

LOCAL OBITUARIES

He founded a fruit company and helped revive UM basketball. Irving Karp has died at 94

BY **CAITLIN OSTROFF** DECEMBER 25, 2018 02:25 PM



On any given day through the 1960s and '70s, Irving and Ruth Karp could be found at their business, Carnival Fruit, chatting with customers as the couple sold oranges for a penny apiece.

Their successful produce company stood as a community staple for decades, its colorful trucks circling Miami's streets.

After they sold the company, the Karps turned to philanthropy, donating tens of thousands of dollars to the University of Miami and other organizations.



They found friendship through a Holocaust

On Monday, Irving Karp died at home after he fell, said his son Martin Karp, a Miami-Dade School Board member. He was 94.

Karp and his wife, Ruth, first came to South Florida as newlyweds. After marrying in New York in 1946, they honeymooned in South Beach, driving down in a car nearly a decade old that kept breaking down every few miles. They stayed at the Cleveland Hotel for \$21 a week — and fell in love with the area.





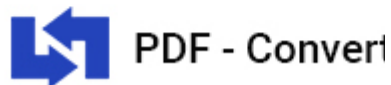
Irving Karp and his wife Ruth on their wedding day in 1946. *COURTESY OF THE KARP FAMILY*

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On New Year's Day 1950, they left New York, arriving in Miami two days later. This time, they stayed and never left.

In 1960, after nine years of Ruth telling him he should go into business for himself, Irving finally listened. The couple founded Carnival Fruit Co. in North Miami Beach.

service. He served as a staff sergeant in the 69th Infantry Division, according to the [National Purple Heart Hall of Honor](#).

He fought in the Invasion of Normandy and the Battle of the Bulge, two moments considered tipping points in the war, and he served as a translator to help British intelligence interview German soldiers, his son said.

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When he came back to the U.S. and married, he already had a reputation as a good businessman and produce salesman, said his wife Ruth, 93.

“He was putting everybody out of business, even his mother and father,” she said.


What started as a retail produce store in Miami Beach with a single 1.5-ton pickup truck grew to a fleet of more than 70 trucks that distributed produce wholesale mostly across South Florida and the Caribbean, including the Cayman Islands and the Bahamas.

Even as Carnival Fruit grew, it stayed a mom-and-pop business, with their employees feeling more like relatives, Ruth Karp said.

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“Everybody was one of the family. They used to call him ‘Hey Irving.’ They called me ‘Ms. Ruth.’ I got the respect,” she said.

Son Martin said his father’s devotion to his work and family was unparalleled.

“He just led by example,” he said. “It was a matter of getting up 3 in the morning, 4 in the morning, getting into the warehouse, coming home late afternoon and being with family.”

Irving retired in 1984, his son said, and the company dissolved in 2009, according to the state’s Division of Corporations.

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After his retirement, Irving and Ruth got involved with UM athletics. They are among a [group of donors](#) whose contributions of more than \$50,000 helped revive the basketball program in the mid-1980s after a 14-year absence.

Karp is survived by Ruth, his wife of nearly 73 years, children Janice Spritz and Martin Karp and his wife Danielle, grandchildren Matt and Eric Spritz, and Herschel, Benjamin and Samson Karp.

Services will be at 1 p.m. Wednesday at Riverside Gordon Memorial Chapel, 17250 W Dixie Hwy. in North Miami Beach. Internment will be at 2:30 p.m. at Mount Nebo Cemetery in Miami.

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BY C. ISAIAH SMALLS II

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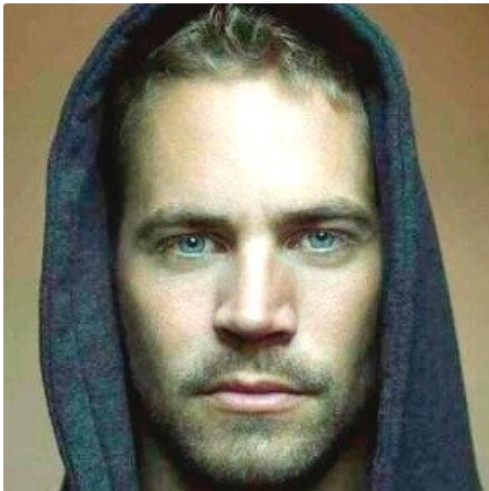
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