



Thomas Ray Spann

January 28, 1929 - January 27, 2017

Obituary

Thomas Ray Spann (Sr), died January 27, 2017 Jackson TN. Born January 28, 1929 to Clarence "Jack" and Lena Spann at home in Johnson Creek hollow in Dickson County, Tennessee. The fifth child of 11, the second of 2 boys plus one who died at birth.

Graduated from Charlotte HS then hitchhiked to Martin TN to attend University of Tennessee Junior College (currently UTM) graduated and moved to UT Knoxville earning a Bachelors' and Master's degree in Animal Science. While at UTK he paid the bills as herdsman for the UT dairy farm. He married Dorothy Knepp of Martin Tennessee in 1951. T. Ray spent a few years (55-57) at Fort Knox in the Army Veterinarian Corp. With assurances from Auburn University that he was not going to be a veterinarian, RayRay accepted a job with the Pet Milk Company and moved with Dot to Johnson City. During this time Ray and Dot welcomed children Thomas Ray Jr (Tom) and Mary Loretta to the family. In 1959, the family moved to Jackson Tennessee for Ray to go to work for UT Agriculture Extension Service as a dairy specialist. In Jackson, Ray and DotDot welcomed son Bill and daughter Ellen Kay and were faithful members of Forest Heights United Methodist Church. When Dad was asked if we had to go to church he always responded, "no you don't have to go, you get to go!"

Thomas Ray retired from UT Extension in the mid 1990's being designated Professor Emeritus in the UT Institute of Agriculture. Dad's job kept him busy especially in the fall traveling with 4H youth and their prized dairy cows to shows across the southeast. In his spare time Dad enjoyed gardening trying his best to get his children to join in his love of it. He began a Christmas tree farm about 1980 which he worked until a few years ago. Dad was a simple, frugal man happiest at home stoking a fire in the wood stove with close family nearby.

Daddy Ray is survived by his four children Tom Spann (Jr) (Aletza), Mary Hagy (John) Knoxville, Bill Spann (Teresa), Kay Frye (Stan). Nine grandchildren Tray Spann (III) (Tracy), Blake Spann (Leslie) - Maryville, Lauren Goff (Chad), Kenny Hurley - Knoxville, Torrey Hurley (Tara) - Knoxville, Jessie Spann, Trevor Spann, Tyler Frye, Connor Frye – UT Chattanooga. Great Grandchildren – Xavier Ray, Zane Thomas, Brayden, Lainey, Tillman, Emsley Lucille, Brantley, Alexa, Amy, Emaline and Ira. Also his sisters Verna Belle, Loretta and Barbara. Predeceased by his parents, wife, brother Doug and sisters Ruth, Lucille, Odell, Claytie, Doy Jean and Betty.

Funeral services will be held Monday, January 30, 2017 at 11:00 a.m. at George A. Smith and Sons North Chapel with Pastor Harrell Nation officiating. Private burial will follow in Highland Memorial Gardens. Visitation with the family will be on Monday, January 30, 2017 from 9:00 am to time of service.

Memorials contributions in Ray's memory may be directed to the Tennessee 4H Foundation, 205 Morgan Hall, 2621 Morgan Circle, Knoxville TN 37996-4510, TN4HFoundation@utk.edu
George A. Smith and Sons North Chapel, (731) 427-5555.