



# Walter Edward Elston

SEP 28, 1930 - AUG 11, 2016



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## Walter Edward Elston

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**W**alter Edward Elston, of Salt Lake City, died on Thursday, August 11, 2016 after a long and difficult illness. He was 85.

Born at the outset of the Great Depression on September 28, 1930, Walt came into the world loved by his mother Alice, a former school teacher, and his father Bill, a shopkeeper, in Lehman, Pennsylvania. His early life was spent among family, friends, and neighbors in a tiny community established over a century earlier by his ancestors, all farmers who cleared virgin tracts granted by a still-new nation.

As a child, Walt came to know those around him through his family's place in the community; they owned and ran W.R. Neely, General Mercantile, his grandfather's general store. The family lived together behind the store and next to the Methodist Church, with his father and grandfather, mother and grandmother, and younger siblings all taking part in doing what was necessary to run a small business. In an era when most business was made from "outside" orders and deliveries, store-bought bread was a luxury, the vinegar barrel was filled each year by pressing "drops" from surrounding apple orchards, and cheese was cut on a wheel, Walt came to know the discipline of hard work amidst childhood fun of savory tastes from the Heinz 57 truck's monthly visits, stealthy thefts from the candy bin, rides from the pony rented for the summer, picking wild raspberries alongside the road, and all the fishing, swimming, and general boyhood tomfoolery one could get by playing free and outside down at Sims's Pond with his friends Bill, Len, Art, and Charlie.

Like those around them, Walt's family all confronted the strains of a nation emerging from economic collapse to a nation at war. Food stamps, rations, doing the right thing by extending store credit to struggling neighbors, and changes in the marketplace all pressed on the family's livelihood.

His father's untimely death on Good Friday in 1945 suddenly thrust Walt into assuming responsibilities as the family's eldest male. Work repairing local farm roads and shoveling snow



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under his grandfather Fred Elston, the township's roads supervisor, harvesting crops down at Yalick's Farm alongside his high school classmates, working on local construction projects, and, with his Uncle Ed Elston, signing on as a "hand" at the Hayfield Farm estate, were formative experiences whose injuries left lifelong reminders in his feet and hands. The store was sold; friends helped his newly widowed mother to resume teaching and to earn a small stipend as township tax collector. His grandfather Neely, an octogenarian, was kept on as a board member of a nearby bank so that a monthly stipend of \$25 could be garnered. With the help of those around him, Walt had transformed from a pudgy candy-eating boy nicknamed "Fat" to a lanky player on the football team and president of Lehman High School's Class of 1948.

Walt attended Wilkes University, graduating with a bachelor's degree in Chemistry in 1952; he quickly found a job in northern New Jersey as a lab technician at Hercules Powder Company's Kenvil plant.

Early on, Walt's skills emerged as a manager in the explosives industry. After marrying Gloria Marian Dran, his wife of 58 years, he began raising three children in Ledgewood, NJ, a nearby suburb. In 1969, he assumed a managerial promotion at Hercules's plant in Bessemer, AL, and started a new chapter in his family's life. After an 18-month stint at Hercules's Carthage, MO, plant in the mid-1970s, Walt returned to Bessemer, where he eventually rose to become Plant Manager.

Walt ascended to senior management in the mid-1980s with the sale of the Hercules Explosives Group to IRECO, a Salt Lake City-based firm. Named to manage the acquired Hercules assets, Walt, with his wife Gloria, moved to UT in 1985. Ever the ambassador, Walt helped manage the relationship between his new firm and Dyno-Nobel, a Norwegian company who had bought IRECO in the late 1980s. He traveled extensively in America, Europe, the Middle East, and Russia to cultivate business opportunities, strengthen customer relationships, and manage operations. He was eventually promoted by Dyno-Nobel to Chief Operating Officer, and in the last two years of his career, to interim CEO of Dyno's North American Division before his retirement in 1995.

