“Pour one out”:
The inventor of the red Solo cup has died

By Doug Criss  December 29, 2016

We lost George Michael, Carrie Fisher and Debbie Reynolds, but we lost someone who's probably had just as big an impact on our lives, though you've never heard of him: Robert Leo Hulseman.

He's the man who invented the red Solo cup, staple at every party ever. He died last week at age 84.

The Solo Cup Company was the family business -- Hulseman's dad started it in 1936 -- and Hulseman started working in the company factory when he was 18.

He worked his way up to CEO of the company, succeeding his father in 1980 and helping the company grow into one of the largest food service packaging companies in the world.

In the beginning, the Illinois-based company made the kind of cone-shaped paper cups you find next to the office water cooler. Then, in the 1950s, as fountain sodas gained popularity, it added wax-lined cups to its lineup.

In the 1970s that Hulseman came up with the now-famous cups. Made of thick, molded polystyrene, you can drop them, stack them, dispose of them. And they are cheap. The cups later came in blue, but the red still keeps outselling.

"I've tested this over and over. Consumers prefer red" said a company executive in 2011.

So the next time you're at a party and find yourself holding a red Solo cup, pour a bit of your drink out for Hulseman. There's no better way to honor the memory of the man who helped make the good times possible.