Welcoming words in the form of a poem by the late James Wright now greet travelers at a rest area “Just off the highway to Rochester, Minnesota.”

Garrison Keillor read that first line of his one-time professor's poem “A Blessing” at a dedication Monday of the plaque inscribed with the poem.

More than 200 area high school students and a few horses listened as the host of public radio's “A Prairie Home Companion” read the poem, which he described as “a very simple poem about stopping, and the wonder of the natural world.”

One student described the poem “about the beauty of

Minnesota. And it's so close to us; we know what he's talking about.”

Wright once wrote about his poetry: “I have written about the things I am deeply concerned with — crickets outside my window, cold and hungry old men, ghosts in the twilight, horses in a field, a red-haired child in her mother's arms, a feeling of desolation in the fall, some cities I've known.”

“A Blessing” tells of those things: horses in a field, the city of Rochester, twilight.

Keillor came up with the idea to put the poem on a rest-stop plaque off Interstate 90, and the Minnesota Department of Transportation authorized it.