



Norman Elia

February 8, 1934 - July 23, 2025

Norman Elia, 91, of Old Saybrook, CT, passed away on Wednesday, July 23, 2025, in Pensacola, FL, where he had recently been living. Born in New Britain, he had lived in New York City and Old Saybrook since 1989. From a young age, he developed a deep love for music, playing the piano and leading youth services at the South Congregational Church from age 10 to 18. A proud graduate of New Britain High School, class of 1952, he earned his bachelor's degree in music education from Boston University. He furthered his education with a master's degree from Columbia University. He also pursued postgraduate studies at Stanford University, Westminster Choir College, and the University of Indiana, attending many musical workshops to enhance his skills and broaden his knowledge throughout his career.

Norman served honorably in the U.S. Army as a Chaplain's Assistant during the Korean War, where he also took on roles as choir director, children's choir director, and organist at the Army Base.

He began his teaching career with the New Britain, CT, school district at Smith Elementary School and Roosevelt Junior High School, but he is best remembered for his tenure as the Choral Director at New Britain High School from 1961 to 1991. During that time, he took over the baton. He continued teaching the well-known Choralaires and Starlettes, and most importantly, he served as the director for "The Revue," which featured outstanding sold-out shows night after night, highlighting the exceptional talents of his music students. Later in his career, he revived popular musicals on stage at New Britain High School and also led the Madrigal Singers and Show Choir, boosting the reputation of the choral program with active student participation in various large choruses and select groups, while working with local community orchestras and musical organizations. Motivated by his passion and love for teaching music, he inspired thousands of his music students, many of whom went on to successful careers in music education across the country. After retiring, Norman made his permanent home in New York City, immersing himself in the vibrant world of performing artists, museums, and cultural venues he had supported throughout his life. He also volunteered for over 15 years at the Hospital for Special Surgery in New York City.

Norman is survived by his brother, Robert "Bob" Elia of Ozark, AL; his nephew Robert J.

Elia of Birmingham, AL; and his nieces Emma Elia Mitchell of Birmingham, AL, Hanna Elia Flannigan and her husband Bill Flannigan of Pensacola, FL, and Margaret Elia Booth (Ben McCaig) of Tuscumbia, AL. Norman was predeceased by his grandmother, Gozel Lazar; his parents, Yousepus and Hanna Elia; his brother, Frederick "Fred" Elia; and his sister, Elizabeth "Betty" Elia, all of whom lived in New Britain, CT.

A memorial service will be held on Saturday, September 27, at 10 a.m. at South Church, 90 Main Street, New Britain, CT. After the service, there will be a reception in the Assyrian Room. Family burial with military honors is scheduled for Monday, September 29, at 10 a.m. at Fairview Cemetery in New Britain, CT.

Instead of sending flowers, donations can be made to the Norman Elia Music Scholarship c/o New Britain High School, 110 Mill Street, New Britain, CT 06051, or to the South Church Memorial Fund. Carlson Funeral Home in New Britain is handling the arrangements. We invite you to share a memory or a note of sympathy at www.carlsonfuneralhome.com

Cemetery Details

Fairview Cemetery

120 Smalley Street
New Britain, CT 06051

Previous Events

Memorial Service

SEP 27. 10:00 AM (ET)

South Church
90 Main Street
New Britain, CT

Burial

SEP 29 (ET)

Fairview Cemetery
120 Smalley Street
New Britain, CT 06051

Tribute Wall

SC

“ Twice, there were auditions being held for the school musical production. Twice, I went up for a speaking only part. Twice, Mr. Elia selected me to be the male lead, singing and all. Here's to all the teachers who see something in a student that that student doesn't see in himself; to all the teachers who inspire confidence in a kid; to all the teachers who instill a can-do mindset in a kid; and and to all teachers who enrich a kid's educational experience through the performing arts. Mr. Elia was all of those. Thank you, Mr. Elia!

Steve Culton - August 17, 2025 at 02:10 PM

PD

“ I was also so Blessed to know Mr Elia from 6th grade at Smith School to Roosevelt Jr HS & on to NBHS! What an awesome, amazing, talented, & Blessed man! Keep playing your beautiful music with our precious Lord! 🙏💖🎵🎹🎸🌸

Phyllis Dorough-Barker - August 04, 2025 at 10:47 AM

DD

“ I had the honor of being one of Mr. Elia's students at NBHS from 1988 till 1992 when I graduated. He was a top notch teacher, mentor, and person. He cultivated my love and talent for music and the arts. 🙏 To perform under Mr. Elia's tutelage was a blessing. His love for the musical arts, and his way of teaching inspired all of us students to excel, and perform with strength and pride. Being in the Madrigals and Showchoir was absolutely the highlight of my high school career. Rest in Peace Mr. Elia. It was an honor and a privilege to be one of your students..... 🙏

Dawn Pignatella DePinto - August 02, 2025 at 11:55 PM

HW

“ Mr Elia was a phenomenal human being. Like so many before and after me, he truly made a difference in every person's life with which he interacted. My time at NBHS were fun times, and Mr Elia's trust in me to help on programs meant a lot. He will be missed but never forgotten.

Hal Wiediger - August 02, 2025 at 08:37 PM

CL

“ There I was, 5th grade, Smith School, chosen to be the blessed Mother, for Mr. Elia’s Christmas pageant. There I sat inside a manger constructed of a military surplus camouflage parachute. I knew in my young heart he was brilliant and I was blessed to be his student... all the way from Smith, to Roosevelt to New Britain High.... From all the shows to the Hallelujah Concert at South Church to the candle lit Christmas tree formation of NBHS choir members who beautifully sang out Oh, Christmas Tree. He was demanding and so inspiring Magical Mr. Elia has and always will be in a special part of my heart❤️ Thank you for your inspiration Love You!

Chiara (Naples) Leone - August 01, 2025 at 03:24 PM

ZT

“ You will be missed Mr. Elia. Thank you for always bringing music into anyone’s lives you touched. The Madrigal Singers and beyond. Youth you served were lucky to have you and they were always treated with utmost care. You shared your most precious gift of kindness with me and many. For that I am always grateful. Rest in heavenly peace. Assyrian warrior.

Zeena Tawfik - July 31, 2025 at 11:15 AM