

Walter Dyett, 69, Dies

Walter Henri Dyett, 69, retired chairman of the music department of Du Sable High School, suffered a fatal heart attack, Sunday evening in his home, 6608 S. St. Lawrence while watching television.

Capt. Dyett, in his capacity as chairman of the music department at Du Sable High School for more than 35 years, was instrumental in launching the careers of many famous musicians and entertainers. Under his baton, more than half a million children and youth have indirectly learned music from him and more than 20,000 were under his direct supervision during his career as a teacher.

In his retiring years, Capt. Dyett felt richly rewarded for having changed his life ambition and profession from medicine to music. Because of his unusual manner of understanding pupils and talent, such persons as the late Nat King Cole, Ahmad Jāmāl, Ray Nance, Gene Ammons, John Young, Johnny Griffin, Dorothy Donegan, Benny Green and others became great stars in the entertainment world.

The famous musician has been identified with Chicago's entertainment circle since 1921, when he emerged as an orchestra leader. His first band date was at the old Pickford Theater (now the Louis Theater) on 35th st., where his orchestra provided background music for silent movies.

This career ended when silent pictures gave way to sound around 1931 and the need for bands dwindled. During those years, opportunities for black violinists just weren't available.

After careful consideration of his situation, he was persuaded to take advantage of his

music degree, earned from the University of California. He began a teaching career as music instructor at Wendell Phillips high school during the school term of 1931. He remained there until the building was burned. He eventually became band instructor for Du Sable High, where he remained for more than 35 years.

Dyett was born in St. Joseph, Md., Jan. 11, 1901, one of two children to Rev. W. W. S. Dyett, prominent AME Minister and Minerva Dyett, a singer, pianist and prominent church worker. Because of his father's ministry, the family (which included a sister, Annye L. Dyett-Lorick) moved often. His early education and high school training came from schools in Denver, Omaha, Pasadena and Oakland, Calif.

The musician, an accomplished violinist, has played in jazz bands. He received a B. M. degree from Vandercook College of Music in 1938, and an M. M. degree from the Chicago Musical College in 1942.

He had considerable influence in the area of music in Chicago and was on the Board of the American Federation of Musicians, Local 10-208 and the Chicago Music Association of Negro Musicians, Branch No. 1.

Other organizations to which he belonged include the Harmony Masonic Lodge No. 88, Western Consistory 24; Arabic Temple 44, Ancient Egyptian Arabic Order Nobles of the Mystic Shrine. He served as National Imperial promotional director. He is a member of the Chicago Teachers Union, Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity and coordinator for O-Jeano Productions.

Services will be held at 8 p.m. Wednesday,

Nov. 19 at Woodlawn AME Church, 65th and Evans ave. Visitation is scheduled from 7 to 8 p.m. in the Church. He will be cremated Thursday morning at Graceland celytery.

Dyett is survived by his wife, Gwendolyn Eula.



WALTER DYETT