

# Sports were big part of Carl Bielewicz's life

**Each Monday**, the *Kenosha News* takes a look at the life of a Kenosha County resident who recently died. We share with you, through the memories of family and friends, a life remembered.

BY DIANE GILES

dgiles@kenoshanews.com



Small in stature, Carl "Specks" Bielewicz was often one of the last picked to play on neighborhood ball teams in his youth. But his love for sports, like his heart, was bigger than any obstacle.

Eventually his sports resume would include a one-hit baseball game, a hole-in-one golf match, and gigs as a Kenosha Youth Foundation swimming instructor and physical director, and as a timekeeper with the Kenosha Golden Gloves boxers.

Even in his late years when he lived at Hospitality Nursing and Rehabilitation Center, he was eager to compete in the Senior Olympics.

"Sports were always a big part of his life. He was always either coaching or watching a game," his daughter Karla said.

Carl J. Bielewicz, 91, of Kenosha, died April 15, leaving children Karl (Kim) Bielewicz, Robert (Juli) Zeihen, Linda Naidicz and Karla Bielewicz; six grandchildren; and a sister Mary (Emerald) Knudson.

He was born in Kenosha, the son of Antonio and Julia (Sielecki) Bielewicz. He was raised with his two older sisters and a younger brother.

## Part of the team

At Kenosha High School, he was the manager of the football, basketball and track teams. It didn't matter to him if he didn't see any action on the field or gym floorboards — he was part of the team.

Later on he was a second baseman and pitcher on area teams.

The Kenosha County Old Timers Baseball Association was a big part of Bielewicz's life. He was inducted into the association's hall of fame in 1993.

Over the years he served as the organization's president and vice president and as the chairman of the "Hot Stove League" dinner for many years.

## Overseas service

During World War II, Bielewicz was a desk sergeant stationed on New Caledonia, a South Pacific island that served as an important Allied base. After the war he served in the Army Reserves before being called up during the Korean War.

He met and married Helen



SUBMITTED PHOTO

**Carl "Specks" Bielewicz was inducted into the Kenosha County Old Timers Baseball Association's Hall of Fame in 1993.**

B. Gehl in 1952. When she died just before Christmas in 1964, he was left to raise Karla, 10, and Karl, 5.

In 1970, he married Lila (Stowell) Zeihen, and the family grew to four children. They were married 38 years until Lila's passing in 2008.

He worked at American Motors Corp. for 30 years, retiring in 1985.

## Sports, dancing

One of his favorite haunts was Clem and Chet's Sports Bar (now TGs) where he tend-

ed bar for many years. His standard menu order there was a hot beef sandwich.

He was a big Green Bay Packers fan.

"Sundays were sacred. We learned to be quiet on Sundays during the game," Karla said.

He would take his daughters to the father/daughter dinner dances, where he would show off his talent as a polka dancer.

"He would always try to teach us to polka," Karla said.

## Polish culture

Bielewicz was a member of the Polish Legion of American Veterans James Smelcer Post 34.

Throughout his life, Polish culture and heritage were very important, especially at Christmas time. He kept traditions like eating a meatless dinner on Christmas Eve, setting a place for a stranger at the dinner table and breaking the opiatek (Christmas wafer).

Bielewicz taught his children the all-important lesson of paying respects at funerals of community members.

When he heard of a death in a family, instead of buying funeral flowers, he would purchase the makings of a care package: ham, turkey, bread and butter and deliver it to the mourner's home.

"He was so taken with the fact that so many people had gone to my mother's funeral," Karla explained.