Walt Elston was a kind, generous, unassuming, and humorous man with little use for pomp and pretense who quietly served and supported others in the community and the Methodist and Presbyterian churches he attended and served as trustee, deacon, or elder.

To those who knew him, Walt's unique penchant for giving funny-yet-annoying pet names to his children's friends; his inexplicable hatred of any food item that got with five feet of a raisin; his



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insatiable love of cookies; his ability to amaze his sister-in-law Barbara by making gravy out of nothing; his ingenuity in turning leftovers into palatable meals; his musical, onomatopoeic love of language; his witty, imaginative role-playing games with his grandsons; his love of fresh vegetables from his garden; his perplexing inability to fix things around the house; from his youthful enlistment in the US Army as a counter-intelligence analyst, his love of things German and befuddling “Deutsch-lish” linguistic mishmash; his endless patience and good humor; and most importantly, his inestimable and boundless love for those closest to him are but a few tiny glimpses of the wonderful person he was, the beloved person we have lost, and the departed person we will forever miss.

Walt is pre-deceased by his parents, William Henry Elston and Alice Neely Elston, siblings Thomas Neely Elston and Mary Lou Crook, brother-in-law John Stahl, and sister-in-law Marianne Dran Pirino. He leaves behind a loving circle of family: his wife Gloria Dran Elston; his children Thomas Frederick Elston, Sally Elston Echols (Michael), and Robert Dran Elston (Denise); grandsons Cameron, Spencer, Kendall, Michael, and Lehman; many nieces and nephews; his sister Marcia Elston Sewell (Richard), sisters-in-law Julie (Ying-Mei) Elston and Barbara Dran Stanski (Fred) and brother-in-law Charles Crook. A circle of dear and beloved friends include Jill and Tom Quam, Jim and Anita Gander, Doris Strozier, Lucy Arellano, Steve Simonson, Craig and Carolyn Wallin, George and Sandy Wright, and the staff and residents of William E. Christoffersen Salt Lake Veterans Home, whose presence, care, and support of Walt and Gloria is immeasurably treasured and appreciated.

Events celebrating Walt’s life include an August reception for his family and friends in Salt Lake City and a funeral service on November 22, 2016 at 2:00 p.m. in his hometown at Lehman-Idetown United Methodist Church, 1011 Mountain View Dr, Lehman, PA 18627 (570) 675-1216. Interment of ashes will be at the Lehman Center Cemetery.

Online expressions of sympathy and condolences can be made through Premier Funeral Services website at [www.premierfuneral.com](http://www.premierfuneral.com).

In lieu of gifts of flowers, friends are encouraged to support the Alzheimer’s Association.

[http://act.alz.org/site/TR/Events/Tributes-AlzheimersChampions?pxfid=356410&fr\\_id=1060&pg=fund](http://act.alz.org/site/TR/Events/Tributes-AlzheimersChampions?pxfid=356410&fr_id=1060&pg=fund)



## Tribute Wall

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**Tracy Anderson** posted:

Dear Tom and family, Heartfelt condolences to you. No words can capture the pain one feels when a parent passes away. Bask in the warmth of your memories of your dad. Peace, Be Still (Matthew 8:23-27) Tracy and Dan Anderson College Park, GA

August 19 at 2:54 AM



**Michaelene Ostrum** posted:

Dear Gloria and family, Sending you love and our deepest sympathy. You are in our thoughts and prayers. Love, Mickie and John Ostrum

August 18 at 2:57 PM



**Helene Skopek-Krygier** lit a candle in honor of Walter.

Gloria and family. I am so sorry to hear of Walt's passing. He was a special person I will not forget. I remember your visits to your mom's in Buttonwood when I was young. I appreciate getting to know you and Walt on my trips to Salt Lake City. I will keep everyone in my prayers. God bless Walt.



August 18 at 2:31 PM



## **Memories only last if you share them**

Join us in honoring Walter by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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