



Rita Spracklin

September 8, 1916 - April 17, 2014

Rita Spracklin, age 97, of Glendive, Montana passed away on Tuesday, April 1, 2014 at her home in Glendive. There will be a combined Remembrance Service for both Rita and her late husband Bill held at 11:00 A.M. on Thursday, April 17, 2014 in the Silvernale-Silha Tribute Center in Glendive with Celebrant Sandy Silha officiating. Interment will follow in the Dawson Memorial Cemetery in Glendive. Silvernale-Silha Funeral Home of Glendive has been entrusted with the arrangements. Rita Flegel Spracklin was born in Braddock, North Dakota on September 8, 1916 to Frederick and Elizabeth (Feher) Flegel. Rita was the eldest of six children so a lot of responsibility was placed on her throughout her mother's illnesses. She continued with caregiving for the remainder of her life. In Glendive she was often referred to as the "baby nurse" by many; as she worked in the nursery until her retirement at the age of 83. Even after being placed in the Veterans home; she would report to the nurses station and ask for her daily assignment or call her daughter for a ride to or from work. When informed of her retirement she would insist, "no I'm at the hospital now and have worked all day." Rita was preceded in death by her parents; two brothers, Ruben and William Flegel; and her husband William "Bill" Spracklin. Rita is survived by her four children, Elizabeth "Wanda" Black and special friend Robbie of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Noreen (Ed) Turnquist of Glendive; Dale (Janet) Spracklin of Sidney, Montana; and Sharon (Keith) Weiss of Glendive; three sisters, Nyla Prosser of Superior, Montana; Hazel Spracklin of Wildamare, California; and

Phyllis Spier of Beulah, North Dakota; 13 grandchildren; 26 great-grandchildren, and nine great-great-grandchildren; and numerous nieces and nephews. Remembrances and condolences may be shared with the family at: www.silvernale-silhafuneralhome.com. Eulogy: Rita and Bill Spracklin were simple, hardworking, honest people. They shared just over 65 years of marriage, filled with working, raising a family of four children, enjoying simple pleasures, accomplishing daily tasks. Both knew how tough life could be having experienced the Great Depression and World War II. Both were born and raised in rural communities, Rita in North Dakota and Bill in Montana. Both were the oldest of six children and help raise their siblings, probably lending to each of them having strong personalities, used to being in charge. Rita is still remembered lovingly by her sisters as “the bossy older sister,” while Bill was mainly responsible for looking out for his twin sisters, Rose, in particular. Both Rita and Bill were self-taught in most every skill they had. And both used these skills throughout their lives in their work, with their families, and in the community. Rita grew up on a farm near the small town of Linton, North Dakota. Her home had no electricity or indoor bathrooms. Rita and her siblings walked the mile or so to school and home each day. Rita’s mother was ill a lot, and so the children took care of the many household chores and helped care for the garden. It was Rita who looked out for the younger children. Rita’s sister, Hazel, remembers that when the younger kids would get into trouble, Rita would make them sit on chairs and not talk. Giggling would ensue, and then Rita would scold them soundly. Hazel also recalls that when their parents were gone, Rita would make fudge for everyone and hide what was left so her parents wouldn’t know. Sister Phyllis says Rita taught her to dance and that all the kids were great at playing jokes on each other. The children made their own fun and their yard was a gathering place for area children. They would play cards, play softball, roll tires down a nearby hill, sled on scoop shovels, and have snowball wars. Sister Nyla says they would roam the hills around their house until their mother would wave a white dishcloth for them to come home. But everyone’s fondest memories are of times on the

