



BARRY WILLIAMS / GUIDE

Garrison Keillor warms up before the live broadcast of the Prairie Home Companion.

Keillor brings radio variety to ever-steady Old Faithful

By Drew Simmons

They found a geyser near Lake Wobegon last weekend.

Garrison Keillor, host of the highly esteemed "Prairie Home Companion," brought his radio variety show to Old Faithful Saturday, celebrating Independence Day and Yellowstone's 125th anniversary in a swift, two-hour stroke.

The public radio program was staged in front of a live crowd of 500 at the Old Faithful Recreation Center but touched thousands of cities internationally through the Public Radio International network.

National Park Service naturalist Ann Deutch joined Keillor early in the show to dispense her knowledge of Yellowstone's unique geyser plumbing.

Yellowstone Superintendent Mike Finley also joined Keillor, reminding listeners the nation's birthday was a time

to reflect on the gifts enjoyed by all Americans: the gift of liberty, a flexible Constitution; and a national will to preserve things that are unique, beautiful and historic. He urged Americans to join the Park Service in protecting America's national heritage. Keillor, radio's best-known storyteller, was his typical self—a silver-tongued spinner of small-town stories dripping with charm.

Some reporters covering the event said that Keillor strayed too often from the storytelling and comedy into his less appealing gospel-singing mode.

Others said the show was an immensely suitable background noise for a Saturday afternoon nap.

During the broadcast, he mentioned stopping at a bookstore in Jackson and being impressed by a shelf devoted to Jack Kerouac. Keillor used the story to segue into a tribute to Kerouac's landmark work, "On the Road."