

Meet the duo who will replace Larry Meiller on Wisconsin Public Radio

Barry Adams | Wisconsin State Journal

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Replacing Larry Meiller on the Wisconsin Public Radio airwaves will be no easy task for management.

That's why, after a national search for his replacement, it has turned to two people well-familiar with Meiller and WPR.

Meiller announced in late December that he would retire on June 30th from his midday talk show, "The Larry Meiller Show," **after 59 years of broadcasting.**

Filling the void will be technical director and frequent fill-in host Lee Rayburn, who will take over Meiller's 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. time slot Monday through Thursday beginning July 6. Executive producer and avid gardener Jill Nadeau, who has filled in for Meiller for over 10 years, will take on the hosting duties for "Garden Talk" on Fridays.



Jill Nadeau, left, the executive producer of the "Larry Meiller Show" on Wisconsin Public Radio, will take over "Garden Talk" on Fridays beginning July 10th. Lee Rayburn, Meiller's technical producer and a longtime fill-in for Meiller, will take over the 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. time slot Monday through Thursday beginning July 6th. Meiller retires Tuesday after a 59-year career with the WPR.

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“We wanted it to be a gentle transition,” Nadeau said. “We wanted our listeners to know the people that are going to be in that chair.”

Nadeau grew up on a farm between Escanaba and Manistique in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula, where she loathed weeding her parents’ garden but learned to embrace the hobby she’s now charged with talking about each week, beginning July 10.

Nadeau, 65, worked at a number of garden centers and as a florist after graduating from Marquette University, where she played in the pep band and earned a degree in broadcast communications with a minor in film. She spent 15 years as the media director overseeing local cable access programming in Watertown before joining WPR in 2016.

“It is an honor, to say the least, and a little scary,” Nadeau said of taking over for Meiller on Garden Talk. “But since I’ve been filling in for him for 10 years, it’s kind of second nature right now. I’m used to the guests, and I’ve been producing the show for 10 years, so that’s not going to change.”

Rayburn, who says he is in his 50s, has been a frequent fill-in host for Meiller, has worked at WPR since 2019, and has been Meiller’s technical producer, a job that entails running the audio board during the show.

Rayburn, a UW-Madison graduate who got his start in radio in 2001 when John “Sly” Sylvester hired him at WTDY-AM, says he will bring his own personality to the chair with the “Lee Rayburn Show.”

He has no intention of mimicking or imitating Meiller, although the show will continue in its existing format.

“Really, I’ll be most successful when I get out of the way and just make those connections with our guests and the people who are listening,” Rayburn said. “It is a legacy that deserves to continue, and that is my commitment to the show that he created. We just want to continue on with it for as long as we can.”

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