

# 'Alfie' had good recipe for friendship

## Retired chef worked with many agencies to prepare tasty meals for urban poor

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By any measure, Alfred, or "Alfie" Simons was a maverick.

At 80 Mr. Simons rediscovered his Jewish roots and had a bar mitzvah.

When he retired he began a series of volunteer projects which took him from the Epilepsy Association to the St. Anthony's College for Boys. He was also known to cook for 120, without a recipe, while holding forth about the merits of Spike, a special brand of all-natural seasoning.

"Alfie was one of the most selfless people I ever knew," recalled his younger brother, Morris. "He didn't have a vindictive bone in his body."

Mr. Simons, who died on Saturday at the age of 85, will be remembered for the endless hours he spent working for the Rotary Club, Goodwill, the Jewish Seniors Drop-in Centre and many others organizations.

More often than not, food was at the heart of how he helped out. "Alfred was truly a chef," recalled George Ford, chairman of the Robertson-Wesley United

Church's dinner committee, a program devoted to supplying free dinners for the poor. "He never had any recipes written down, but they were always just right."

Just right, that is, for serving hundreds of hot and healthy meals once a month at the west-side church. He retired last fall, after joining the program in 1997.

Mr. Simons didn't have a trademark dish, Ford said, however, he had a set of mandatory ingredients: Spike, garlic and fresh dill. "It didn't have dill it wasn't edible for Alfred," Ford said.

Many people came back time and again to sample Mr. Simons' cooking — or just because they loved his company.

"Everybody wanted to work in the kitchen," Ford said. "He was so easy to talk to and he had such great stories."

"It was fun being around him. It never felt like work at all when Alfred was there."

Alice Abells, a former president of the Jewish Seniors' Drop-in Centre said Mr. Simons became involved with the organization when it opened in the early 1950s.

"When I think of Alfie," Abells



Alfred Simons, left, helps prepare a meal for the poor with Janet Hughes, back left, Lois Butler, Lois Ford and George Ford, front right.

FABRY WONG, THE JOURNAL, FILE

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said, "I think of the drop-in centre, and then I think of the kitchen."

She recalls an outstanding fish dinner he made there 50 years ago with his first wife, Dora.

He was a legendary chef, yet he was involved in all aspects of the centre, serving on its board and later acting as the photo archivist.

"What didn't he do?" the 83-year-old Abells said. "He was very, very good with the elderly even when he was still a young man. He really remained so com-

passionate all through his life." To Ford, Alfred Simons is simply an irreplaceable figure in the community.

"He acted the same way with everybody," Ford said. "He was a person without prejudice of any kind, just a marvellous man. Since I met him six years ago my life has just been ever so much better."

Mr. Simons' funeral service is today at 2 p.m., at Chased Shel Emeth, 12313 105th Ave.

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