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February 19, 1991

Lon Dyson, 65

Longtime radio deejay in Chicago

June 23, 2004 | By Courtney K. Wade, Tribune staff reporter.

When Lon Dyson's smooth baritone voice first floated over Chicago's AM radio airwaves, he was still wet behind the ears though listeners would not have guessed it.

At the age of 15, Mr. Dyson became the youngest disc jockey in Chicago radio history, said his brother, Marv.

Though his first radio show on WHFC-AM, now WVON-AM, was for teens, many listeners thought Mr Dyson was much older than he really was, his brother said. His voice was the reason.

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Mr. Dyson worked as a disc jockey and news editor for popular and gospel radio stations in a career that spanned nearly 50 years. He retired four years ago from WGCI-FM and Gospel Radio 1390-AM.

Mr. Dyson, 65, of Chicago died of lung cancer on Saturday, June 19, in the hospice of Mercy Hospital in Chicago.

He was born into a radio family on the South Side, his brother said. Their father Richard Dyson, a WHFC-AM disc jockey, wooed their mother with dedicated slow jams over the airwaves, he said. Their mother Florence became a disc jockey for the same station, he said.

"My mom couldn't drive," Marv said. "So, Lon and I used to drive her to work, which was at the radio station." And this was an excuse to go inside and rub shoulders with the stars during their teen years, his brother said.

Growing up, Mr. Dyson and his brother met members of the Jackson 5, Gene Chandler, Jerry Butler, Sam Cooke and many Motown recording artists. But none of those artists compared to meeting Tina Turner. The brothers had never been star-struck until they met her, he said.

"She had this aura about her that was incredible," Marv said.

Mr. Dyson attended Parker High School and Columbia College Chicago. In 1954, he hit the airwaves and became hooked on radio. Between the 1960s and 1990, Mr. Dyson worked as a deejay typically between midnight and 6 a.m. at Chicago AM stations WBEE, WAAF, WJPC and WLS. He spent 11 years as a news assignment editor at WLS.

Mr. Dyson most recently worked for WGCI-FM and Gospel Radio 1390. He retired from the station in 2000 for health reasons.

During his career, he worked with a number of Chicago disc jockeys, including Herb Kent, Tom Joyner, Doug Banks, Mary Dee, Jesse Owens, Marty Faye and John Daniels.

Norman Boulden, 41, a friend for more than 20 years, said he remembered Mr. Dyson as a radio business mentor.

He spent time "talking to me about how cutthroat and ruthless it could be," said Boulden. He said those conversations in the hallways of the radio station gave him the confidence to make moves in his career.

Other survivors include another brother, Richard Durwood Dyson. A memorial mass will be said at 7 p.m. June 30 at St. Clotilde Catholic Church, 8430 S. Calumet Ave., Chicago.

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