

ALVIN C. ELTON | 1964-2020

# Well-known, popular N.W. Side darts player dies of coronavirus, 56

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Alvin Elton, who died March 22 from the coronavirus at 56, was one of the Northwest Side's best-known and best-liked competitive dart players.

He enjoyed Chicago pleasures. "Italian beef sandwich and a Bud Light, and he was a happy guy," said his wife, Gretchen Meyer, director of customer service at the city Department of Aviation.

"He approached everybody as a potential friend," said his buddy Pete Citera.

And "Even though he was living in Chicago, probably about 300 days of the year, he was wearing shorts and a Hawaiian shirt," his wife said.

Mr. Elton, who had worked as a pipefitter, was proud of his roots in two Sioux tribes. As a youth, he spent summers on reservations in South Dakota, forging close ties with family members there. Later in life, he went to Chicago powwows. He was thrilled when he found his tribal flag at the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C.

He took ill last week. "Just like everybody else, we thought maybe it's a cold," his wife said. But by March 20, "He felt really bad." He underwent a chest X-ray, which showed "quite a bit of pneumonia."

He sought treatment at Resurrection Medical Center. On March 21, he seemed stable, but on March 22, his condition worsened, and a doctor called at 9:30 p.m. and urged Meyer to get to the hospital.

Her husband was on a ventilator and wasn't conscious. She was able to suit up in protective gear and be in the room with him when he died.

"I was in two layers of gloves, but through the gloves, I was able to touch his face," Meyer said. "I held



Alvin Elton, a skilled Northwest Side darts player, with a darts trophy. He could be found playing at Di's Den, Gamblers or the Mark II Lounge. PROVIDED

his hand for a little bit."

And even though she knows most people are doing the best they can in an unprecedented situation, she has been frustrated by a lack of official coordination about the coronavirus.

It was difficult to get confirmation of his cause of death, and with little in the way of government guidance or instruction, she made her own decision to self-quarantine.

"I'm doing it because I feel it's my job and my responsibility," she said. "I haven't let my mother or sister or my best friend" come in close contact.

She's finding quiet solace in their home with their beloved cat, Kitty.

They met while playing darts against each other in a Windy City Darters match at Mullen's bar Touhy and Western. "It was a Thursday night. We exchanged

phone numbers and emails. I had an email waiting for me by the time I got to work Friday morning, and he asked me to go to a Cubs game Saturday morning. I went, and we never looked back.

"He was just so friendly and warm," she said.

Mr. Elton's parents were part of two Sioux tribes in South Dakota. His mother, Adeline Marie Stands and Looks Back, was a member of the Rosebud Sioux. His father, Arthur A. Elton, was a member of the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate.

His mom and dad met at the American Indian Center after moving to Chicago in the 1970s to participate in a federal program that promised vocational training to Native Americans. His father became a pipefitter, and his mom specialized in accounting.

They raised Alvin and his sister



Alvin C. Elton in his Blackhawks jersey. He once enjoyed the chance to try on some championship rings belonging to the Hawks organization. PROVIDED

Anne in Evanston, where he made lifelong friends. He went to Chute Middle School and Evanston Township High School.

His favorite food was what he called "Indian tacos" — fry bread, ground beef, cheese, lettuce and tomatoes.

He was a big fan of Bruce Springsteen, and he saw U2 in concert about 20 times.

Mr. Elton taught himself to play the piano and did a lovely version of Journey's "Faithfully," she said.

"Star Wars" was his all-time favorite" movie, his wife said. Because she works for the Department of

Aviation, "He insisted on driving me to work some days because he could see airplanes up close."

He treasured a collection of handmade star quilts made by his mom and other relatives. "Knowing that my mom made them and what the star quilt means to the Indian community, I don't want to let them go," he told his wife.

In addition to his wife and his sister Anne Gavin, Mr. Elton is survived by his nieces Kayla Carlson, Abby Carlson and Katrina Carlson and nephew Billy Gavin. A celebration of his life will take place in the future, his wife said.