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## OPINION

Monday 22 January 2001

# We'll miss you, Uncle Bill

**Jaron Summers**

Flying from Edmonton to Los Angeles several months ago, my wife, Kate, and I talked to an Air Canada flight attendant aboard our plane. She said that one of the best things about living in Edmonton was the William Lutsky YMCA Family Community Centre.



**File Photo /  
 William  
 Lutsky**

It is within walking distance from her home, near Heritage Mall on the south side. She said the YMCA facilities made living in Edmonton a delight for her and her family. It keeps them healthy with everything from swimming lessons to Tai Chi.

My wife, Kate, and I knew William Lutsky. We spent a pleasant two months with him after the famous California Northridge earthquake of 1994.

When Kate and I visited Bill in Edmonton we told him about our conversation with Air Canada flight attendant and how much she appreciated the family YMCA he had funded.

Bill, who was recovering from some serious operations, smiled and said he was glad that Albertans enjoyed the YMCA and were getting good use out of it.

Some years ago when he funded the south-side "Y" I asked him why he was doing it. He said that when he

was a young man some of the members of the YMCA were nice to him. "They accepted me as I was and made me feel welcome," said Bill.

Bill Lutsky was a Jew. He claimed he was not a great Jew, but in my opinion he certainly did his best to follow his religion. I think he was an astonishing man. (Having come from a Christian background myself, I don't recall any of the members of any of the Christian Churches funding any programs that the Jewish community set up.)

I talked to Eric Van Meurs, manager of the William Lutsky YMCA Family Community Centre. He told me that the "Y" directors thought by now there would be about 4,000 people involved in its program. "It has far exceeded our expectations," Eric said. "We have about 8,000 people who have joined."

I thought to myself: all those people have benefited so much from a single person. And why? Simply because a few people were kind to a young man over half a century ago. Isn't it amazing how tiny acts of kindness pay massive dividends in ways you never suspect?

He'd probably be annoyed that I mentioned a little bit about his philanthropy. He didn't like anyone to know the many kindnesses he had done for countless people. Few Edmontonians even knew who he was. Forgive me, Bill, but I just had to write about the domino affect of tiny acts of kindness here in our city.

Too bad the rest of the world can't be a little bit more like Edmonton. I guess there just aren't enough Uncle Bills to go around.

Bill died early Monday morning, Jan. 15, in Edmonton.

Jaron Summers, Los Angeles

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