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## Tom Keith, sound effects man on 'Prairie Home Companion'

ASSOCIATED PRESS

ST. PAUL — Tom Keith — a longtime sound effects man who was the source of creaking doors, clucking chickens, and more on "A Prairie Home Companion" — has died. He was 64.

Mr. Keith's death was announced yesterday by Jon McTaggart, chief executive of Minnesota Public Radio and American Public Media, which distributes "A Prairie Home Companion."

Mr. Keith died suddenly after collapsing at his home Sunday.

He had performed with the "Prairie Home" host, Garrison Keillor, since 1976, when Keillor hosted an early version of MPR's "The Morning Show." Mr. Keith worked as a board operator, but began appearing more and more in skits Keillor produced.

When Keillor moved to "A Prairie Home Companion" full time, Mr. Keith cohosted "The Morning Show," appearing in his alter ego of Jim Ed Poole.

He retired from that program in 2008 but continued to appear on Keillor's show. Along with other regular cast members, he appeared as himself in the 2006 Robert Altman movie "A Prairie Home Companion."

Keillor said Mr. Keith was "one of radio's great clowns" who was "serious about silliness and worked hard to get a moo exactly right and the cluck too, and the woof."

In a statement, Keillor said Mr. Keith died of a heart attack. He said Mr. Keith performed on the "Prairie Home" show Oct. 22 at St. Paul's Fitzgerald Theater, where he did a sound effect of a grade-school teacher being shrunk from 6 feet to 3 inches.

Keillor said Mr. Keith complained of shortness of breath the next week but put off seeing a doctor.

"We're just stunned," said Tim Russell, a voice actor on the show. "He was such a joy to work with and such a master at his craft. He's really going to be missed."

Russell said he will remember Mr. Keith for his generosity and kindness, as well as his talent.

"We always had just the greatest time," Russell said. "He really kind of reinvented the whole genre of radio sound effects, going back to the earliest days of 'A Prairie Home Companion,' and he was so generous to the rest of us as actors and other cast members."