UI’s Walton dies while in Chicago

By Cathy Jackson
The Daily Iowan

UI Assistant Professor of History and African-American World Studies Jonathan Walton died of unknown causes Sunday at his sister’s home in Chicago, Ill. He was 43.

His sister, Addie Walton, said doctors performed an autopsy on Walton, but the cause of his death has not yet been determined.

Walton, who had been teaching at the UI since 1977, received his Bachelor of Science in history from the University of Illinois at Chicago and went on to receive his master’s and doctoral degree in history from Princeton University.

Walton had to cancel plans to research at Yale University this summer when he became ill in May, according to UI African-American World Studies Chair Darwin Turner. Walton was also planning to take a 2-year leave from the UI beginning this fall to teach at Carleton College in Northfield, Minn. UI students and faculty mourned his death Monday.

At times when individuals at businesses and educational institutions die, a kind of respect is paid from professional courtesy,” Turner said. “But in Walton’s case, the friendships he evoked in people are so deep and so genuine. I am certain individuals who are colleagues, former students and friends are feeling the same shock and grief they would if a close friend of their family died.

“He had a very promising scholarly career ahead of him,” Turner said.

Walton had recently contracted with Greenwood Press for the publication of his first book, which was to be printed in less than a year. The book, a study of the immigration of blacks from the U.S. into Canada, will still be published, according to UI Associate History Professor Shelton Stromquist.

“Collectively, we will all make every effort to see that it comes out,” Stromquist said. “It will come out.”

Assistant Professor of History James Glibin said Walton was one of the most conscientious teachers and mentors at the UI.

“He was one of the most highly valued faculty members at the university,” Glibin said.

Clenora Hudson, who did doctoral research under Walton, said he was a mentor to many students.

“It’s his mentoring that makes him different from everyone else,” she said. “A lot of teachers will teach you, but they won’t be your mentor. He helps you grow. He’s a true scholar, all he did was enhance you. He was a mentor to me and he made me better.

I told him: ‘you’re making me brilliant.’”

Memorial services for Walton will be held at Unity Funeral Parlor in Chicago at 11 a.m. Saturday.

Letters

Jonathon’s gone
To the Editor:

Jonathan Walton, you gave me so much, asked for so little and received even less. So many people have come to me and congratulated me on my newest book. Jonathan, I am so grateful to you for all that you have given me.

I have been with you since you were a child. You were one of the most talented students I have ever had. I encouraged you to pursue your dreams and to continue your education. I am so proud of you.

I knew from the moment I met you that you had a special talent. You had a way of making people feel special and loved. I will always remember the way you made me feel when we spoke.

Thank you, Jonathan, for your love and support. I will miss you so much.

Clenor Hudson
Iowa City

As most of us know, Jonathan
died while in Chicago.

I am grieving now, it hurts
badly. But I know that next
week when I talk about Jonathan, I'll smile and laugh and talk about
the many good things he brought to me —
to all of those who knew him.

How can I not feel joy when I think
about Jonathan? He did so much
living and giving while he was
here, but it is not enough. He
made it happen.