porch singing, with the two brothers playing guitar. Nyla says that their father was in a band that competed with Lawrence Welk, and the family would sing in church also. Music was never far away, as they even sang while doing chores. Nyla and Rita sang at many funerals around the country, and both also learned to play the guitar. No one read music, it was all learned by ear. Rita also played the piano and the accordion. Country music was a favorite. Rita's education went thru 8th grade. Rita sewed her own clothes, but she was given her first store bought dress to wear for the 8th grade graduation. She wore the dress that day, but did not attend the graduation. As a young lady, Rita left home with her sister Nyla, and they both moved to Mandan/Bismarck, North Dakota, working in hospitals in housekeeping and later as aids. Rita and Nyla also sang on the radio station with their own program at both the station in Mandan and later, the one Bismarck. They were known as the "Sweethearts of Harmony." Rita and Nyla always closed their program with the same song about leaving the light on, something their mother always did for them when they were out at night. And sister Phyllis can still sing the radio stations' theme songs that Rita and Nyla sang each program. The end to all this came when Rita heard of hospital jobs in Jordan, Montana, that were available. Rita did not like the big city life and so off she and Nyla went to Jordan, Montana and new lives. And who was in Jordan but Bill. As was mentioned, Bill was the oldest of six children. His younger brother Pete, shared some insight into Bill's growing up years. Pete remembers that as a youth Bill had his leg in a cast, and his parents sent him to a ranch in the area where he lived for a time. Pete also remembers that Bill began at an early age to operate big equipment, working with their father. One particular memory is that Bill was too little to sit on a Cat and pull the lever to dump it. Bill had to jump up to reach the lever to pull it. Another memory Pete shared was when Bill was supposed to make rice for dinner. He used the whole box and everyone had to eat rice for a week. Pete says that hunting was important as a source of food, and Bill would spotlight rabbits at night for meals. Card playing was a favorite activity

all through life for all the family. Bill's education went into the 11th grade. During this time, there was a big push for young men to enlist and go to war, and Bill talked his mother into signing permission for him to join the Navy, and Bill left to serve our United States. Bill's time in the Navy was spent serving in the Pacific theater of World War II. Trained as an electrician, Bill helped in the construction of airstrips and also helped remove the injured and dead from planes. Bill was honorably discharged from the United States Navy in 1946, where upon Bill returned home to Jordan. Rita and Nyla arrived in Jordan when Bill was in high school. Two new girls in town was a big deal, and it wasn't long before Bill and Rita met. Although Rita was 10 years Bill's senior, the attraction was there. When Bill returned from the service, Rita was still working at the Jordan hospital, and they began to see each other, marrying six months after Bill's return. Bill worked moving houses and construction jobs, often being away from home for weeks and months. Rita and Bill started their family with Wanda, followed by Noreen and Dale. Rita's sister, Hazel, came to Jordan, and she and Bill's brother Bob were married also. Bill and Bob worked many jobs together on construction, with their families travelling with them to many job sites. The families lived in small trailers near the job sites, returning to Jordan during the off seasons, where they would camp in Bill's parents' yard and Bill would sell cars and feed. Bill and Bob would also serve as mechanics and take boxes of pick-ups to make trailers. After Sharon was born, Bill and Rita decided to settle down, and Bill and Bob moved to Glendive with their families where they had their own business running dump trucks, and working for Crisafulli Pump designing pumps and cattle guards. The trucking business was sold when Bob and Hazel moved to California. Bill went to work for the State Highway Dept. as a heavy duty mechanic. Rita again worked in the hospital, becoming known as the "baby nurse." By then, Rita and Bill's family was growing up. Wanda, Noreen, and Dale had grown up moving around a lot and going to various schools, but Sharon, who was the youngest, only knew the Glendive school system, and being so much younger than her siblings, grew up as somewhat of an only child. Bill, a traditional man

