http://www.KSCBNews.net/news/index.cfm?nk=3133

Country Music/Sausage Legend Jimmy Dean Dies

Jimmy Dean, a country music legend for his smash hit about a workingman hero, "Big Bad John," and an entrepreneur known for his sausage brand, died on Sunday. He was 81.

His wife, Donna Meade Dean, said her husband died at their Henrico County, Va., home.

She told The Associated Press that he had some health problems but was still functioning well, so his death came as a shock. She said he was eating in front of the television. She left the room for a time and came back and he was unresponsive. She said he was pronounced dead at 7:54 p.m.

Born in 1928, Dean was raised in poverty in Plainview and dropped out of high school after the ninth grade. He went on to a successful entertainment career in the 1950s and '60s that included the nationally televised "The Jimmy Dean Show."

In 1969, Dean went into the sausage business, starting the Jimmy Dean Meat Co. in his hometown. He sold the company to Sara Lee Corp. in 1984.

Dean lived in semiretirement with his wife, who is a songwriter and recording artist, on their 200-acre estate just outside Richmond, where he enjoyed investing, boating and watching the sun set over the James River.

With his drawled wisecracks and quick wit, Dean charmed many fans. But in both entertainment and business circles, he was also known for his tough hide.

The Jimmy Dean Meat Co. opened with a plant in Plainview. After six months, the company was profitable.

Copyright KSCB News