

J. J. Lyons, Noted Organist, Dies

**Funeral Services Scheduled
10 a.m. Thursday at Cathedral**

Joseph J. Lyons, 44, of 403 West Jefferson St., one of the most talented musicians and composers in the midwest and the organist for the Cathedral of St. Raymond, died suddenly early today at St. Joseph's hospital.

Mr. Lyons was stricken at his home about 10:30 o'clock Sunday night as he prepared to retire for the night. The fire department inhalator squad was summoned and later he was moved to the hospital, where he died about 3:30 a.m. His family was at his bedside.



JOE LYONS

Mr. Lyons had not complained of feeling ill prior to the attack. He presided at the Cathedral organ Sunday as usual for all masses from early morning until 12:30 p.m.

A true artist, Mr. Lyons had a great love for his work and his art. It was the most important thing to him outside of his family. He lived for the hours he spent at the Cathedral organ and in presenting organ recitals and programs for recordings and for radio broadcasts. The special music presented at the Cathedral for such solemn occasions as Christmas and Easter with the Bishop pontificating, were his greatest pride and joy. He would spend hours arranging, rehearsing and perfecting selections for this occasion. Always he was gracious and accommodating.

It was Mr. Lyons together with Msgr. Edwin V. Hoover, of the Cathedral, who organized the Men's choir at the Cathedral for the Cathedral dedication services. He helped to develop this group of male singers and also to combine the Men's chorus with the Boys' Choir to give the Cathedral one of the most unusual and dynamic male choral groups in the area.

He spent many of his leisure hours at the piano or organ entertaining his friends. When seated in front of an organ, he was happiest, and he would never refuse a request to present an organ program. Fans of the Herald-News Cooking school will remember him as the gracious virtuoso who performed so ably during the sessions at the Rialto.

His organ programs, broadcast sometimes from his home studio, sometimes from the Rialto, were a popular feature of WJOL, the local radio station.

Mr. Lyons devoted much of his time to composing organ selections he used in his Cathedral work and with which to delight his many friends. To them he was known as "Joe."

Born in Joliet May 26, 1913, he was the son of Albert Lyons and Alma Braun Lyons, members of pioneer Joliet families. His grandfather, was the founder of the Lyons Lumber and Fuel Co. in Joliet.

When Joseph was 18 months old, his father died. About nine years later when his mother remarried, young Joseph continued to live with his grandmother, the late Mrs. Theresa Braun, who died recently; and with an aunt, Miss Ida Braun. They resided on Hickory street. The aunt was a prominent organist and encouraged her nephew to study music. An apt pupil, he was taken to Chicago

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J. J. Lyons, Organist, Succumbs at 44

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to study organ under the inimitable Ralph Waldo Emerson.

As a boy of 11, he would go to Lemont on Sunday to play the organ at the St. Alphonsus church there. By the time he was 15 years of age he was being sent to theater openings to serve as the organist when Ralph Waldo Emerson was unable to keep an engagement.

He studied also at the American Conservatory of Music with several prominent artists and musicians. He was proud of the fact also that he studied with Dr. Mario Salvatore, considered one of the country's outstanding organists, who came to Joliet to play the concert when the Cathedral organ was dedicated. It was Dr. Salvatore, Mr. Lyons and Msgr. Hoover who conceived the idea of the organ that was built especially for the new Cathedral.

Mr. Lyons was graduated from the St. John's parochial school here, the De La Salle high school and earned his degree at the St. Thomas college in St. Paul, Minn. While there he played with the Symphony orchestra and broadcast from the radio station.

He became the official organist for St. Raymond's parish in 1941 and when the Cathedral

was established here, was designated the official Cathedral organist.

On Oct. 12, 1940, two pioneer Joliet family names were linked when he wed Miss Edna Louise Weber, the daughter of the late Mr. and Mrs. A. J. Weber, founders of the Weber Dairy. They were married at St. John's church. Of this union, one son Richard J. was born. He is 12 years old.

Mr. Lyons was a member of the American Guild of Organists, of the Musicians Union, the Loyal Order of Moose, the Knights of Columbus, Joliet Council, and the Holy Name Society of the Cathedral of St. Raymond.

Besides his widow and his 12-year-old son, he is survived by his mother, Mrs. Alma Wilhelmi, of Elwood; two sisters, Betty now Mrs. Robert Kennedy of Joliet; Marian now Mrs. Meade Clark, of Elwood and a brother, James Wilhelmi, of Elwood.

The funeral will be from the Fred C. Dames Funeral home Thursday morning at 9:30 o'clock to the Cathedral of St. Raymond for a solemn requiem mass at 10 a.m. Burial will be in St. John's cemetery.

Friends may call at the funeral home from 7 to 10 p.m. Tuesday and from 2 to 5 and 7 to 10 p.m. Wednesday.

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