

James Eline Class of 1955

4th generation owner of Elines Funeral Homes

Jim was president and owner of one of the oldest family-owned funeral establishments in the nation. Born in Baltimore into a family of funeral directors, Mr. Eline was the fourth generation of his family to own and operate Eline Funeral Home in Reisterstown. The funeral home was established by his paternal great-great-grandfather, E.D. Selby, a cabinet maker, in 1863.

"It originally was called E.D. Selby Undertakers, and after his daughter married J.F. Eline, the business changed its name to J.F. Eline & Sons Undertakers in the 1890s," said his son, Jeffrey B. Eline of Reisterstown, who is a fifth-generation family member in the business.

After graduating in 1955 from Franklin High School, Mr. Eline earned his mortuary science degree in 1957 from the Echols College of Mortuary Science in Philadelphia in 1957.

From 1959 to 1961, he served with an Army infantry unit before being discharged and returning to the family business that was located at 10 Main St. in Reisterstown. It moved in 1977 to its present home at Reisterstown Road and Franklin Boulevard.

"I used to hang around my father's law office after school, which was next door to their Main Street funeral home," said Mr. Smith. "I also knew Jim's parents. The Elines are an important family in Reisterstown."

"I've known Jim since 1968. He was well thought of in the funeral service business," said Mr. Art Queen, owner of Burrier-Queen Funeral Home in Sykesville. "He put on no airs. He was down-to-earth. He was a good man who was decent and honest and treated everyone right." He recalled Mr. Eline's concerns for "his families" and the fact that he was always willing to lend a hand to a competitor.

"When I owned Loring-Byers, we were six miles apart. But if I were busy and needed some help, he sent it. If I needed extra cars, he sent them, and I would do the same."

Ronald S. Wade, director of the Maryland State Anatomy Board who is also the director of the anatomical service division at the University of Maryland School of Medicine, was a friend for nearly 40 years.

"Like Jim, I grew up in a funeral home, and he carried on his family's tradition," Mr. Wade said. "Jim was a humanist and he loved the funeral service business and showed it in his care of the dead and concern for the living," he said. "It just wasn't a business to him. His first concern was always for the family and their best interest." Mr. Wade said he had a "great deal of respect" for Mr. Eline, who "was someone that people could trust. He said what he meant, and meant what he said. He was always up front."

Since Rosewood State Hospital was established in 1888 in Owings Mills, its residents had been a concern of Mr. Eline's family. "For as long as Rosewood has been around, my family has served the families of Rosewood," his son said. "Oftentimes, the residents had no families, and my father would make sure they had a proper burial, regardless of payment," he said. "Most of the burials in the Rosewood section of St. Thomas Cemetery were made by my father."

Mr. Eline was vacationing in Ocean City with his family when a call came that a Mr. Larkins had died. "There was no hesitation, he had to return. My father had buried generations of the Larkins family and he had to be there for this one, too," his son said.

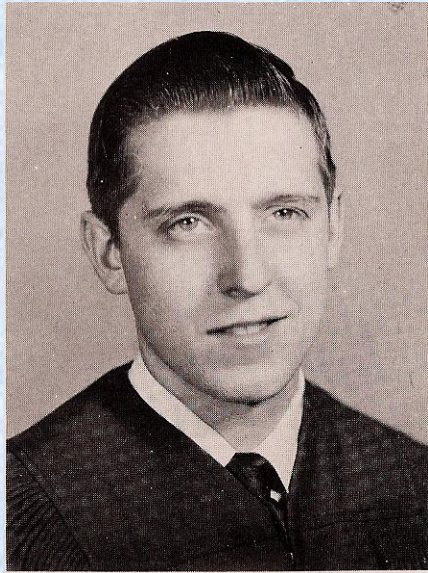
Mr. Eline was a lifetime member and former chief of the Reisterstown Volunteer Fire Company and was a former captain of the Glyndon Volunteer Fire Department. He had been a member of the Maryland State

Funeral Directors Association and was a past president of the Reisterstown Lions Club. He was also a member of the Reisterstown, Owings Mills and Glyndon Chamber of Commerce, Masonic Lodge No. 145, and American Legion Post No. 160.

"He had no hobbies and enjoyed working. He said his retirement party would be his funeral," his son said.

Mr. Wade said lyrics from the country song "Three Wooden Crosses" best summed up the life of his friend. Mr. Wade, quoting the song, said: "It's not what you take when you leave this world behind you. It's what you leave behind when you go."

He was married to his wife, the former Janet Butler for 46 years; another son, Jay B. Eline lives in Santa Rosa, Calif.; and he also had two grandchildren.



Now run by son, Jeff Eline Class of 1985

A graduate of Franklin Sr. High and Wilkes University, Jeff began working in the family business in 1991. Prior to that, he was a television news director working in northeast Pennsylvania. Jeff is an active member and Past President of the Reisterstown/Owings Mills/Glyndon Chamber of Commerce. His interests include filmmaking, jazz guitar and magic. Jeff and his wife Gayle, live in Reisterstown with their two children.

