



Baisel Elmer Spencer

October 30, 1925 - August 28, 2014

Baisel Elmer Spencer was tough as nails and soft as clay. He loved his family and molded himself to support them.

Born on Oct. 30, 1925, he grew up during the Great Depression, one of 13 siblings. His father, George Everal Spencer, a fierce man, had been a sheriff and a cowboy, herding cattle. His mother, Susie Isabelle Gullick, a hard-working woman, knew how to stretch food to feed a large family and used scraps to fashion beautiful quilts to keep them warm.

Baisel, whose friends called him Spence, knew how to make bricks of mud, and helped build his family's adobe house in Morton, Texas. The central room was just big enough to hold his mother's quilting frame, which was raised to the ceiling when not in use. He was the tallest in his class at school and, while not aggressive, he wouldn't stand for others being bullied. He had a pet crow who would perch on his shoulder.

After he graduated from high school, he joined the Army to fight in World War II. He was shot in the Philippines during the invasion of Leyte Gulf. He rarely spoke of the wound that earned him a Purple Heart. He then was part of the occupation of Japan.

After the war, he joined a crew that built camps for men to bring phone service to rural Oregon. One Saturday night, he went with some buddies to a Grange Hall dance. "She picked me out of the crowd," he said of Marie Wakefield, raised in a nearby Oregon lumber camp.

Not long after, on the top of Camus Mountain, he asked her to marry him with

words he remembered more than a half-century later: “Would you do me the pleasure of making me the happiest man in the world for the rest of my life?” She said yes. Their marriage lasted 64 years, ending only with his death. He helped build their house in Eugene — particularly proud of the hipped roof — where they raised their two sons, Gary and Gregg, in a brand new neighborhood full of young families and close friends. After he worked as a landscaper and pipefitter, Baisel co-owned a business repairing hydraulic jacks.

Baisel kept the cowboy spirit of his roots. Tall and lean, he cut a striking figure in his Stetson, jeans, and cowboy boots. He liked reading Zane Gray. And he liked roaming: After selling his business, he and Marie took to the open road, traveling across the country many times in their RV, making friends and visiting relatives along the way. He used his many skills to help his elder son on the East Coast make a home of a gutted old house. And he traveled as far as Australia to visit his younger son and his family in their home there.

Baisel treasured his own home and took particular pride in its carefully cultivated yard. He built a waterfall there of found rocks and plants that was a wonder to behold. He had a quick wit and liked making puns. A month ago, when he was hospitalized and diagnosed with cancer, he joked to the orderly who wheeled him to tests, “Is this a biopsy or an autopsy?” On Aug. 28, 2014, he died at home with his devoted wife by his side. While waiting for the undertaker to arrive, his granddaughter, as a tribute, turned on her Grandpa’s waterfall as the hospice workers marveled.

Baisel Elmer Spencer is survived by his wife, Marie Louise Spencer, of Eugene; their two sons, Gary Spencer and his wife, Melissa Hale-Spencer, of Altamont, N.Y.; Gregg Spencer and his wife, Nguyen Thi Hong Chi, of Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam; and their grandchildren, Magdalena Hale Spencer of Manhattan, Saranac Hale Spencer of Philadelphia, and Samuel Crawford Spencer and Nina Crawford Spencer, both of Queensland, Australia.

A viewing will be held on Friday, Sept. 5, from 10 a.m. to noon at the McHenry Funeral Home at 206 NW Fifth Street, Corvallis, Oregon 97330. Burial will

follow at 1:30 p.m. at the Eddyville Cemetery.

Memorial contributions may be made to The Nature Conservancy, 821 SE 14th Ave., Portland, OR 97214, or the charity of your choice.

Tribute Wall



“ McHenry Funeral Home created a Tribute Video in memory of Baisel Elmer Spencer



McHenry Funeral Home - September 10, 2014 at 11:37 AM

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“ Dear Marie, Gary and Gregg,

On behalf of my sisters, Laurie Reymers Keebler and Sally Reymers Medford, I'm writing to express our condolences. Basil and Marie were always the heart of our neighborhood growing up, steady and kind adults to us and good friends to our parents. I remember babysitting Gary and Gregg, and having warm conversations with Baisel and Marie, and thinking what great parents they were to have such easy-to-babysit, good-hearted boys. Please know that our thoughts are with you.

*With love,
Linda Reymers*

Linda Reymers - September 04, 2014 at 02:03 PM