

Larry Eldridge



Larry Eldridge, former sports editor of The Christian Science Monitor and television host of "Eldridge on Sports" on the Monitor Network, died Sunday, June 18, 2017, from complications of congestive heart failure. He was 84 and a longtime resident of West Newton.

Eldridge began his half-century sports journalism career in the mid-fifties as a copy boy in the sports department of the Philadelphia Inquirer. His 11-year tenure with the Associated Press began in Portland, ME, in 1960 where he covered the famous Muhammad Ali (nee Cassius Clay)-Sonny Liston heavyweight championship in Lewiston in 1965.

In 1967, he was transferred to the AP Boston Bureau as assistant sports editor, covering sports on a full-time basis, including the Boston Red Sox' "Impossible Dream" pennant-winning season.

In 1972 the Christian Science Monitor hired him as its lead sports columnist, immediately assigning him to cover the winter Olympics in Sapporo, Japan, and the summer Olympics in Munich. He later became the Monitor's sports editor.

His lively coverage of the '72 Summer Games captured the record-setting seven-Gold Medal performance by U.S. swimmer Mark Spitz, the emergence of Russian teenage gymnast Olga Korbut, the USSR's disputed basketball championship, and Frank Shorter's stirring Marathon victory. He is perhaps best known to Monitor readers that summer for his extensive page-one coverage of the deadly terrorist attack on the Israeli quarters in the Olympic Village, resulting in the massacre of 11 Israeli athletes and coaches.

During his career with the Monitor, Eldridge reported on and wrote about virtually all of America's top sporting events, teams, personalities, and issues. He also covered many important international events, including the famous World Championship chess match between Bobby Fischer and Boris Spassky in Reykjavik, Iceland, and all summer and winter Olympics Games from 1972 to 1980. The games in Sapporo, Innsbruck, Montreal, and Lake Placid produced countless highlights including his coverage of such Olympic legends as Nadia Comaneci, Franz Klammer, Bruce Jenner, Eric Heiden, and the 1980 "Miracle on Ice" U.S. Men's Hockey Team.

At the 1980 Summer Olympics in Moscow, Eldridge was one of the few American journalists who was granted a press credential to cover the event, due in part to the U.S. boycott of the Games.

Eldridge also hosted his own TV interview show on the Monitor Channel, "Eldridge on Sports," which featured insightful and entertaining interviews and feature stories on the nation's top sports personalities, including basketball Hall of Famer Wilt Chamberlain, golf legend Lee Trevino, and many more.

His lifelong passion for chess spawned a long-running weekly chess column for the Portland (ME) Press Herald as well as his own individual successes in city and state tournaments. Upon retirement from sports journalism, he began a second career as a chess teacher to elementary school children in the Newton Community Schools program. Many of his school teams went on to win state and district championships at the primary and elementary school levels. He also taught chess in Belmont, Brookline and Somerville schools.

Eldridge was born in Philadelphia on Sept. 15, 1932, and spent his entire childhood and young adulthood in the Philadelphia area. After graduating from Germantown Academy, he earned a bachelor of arts in English from the University of Pennsylvania in 1958. He was a lifelong member of the Baseball Writers Association and a former board member of the Massachusetts Chess Association

He is survived by his wife of 46 years, Joyce Leffler Eldridge; six children, Larry Eldridge Jr. of Portland OR, Janice Yost of Wayne, PA, Scott Eldridge of Phoenixville, PA, Nicole Eldridge Marcus of Miami, Ross Eldridge of Newton and Robin Eldridge of Cambridge; 10 grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren.

Services and burial will be held on Friday, June 23, 2017 at 11:00 am at Newton Cemetery Chapel, 791 Walnut St., Newton Centre. Donations in his memory may be made to the MSPCA Boston Animal Care and Adoption Center, 350 South Huntington Ave., Boston, MA 02130 (mspca.org).

If you have an urgent need for information or would like to inquire about our services, please contact Brezniak-Rodman at **617-969-0800** (in MA) or **800-554-2199** (Worldwide).