

'Didn't Know He Was Dying' CANCER CLAIMS NAT KING COLE

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The King Is Dead

Forty-seven-year-old singing star Nat King Cole died of cancer in California. Thus a modern-day legend carved into the very fibre of the world's entertainment industry has come to an end. (Photo left is a 1960 publicity photograph taken in a California recording studio

where the singer was recording an album. At right, Cole leaves cobalt therapy unit in St. John's Hospital, Santa Monica, Calif., preceding surgery where his cancerous left lung was removed. (Right photo copyright United Western Newspapers, Inc., 1964 via UPI.)

Nat King Cole Is Dead; Loses Bout To Cancer

Nat King Cole is dead.

The velvet-voiced singer who was an internationally famous succumbed to cancer.

He was 45. His wife, Maria, was at his bedside when the end came.

Cole appeared to be gaining Friday and talked with his wife and nurses but his condition worsened during the weekend.

Of her vigil she said, "This is the time every woman must be strong."

She interrupted her hospital visits only to spend time with her brood of five children, Carol, Natalie, Nat Kelly, and twins Casey and Timolin and explained that they looked to her "for strength when I get home in the evenings."

The entertainer's death marks the second time in less than a month that the Cole family has been struck by death. The Rev. Edward James Cole, Nat's father, died recently in North Chicago, Ill.

Cole underwent surgery on Jan. 25 for removal of a can-

cerous left lung at St. John's Hospital, Santa Monica, Calif.

When he entered the hospital last Dec. 8 for observation and tests, it was disclosed his left lung was cancerous.

The world gasped when it was announced the singer was receiving cobalt treatments for the malignant tumor, and many at that time forecasted the end. Later, surgery was performed.

After the three-hour surgery, his condition was described as satisfactory. When satisfactory was later changed to good, there seemed to be hope.

The removal of the singer's lung touched off a controversy between medical men and laymen, who debated whether Cole's condition had been arrested. Possibilities of his resuming his singing career then

became the subject for speculation.

Cole did not attend his father's funeral services, but even that did not shake the faithful, who ascribed his absence to the fact that he was still recovering.

Following his surgery, Cole's physician, Dr. Robert Kositchek, was not available for comment. A hospital spokesman, however, told the DEFENDER, "his condition looks good. But the seriousness is not being minimized."

Half of the singer's stomach was removed in 1943 after he collapsed in the wings of New York's Carnegie Hall. He was rushed to the hospital with an acute case of ulcers and an internal bleeding. He lost about 20 pounds as a result of that bout.

The man with the golden voice, who charmed all generations was born in Montgomery, Ala. He was then Nathaniel Adams Cotes. His family moved to Chicago when he

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was four.

The Rev. Mr. Cole made his move to Chicago in 1919 and was placed in charge of the True Light Baptist Church. The family later moved to North Chicago (Waukegan). When he died, the Rev. Mr. Coles was pastor of the First Baptist Church in North Chicago.

In the Cole's home there was swathed in love and devotion. There was also music. Many



MARIA COLE

believe it was Nat's mother, Cora Bell Cole, who planted the musical spark in the closely knit family. Mrs. Cole, who died in 1955, was a famous singer in her own right.

Cole, given early musical training, began his entertainment career as a pianist with the "Nat 'King' Cole trio," and became a singer by accident when a drunken patron insisted he sing his favorite tune "Sweet Lorraine."

That was in 1937 and the instrumentalist group was making a grand total of \$75 a week.

Cole then concentrated on singing and his income rose to \$10,000 a week. His records have sold more than 50 million copies.

Among his hits were "Mona Lisa," "Nature Boy," "Too Young," "Unforgettable" and "Rambling Rose." Many will also remember his rendition of "Signifying Monkey" and the nostalgic "Home."

The master of song was praised for his phrasing and the purring quality in his voice.

Cole is survived by his wife, Maria; five children, Carol, Natalie, Nat Keyy, and twins, Casey and Tomoin; a sister, Evelyn of Chicago; three brothers, Edward (Los Angeles), Frederick (New York) and Isiac, (North Chicago). Also, an uncle, Henry Coles of Washington and his step mother, Pelina Cole.