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By KEVIN ‘CHILL’ HEARD

Managing Editor

My man Spi (pronounced “Spy!”)

For those who knew Spinoza Elkins, knew he was one of the coolest cats around.

Spi sold ads for the Call and Post for many of the years that we have occupied our Shaker Boulevard
building. I suspect that his sophisticated array of fur coats, fedora hats alligator shoes and gentlemen’s clothing were often a part of the deal – not that he hadn’t already ascertained a treasured collection prior to selling ads.

He was an unforgettable man indeed. An elder statesman of the city, Spi had more than a few stories about Black Cleveland, its personalities and cool twist to every endeavor. His swag was undeniable. He was like that cool uncle that could hip you to all the ins and outs of everything that you would ever want to get into or out of! He was a sage that was on site, from 9 to 5, to disperse advice, in affairs both business and personal.

One day, Spi pulled me aside to tell me a story about his nephew who he wanted me to meet. His nephew Antwone lived in L.A. and was working as a security guard at a Sony Pictures and had decided to write a book about his life. Not wanting me to have to wait on the book’s release, Spi told me his nephew’s story – and what a story is was!

As the book was ready to be released, Spi gave me the scoop that Denzel Washington was set to star in the film version of his nephew’s book and Washington would make his directorial debut. The book was called “Finding Fish,” the film was to be called “Antwone Fisher” and yes, Spi’s nephew was Antwone.

Needless to say, Antwone had chucked his security guard gig and was headed for bigger and brighter things. Spi was very proud, especially considering the life journey that his nephew had to travel – much of which has been well documented.

Spi – and ironically enough the Call and post – had been an integral part of the actual “Finding of Fish” or at least his reconnection with his family.

As the movie made its way to Cleveland for filming, Spi was humorously concerned that the person playing “Spinoza Elkins” in the film didn’t seem to capture his true essence. He invited me to come down to the set and hopefully confirm that the actor portraying him didn’t have his swag. Though I assured Spi the man playing him was a talented and seasoned veteran of the Karamu theater, who I had seen perform many times, Spi was not to be dissuaded on his judgment. Still, he was excited that he himself would get to be in an actual scene.

Every day, Spi made his way into the city to keep up with the film’s shooting schedule and everyday he beamed with pride that his nephew was getting to tell his story in a most profound way.

I was out of town when I got the call that Spi had passed away and it took a moment for me to gather myself. Sadly, Spi passed away prior to the film’s release but his spirit lives on in the Call and Post and in the film.

I was invited to take part of the film’s media screening and Spi was very much on my mind. I smiled and thought of Spi when I saw the actor playing him but, as the film swung to its conclusion, there he was! I forgot Spi was actually in the film and he starred out from the screen at me it as if, at least for that moment, he was still among us. The Call and Post staff will forever miss Spinoza Elkins for his style, knowledge, humor – and hook-up at Mike the Hatter! Rest well my friend.

Upcoming articles in this space will be dedicated to telling the story of former C&P employees. From the names you may have long forgotten, to names you may have just recently come to know.

The Call and Post Newspaper, 95 years and counting, stand up and be counted. Be a part of the history that you or your family helped to build. Email us at Info@call-post.com or give us a call at (216) 588-6700. Yes, we are still looking for you!