

# Despite stroke, humorist not slowing down

**NO MORE FLOWERS** | 'PRAIRIE HOME COMPANION' AUTHOR IS BACK AT WORK

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

ST. PAUL, Minn.— Fans of "A Prairie Home Companion" can stop sending Garrison Keillor flowers. The humorist and best-selling author says he's just fine after suffering a mild stroke and is back at work preparing for the new season of his radio show.

"What I feel is impatience and guilt at accepting sympathy and concern from people that I do not have coming to me," Keillor told The Associated Press on Wednesday, a little more than a week after he checked himself into a hospital because he was feeling sick.

"You get a lot of potted plants that you're really not entitled to," said Keillor. "Just because a guy, you know, spent four days on monitors doesn't entitle you to a big pot of black-eyed Susans. They should go to people who have real problems?"

Keillor, 67, said he has no plans to retire or to postpone the coming season of "A Prairie Home Companion," which kicks off Sept. 26 with a live broadcast from St. Paul's Fitzgerald Theater, followed by a supper and annual street dance.

"People are always ready to give you advice about what you should do, and you should take it easy and so on. But taking it easy makes me restless and unhappy," Keillor said. "I don't have hobbies ... so work is what I do."

Keillor began "A Prairie Home Companion" in July 1974 and has seen it grow to a public radio institution that draws more than 4 million listeners weekly to the Saturday evening broadcast on nearly 600 radio stations nationwide. He quit the show in 1987 but was back on the air two years later.

Keillor drove himself to a St. Paul hospital after feeling ill Labor Day, then was taken by ambulance to the Mayo Clinic in Roch-

ester, Minn., where he spent four nights at Saint Marys Hospital.

Keillor underwent surgery to repair a heart valve at Mayo in 2001 but said his stroke apparently was unrelated. He said he didn't expect to have a stroke "until I was 85, but life is not always chronological."

"Your mouth goes berserk," he recalled of his stroke, "as if you'd had four martinis, and it's numb, as if you've gone to the dentist and had four martinis."

Keillor, who wore a wrinkled linen jacket, black T-shirt, faded blue jeans and his signature red tennis shoes (no socks), said he "crossed a line in human experience" when he gave himself an injection of blood thinner in his belly when he got home from the hospital. He said that impressed his 11-year-old daughter.

"It was like the side-show at the state fair when I was a kid, you know. I became the equivalent of a sword swallower," Keillor said.

He said his doctors did not tell him what to do or not to do after his stroke, and he plans no lifestyle changes.

"I don't exercise and I don't diet, so those are off the table," Keillor said.

Keillor doesn't think his workload contributed to his stroke. This summer he finished a novel, "Pilgrims," and a novella, "A Christmas Blizzard," which both come out this fall. He also celebrated the 35th anniversary of "A Prairie Home Companion" with a Fourth of July performance that attracted an estimated 10,000 people to Avon, a central Minnesota town that is one of the inspirations for Keillor's imaginary hometown of Lake Wobegon.

"But I love my work, so I don't know that work creates stress for me that it seems to other people," Keillor said.



Radio show host Garrison Keillor resumes work in his Prairie Home Productions office in St. Paul, Minn.

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