

'2-Ton' Baker, music man, dies

RICHARD "TWO-TON"
Baker, entertainer and former
radio and television personali-
ty, died Sunday.

Mr. Baker, 59, collapsed in his home, 17118 Whitman Av., Hazel Crest, and was pronounced dead on arrival at Ingalls Memorial Hospital.

The 350-pound piano puncher, a native Chicagoan, began his career in 1938 on the night club circuit. A year later he became a disc jockey at WJJD radio and moved to WGN radio in 1944 as host of the One Man Show music program.

WITH THE ARRIVAL of television, Mr. Baker donned a pirate's outfit and hosted a noon hour children's program during the 1950s from his piano bench in WLS studios.

Mr. Baker, who never took music lessons and could barely read a music score, was considered a master of improvisation, playing by ear. In recent years he entertained at supper clubs.

He had told friends he planned a long show business career so he would never have to work. "The only thing I've ever wanted to do in this world



Two-Ton Baker in 1951

is play the piano and sing . . . This isn't work, it's play—and I'm getting paid for it," he said.

Two-Ton Baker, the Music Maker, rode the keyboard slapping and kicking the piano. "Happy day to you, friends," he told his radio audiences as he opened his network program playing "We Belong Together," the theme song he had written.

He is survived by his widow, Ruth; a son, Richard Jr.; and a daughter, Deborah Lynn. Funeral arrangements were pending.