who believed that women had their place, would not teach Noreen mechanics, something she had an interest in. He did teach his kids to drive, starting at a young age with them on his lap, and he taught his daughters to fix a flat tire. Bill would never hire anything done; he believed he and his children could do it. Family fun was swimming, and having people and family parties at their home on Marsh Road. Noreen and Sharon have memories of travelling with their father. With Bill driving, there was no stopping, so you took a pee and puke bucket with you in the car. Bill loved to drive in a swerving fashion, and you couldn't have the radio on as he wanted to listen to the car in case something went wrong. The ultimate mechanic, Bill could and would fix anything. When Dale got his MG car from Germany, it came in cardboard boxes. Bill had it together in no time. As for Rita, she was the ultimate caregiver. She loved her work at the hospital, retiring at age 83. But it's hard to retire from something you have done your whole life, and in Rita's mind, she was still ready to give. Sharon believes her mother's purpose in life was to "welcome new babies into the world and to hold and love them." When Rita had her last great-grandchild in her arms, she looked at Sharon and said, "This is so natural, how it should be." When not working, Rita and Bill enjoyed numerous activities; rollerskating, dancing, gardening, coffee at CC's, fishing, listening to country and gospel music, puttering, and last but not least, picking at each other. One example was the computer they got late in life. Rita enjoyed getting on the computer, but Bill hated it, so when Rita wanted to use the computer, Bill would pick up the phone, disconnecting the computer. Rita and Bill's bank was the freezer, they believed in the cash system. It was not uncommon to find \$20 bills stuck between the plates. A favorite activity for Rita was watching Sharon in her sport of gymnastics. Rita never missed a local meet. The gymnastics team called her Mom because she was always there and even chaperoned a couple of times so she could attend out of town meets. And how proud Rita and Bill were of Sharon when she went to state for track. Family was important to Bill and Rita. They always stuck up for their kids. They kept in touch and exchanged visits with all their siblings over the

years. Three years ago, Rita got together with her sisters in Seattle, and they had a pajama party in the motel. Rita and Bill were good with the grandkids. Bill would tease them with his joke of having them pull his finger, responding with a farting sound. Grandpa would give the grandkids money and grandma would give them presents. Granddaughter, Heather, wrote these special memories of her grandpa Bill after he died. "Every time I see a black jelly bean or Brazilian nut, I will think of him. When I come across an old Tonka truck or silver coin collection, I will think of him, (especially if they are coins stored in an old freezer.) When I was 4 or 5 years old, I spent part of my summer with Grandpa and Grandma. I still fondly remember the little songs he taught me to 'sing to mommy on the phone'. Songs like 'Ripshaw-Buckshaw, daddy shot a bear, hit him in the asshole, didn't hit a hair!' Yep, Mom LOVED that one! And I promise, Grandpa, to one day have small children 'pull my finger' in honor of you!" Rita took up painting later in life and would get grandson Brian and granddaughter Tiane drawing and painting. Both Bill and Rita enjoyed their grandchildren. Son Dale's perspective about his parents is that his mother was always busy but had the most patience, while his father did what he had to in life to support his family and that his options were limited. Bill and Rita both were strong people and that strength has been passed on to their children. Bill will be remembered for the skills in his hands and his work ethic. Rita will be remembered for her caregiving and her infectious smile. They will both be remembered in many ways and for many things. Most importantly, they will be remembered, and they will be missed.

Tribute Wall



“ *Rita Spracklin*

December 07, 2022 at 04:10 PM



“ *Though it is now July 23, 2014, I happen to find your mother's obit. I belatedly send my condolences to your family. I remember working with her when I worked at Glendive hospital as a nurse's aid starting in the summer of 1977 to the summer of 1979. I really enjoyed working with your mom, she was a great lady. Sincerely, Sharon Reynolds, Holmes, L. P. N.*

Sharon Holmes - July 23, 2014 at 08:38 PM



“ *Sorry to hear of your loss. My mother, Betty Jean 'Spracklin' Stocker Cole was Bill's cousin. She passed away February 10, 2013. I have photos of Rita and Hazel when they were younger. Again, my condolences to all the family.
Your second cousin,
Gloria*

Gloria Spinler - May 22, 2014 at 01:22 PM

BE

“ Hi Wanda, Noreen, Dale, and Sharon from Bill Erhardt in Helena, Mt. My sister Linda from Dickinson, ND. let me know your mother passed away earlier this month. If I had known, I would have been there as I spent a bit of time as a young man with all of you along with your mom and dad. My most sincere condolences. I think of you all more than you know and hope this finds you all well. If you find time, please e-mail me to my address in this message. I would love to hear from you.. In friendship always Billy Erhardt...

Bill Erhardt - April 26, 2014 at 06:34 PM