

WALTER C. ALLEN

Dr. Walter C. Allen, author of King Joe Oliver (with Brian Rust) and Hendersonia: the Music of Fletcher Henderson and His Musicians, died on December 23, 1974, after a prolonged illness.

In the course of more than three decades of research, Dr. Allen measurbly raised the standards of discography and introduced bio-discography, a form represented by both bokks mentioned above. He also published his own books and those of other researchers and operated a mail-order book service for jazz enthusiasts.

Dr. Allen's main profession was ceramic engineering. After many years in private industry, he joined the engineering department of Rutgers University and, while there, became a member of the Executive Committee of the Rutgers Institute of Jazz Studies. In 1968 he initiated the Institute's annual Conferences on Discographical Research, work which he continued to supervise through 1973.

Walter Allen's research was dedicated first to music, as his choice of discographical subjects and his connoisseurship of their recordings showed, but he clearly saw that phonograph records were the chief means of documentation of the jazz of the 20s and 30s. He went about his tiring but necessary work with a patience and thoroughness unusual even among discographers, enhancing his discipline by his presence as well as his publications. He was generous with time and advice to researchers at every level of sophistication and his opinions, though firmly stated, were undogmatic and usually seasoned with a quite scholarly wit.

At the time of his death, Dr. Allen was working on a revision of King Joe Oliver and was planning a history of the Harlem music scene of the 20s and 30s.

J. R. Taylor