

Keillor: Emails to accuser were just 'romantic writing'

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Garrison Keillor described several sexually suggestive emails he exchanged with a former researcher who accused him of sexual misconduct as "romantic writing" that never resulted in a physical relationship, and the radio host rejected the idea that because he was her boss — and the driving force of a hugely popular radio program — it could be sexual harassment.

The woman responded, via her attorney, that Keillor's power over her job made her afraid to say no to him.

In one of his first ex-

tended interviews since Minnesota Public Radio cut ties over the allegations against the former

"A Prairie Home Companion" host in November, Keillor said he never had a sexual relationship with the woman,

a freelance contributor to the show at the time. "No button was unbuttoned and no zipper was unzipped," Keillor told The Associated Press. "I never kissed her ... This was a flirtation between two writers that took place in writing."

Keillor also downplayed



Garrison Keillor

his power over the woman by portraying himself as uninvolved in the mundane operations of the radio show he created nearly a half-century ago and built into a powerhouse that attracted millions of listeners nationwide each Saturday evening, spun off assorted businesses and tours and inspired a movie.

"I was not really the boss around 'Prairie Home Companion,'" Keillor said. "I was a writer sitting in a dim office at a typewriter, back in the old days." He also said: "I had no control over her whatsoever. She worked at home."

The woman said in an emailed response through her attorney that Keillor

"had the power to provide or take away job assignments and opportunities. He also acknowledged several times that power imbalance between us, recognizing how his conduct could be offensive when it was coming from the person for whom I work."

She also said she wasn't interested in anything but a "collegial" relationship with Keillor.

"He was my mentor and employer," she said. "As such, he had power over me. Every time I said 'no' or tried to avoid him I feared I was saying 'no' to my future."

The Associated Press does not typically name alleged victims of sexual harassment unless they have chosen to go public.

MPR spokeswoman Angie Andresen said the station stands by its handling of the claims against Keillor.

In January, the company

said the woman had accused Keillor of dozens of sexually inappropriate incidents over several

years, including requests for sexual contact and explicit sexual communications and touching.

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