



Obituary

R. E. “Sonny” Spradlin 1930 - 2015

Kilgore resident and Texas Ranger benefactor, Sonny Spradlin was born to the late R.E. Shiplap Spradlin, Sr. and Sis Spradlin on June 30, 1930 in Louann, Arkansas, and died Saturday, October 17, 2015.

He was nicknamed Sonny by his late mother, Sis Spradlin, because he was the Sunshine of her life. Little did she know, he would continue to be a ray of sunshine for countless others throughout his life.

He moved to Kilgore where he attended elementary and Kilgore Junior High School. In 1942 the family moved to Tyler and opened a bowling alley, where he worked as a pin-setter, until the end of the war. He moved back to Kilgore for good in 1948. He graduated from Kilgore High School, attended Kilgore College and The University of Texas where he was All Southwest Conference Catcher and played in the College World Series.

In 1953, he served two years in the U.S. Army and was honorably discharged. While serving, he received a draft letter from a semi-pro baseball team, the Dallas Eagles, saying he would be fined \$500 for reporting late. He found this humorous and always chuckled when retelling the story. He declined, instead working at the family business, East Texas Lumber Company, starting in 1954 until his retirement in 1986.

In 1956, he married Betty Sue Bird, of Longview and lived to see their 59th anniversary. Spradlin was a founder of Texas Ranger Association Foundation, affiliated with the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum in Waco. The Foundation provides scholarships for the children of active duty Texas Rangers, compassionate assistance to the families of Texas Rangers and supports the historical programs of the Hall of Fame and Museum. Spradlin also formed Troopers Benefit which benefits State Troopers who have extraordinary needs.

Sonny did many acts of kindness, never known by anyone but the recipient. He served the Kilgore Chamber of Commerce, the Lions Club and served on the Kilgore College Board of Trustees for a record 30 years. In his unique way, Sonny was quoted as having said he was still waiting on the pay check to arrive, and nothing had come to date!

Anyone who Spradlin crossed paths with knows that his generosity and love of children prevailed. Known for his pads of \$2 bills which he handed out saying “if you never spend this, you’ll never be broke!” He also handed out pocket knives as a gesture of friendship

Raising cattle was his hobby. He bought his first head in 1958, emulating his father who also raised cattle. He found his greatest peace riding a tractor on his farm at Laird Hill.

Adapted from the *Longview News-Journal*.