

By Elliot Gelfand

Spike Gelfand was born on a farm in West Kildonan, Manitoba, just outside of Winnipeg, on June 11, 1917. He was the sixth of seven children born to Tevya and Rose Gelfand. He lived on the farm until age 7, when his family moved into Winnipeg.

Uncle Spike's early life was filled with sports, an avid interest he maintained all his life. He became very involved in baseball, and reached the triple A level as a shortstop in Seattle. His base running exploits resulted in his nickname, Spike, whereas prior to this, he was known, to his family, at least, as "Itzy-Isaac". His baseball career ended with a wrist injury, and he returned to Winnipeg and enjoyed great success as a high level all-star soccer goalie.

He met Auntie Ruthie while she was the elevator operator at a building where he worked, they dated, fell in love, and were married in January 1942. They lived with our

grandparents for a time, but the war years intervened. Uncle Spike served in the Canadian Air Force, first as a bombardier, then as an air traffic controller in Prince George, BC.

They moved to Calgary in 1946 to join other members of our family in the restaurant business, then in 1957, came to Edmonton to open the first Kentucky Fried Chicken franchise here. For business, and for pleasure, Auntie Ruthie and Uncle Spike traveled widely around Canada and the United States, and had many happy memories of those adventures. Among their favorite places to visit were Hawaii, and Las Vegas.

In Calgary, their life was filled with many close friends, and an extremely close family. Uncle Spike was a favorite uncle to his many nieces and nephews, always ready to escape adult company to throw the ball around with the kids. We

especially loved being with him on Sunday mornings at Baba's house, eating leftovers from Shabbas, and having quarters pulled from our ears in his displays of magic.

In Edmonton they had many close friends, and Uncle Spike was very involved in helping Camp B'Nai B'rith get its kitchen going, helping establish and run a Jewish Boy Scout Troop, and entertaining hospitalized children with his wonderful magic shows.

As his health declined in later years, he was largely confined to home, but enjoyed watching sports on television, and still had a great laugh and a great sense of humor. At each visit, as I greeted him with "Hi, Itzy-Isaac", he would break out in roars of laughter.

Uncle Spike was an honest, ethical, highly moral man, with a great sense of humor. He was devoted to his family and was always so happy when he was in their company.

He and Auntie Ruthie are particularly indebted to the most wonderful caregivers who looked after him in his declining years. They are Cheryl, Sarah, Alena, Arnell and Richard, and are so grateful for the friendship and care given him by their special friend, Dr Albarro Barrios.

Our community, and our entire family and extended family, are so much richer for having had Uncle Spike with us for his 88 years, and so much poorer, for his passing.

Uncle Spike, we will all miss you, and treasure our memories of our wonderful times together.