

John Keillor; father of humorist Garrison

John Keillor, father of Minnesota storyteller Garrison Keillor and an inspiration for some of his "Prairie Home Companion" characters, died Thursday at his home in Brooklyn Park. He was 87, and had pneumonia.



John Keillor

Keillor, a railway mail clerk and carpenter, is the subject of an essay by his son in today's Time magazine. He's remembered as a hard-working, taciturn man who, even as he lay dying, evoked respect: "He is still my dad, and his power is greater than that of the New York Times."

In the essay, the St. Paul author and host of the Minnesota Public Radio show wrote that he recently read a 1945 letter from his father in which he spoke tenderly of his children: "It never occurred to me that he loved me, but of course he did, and it was nice to hear about it at last."

Garrison Keillor was flying home from Ireland and couldn't be reached for comment. But his brother, John Philip Keillor Jr. of Madison, Wis., speaking from a family gathering at his parents' Brooklyn Park home, said his father inspired "aspects of several characters" in Garrison's monologues from Lake Wobegon. "My brother mercifully disguises us to the world, so it takes a family

member to recognize us, but sure, my dad has shown up several times in there."

John Keillor said his father was a "hard worker and a gentle and caring father" who served as a peacemaker in his

Plymouth Brethren Assembly congregation.

He was born in Ramsey Township and graduated from Anoka High School. In 1936, he married Grace Denham. During World War II, he served in the Army in New York, and after the war he worked as a railway mail clerk for Great Northern.

Keillor also was a gifted carpenter and built furniture and houses.

In addition to his wife and sons, Keillor is survived by two daughters, Judith Locke of Greenville, S.C., and Linda Berg of Minneapolis, and two other sons, Stanley of Mendota Heights and Steven of Askov, Minn.; 14 grandchildren and 11 great-grandchildren.

Services will be held at 2 p.m. today at Trott Brook Gospel Hall, 17301 Nowthen Blvd., Ramsey. Visitation will be held one hour before services.

Arrangements are by the Kapala-Glodek Funeral Chapel, Anoka.

— Pamela Miller