

Obituaries

Local Radio Personality

Ted Downes Dead at 59

By ROBERT A. BAKER

Widely known Syracuse radio personality Edward "Ted" Downes, 59, died Tuesday at his home.

Mr. Downes was paired with Bill Merchant on WSEN Radio's early morning radio show. He was also a much-requested dinner speaker and was addressing the Central New York Chapter of Professional Engineers Feb. 23 when he suffered a heart attack. Mr. Downes had not been on the program since then.

Downes and Merchant were heard on WSEN for seven years, but the team formed 12 years ago while both were working at WFBL Radio. Merchant remembered Wednesday how the team came together:

"He was doing the morning news and I was doing the morning show, and we kind of drifted together, and we've been together ever since."

Merchant remembered that Mr. Downes had taught at Fabius-Pompey and Solvay schools and said, "He became a marketing analyst with BBD&O (a national advertising firm) and sort of got into radio part-time on weekends, and it developed into a full-time job."

Mr. Downes was known to his listeners for his tremendous sense of humor. He and Merchant would bounce one-liners — sometimes

corny, sometimes subtle, always funny — back and forth like a rubber ball. Merchant said Mr. Downes took his humor very seriously.

"It was one of the things that was studied. He'd write routines and rehearse it," Merchant said.

"When we first started, we decided we didn't care who got the punch line. When the punch line came, we got out of it right there and into the music. That was the secret."

Since Mr. Downes' Feb. 23 heart attack Merchant visited him regularly.

"I'd go over there every couple of days. I was over there last night (Tuesday), as a matter of fact," Merchant said. "I got him laughing before I left."

Merchant was doing the show Wednesday when he received the call that told him Mr. Downes was dead.

"I didn't say anything on the air. I just kept going for the last couple of hours," he said, adding the show will be business as usual today, despite the loss.

"Ted and I had an agreement that whenever we had a personal problem, we never said anything on the air, because people have their own problems and they don't want to hear ours," Merchant explained.

"He taught me a lot. He was a genius," Merchant said. "I'm a different person than I was 12 years ago."

WSEN General Manager Dan Deeb said, "It goes beyond a being a loss to broadcasting. It's a loss to the whole community."

Mr. Downes was a native of Syracuse. He was a graduate of Le Moyne College and did graduate work at Syracuse University.

He was a communicant of St. James Church and a member of Council 191, Knights of Columbus. Mr. Downes was a promoter of the Society for the Preservation and Encouragement of Barbershop Quartet Singing in America and an honorary member of the Syracuse and Nedrow fire departments.

Surviving are his wife, the former Virginia Dorris; two daughters, Barbara Breen of Illinois and Gabrielle Downes; a son, Edward III; a brother, Michael; a sister, Patricia Polgreen; a grandson and several nieces and nephews.

Services will be at 8:30 a.m. Friday at Ballweg & Lunsford Funeral Home and 9 a.m. in St. James Church. Burial will be in St. Joseph's Cemetery, Roxbury, Mass.

Calling hours will be 2 to 4 and 7 to 9 p.m. today at the funeral home.

Contributions may be made to the Nedrow Fire Department.

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Ted Downes Will Be Missed

To the Editor:

Having known Ted Downes for a number of years, I am saddened by his passing. It was always a pleasure to share time with him. His jovial and positive attitude was contagious. I never heard a negative comment about Ted.

My association with Ted spanned more than 25 years. He was very helpful in our endeavors to benefit muscular dystrophy, and helped the Syracuse firefighters. He was always willing to help those in need, and aided many community groups.

He made more people laugh in Onondaga County than anyone I know.

Ted will be missed by many people of this community. Our area is a better place to live because Ted passed our way.

FRANK ROSE

North Syracuse

NYS

ASSEMBLY MAN

