



## **R.E. "Sonny" Spradlin**

6/30/1930 - 10/17/2015

Memorial Services for R.E. "Sonny" Spradlin Jr., 85, of Kilgore, will be held at the First Presbyterian Church on Tuesday, October 20, 2015, at 3:00 p.m. with Dr. Bill Holda and Rev. Buddy Duggins officiating under the direction of Rader Funeral Home. The family will receive friends at Rader Funeral Home on Monday, October 19, 2015 from 6 to 7:30 p.m.

Sonny was born to the late R.E. "Shiplap" Spradlin, Sr. and "Sis" Spradlin on June 30, 1930 above the lumberyard in Louann, Arkansa, and died Saturday, October 17, 2015, at his home with his family by his side. On his last day he had the privilege of enjoying a trip (with the dogs) to coffee at the Circle cafe, followed by a trip to the farm at Laird Hill, where he often said, "I get on that tractor and all my cares and troubles go away."

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

He moved to Kilgore while he was still wearing "three cornered britches," where he attended elementary and Kilgore Junior High School. In 1942, in response to WW II, 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. Sports writers credit Spradlin's hot hitting streak with propelling the Longhorns to the Final Game of the 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. His current and only wife, as he would often introduce her. They had their 59th anniversary this year.

Spradlin was the founder of "The Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum Foundation. To date, the Foundation still provides funds for retired Texas Rangers to attend the annual gathering in Waco, Texas. He formed Troopers Benefit which benefits State Troopers who have extraordinary needs.

Sonny did so many random acts of kindness, never known by anyone except the recipient. He was known for his lack of desire to be in the spotlight, never seeking praise for any help he provided. Spradlin was a member of Kilgore Chamber of Commerce, the Lions Club and served on the Kilgore College Board of Trustee's for a record 30 years. Sonny was quoted as having said "he is still waiting on the pay check to arrive, and nothing has come as 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!" Additionally, he handed out pocket knives, which he loved to collect. But never without receiving a penny, which word has it "the friendship would be cut forever unless received in exchange.

Raising cattle was his hobby. He bought his first head in 1958, emulating his father who raised cattle the whole time Sonny was growing up, so he thought he knew what he was doing. Riding a tractor on the farm at Laird Hill

was where he found his greatest peace.

He is survived by his best friend and wife Betty, four sons, Ronnie, Don, Jonn and Lonn Spradlin. One granddaughter Erin Spradlin, a pre-med student, is currently attending Texas A&M University.

The family has requested memorials be directed to either Kilgore Boys and Girls Club or the R.E. Spradlin Jr. Scholarship at Kilgore College

Obituary Provided By:  
**Rader Funeral Home**  
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Kilgore, TX 75662  
[www.raderfuneralhome.com](http://www.raderfuneralhome.com)