

L.E. SPRUILL

Since the birth of Oktibbeha County in 1835, it has flourished to be a fruitful county. Is it because of the Industrial Revolution? Some of Oktibbeha County's features can be attributed to the Industrial Revolution; however, fruitful, kindhearted, and intelligent local individuals contributed to Oktibbeha County's success. L.E. Spruill was one such individual, a resident who overcame obstacles; spoke directly from his heart, helped others in need find direction, and believed in Oktibbeha County's future.

L.E. Spruill was born June 19, 1924 to sharecroppers and lived in an old sharecropper house. At thirteen months of age, Spruill was diagnosed with polio. He experienced only one day of his life walking. Despite his inability to use his lower limbs, he became determined not to let that keep him from living. If someone tried to help him or offer him sympathy, he would refuse. At the age of eight he got a pony named Smokey for his birthday. Smokey was his way of getting to school and any where he needed or wanted to go. As a teenager he was often told by his father that he would never experience the adventures of being a young man such as participating in sports, going on dates or being able to drive. Young Spruill did not want to hear what his father was saying and decided that he would do all the things his father said that he could not do. Shortly thereafter he taught himself how to drive, played baseball and even received his pilot license. At a young age he knew that the word "can't" was not in his vocabulary.

Young Spruill grew up to be a man who was direct and therefore often misunderstood. People did not realize that what Spruill said was exactly what he meant. For this reason, some people were afraid to approach him, and on many accounts his friends described him as a person who stood up for what he thought was right. Despite the fact that many individuals thought of Spruill as a “smartass”, he had a softer side. At the age of 28 he wed Helen Ruth Logan from Maben, Mississippi in 1951. They had one child and named her Donna Lynn.

Spruill sympathized with people who were having a hard time providing for their families. He remembered that he once had experienced growing up during hard times. If someone was in need and proved himself to be worthy, Spruill would offer them assistance. He despised lazy people who did not fight for things they wanted to accomplish. Over his lifetime he anonymously contributed large sums of money to organizations. Some of these organizations included Mississippi State University and Oktibbeha County Hospital. Fame and recognition were not his motivation for helping those he believed in. He especially gave generously to the March of Dimes, a non profit organization founded to aid in research and a cure for polio. He never forgot the March of Dimes because of their generosity for providing funding to his parents for his first set of braces.

Spruill believed in himself and in the future of Oktibbeha County. His contributions to the community were enormous in paving the way for its current development. His friends describe him as being 99% business and the other percent a practical joker. Heavily involved in the real estate development, local banks and his own accounting firm, he saw the future for Oktibbeha County. Many of the businesses presently residing on Highway 12, Industrial Park

and others would not have been there without the help of Spruill. He knew that some day the city would expand and there needed to be a place for industries to build. By having ties with the Starkville Industrial Development Foundation he strongly pushed for the reservation of the land on highway 12 for the uprising of Oktibbeha County. Since Spruill had a passion for being a boy scout when he was younger, he played a major role in constructing the road to Camp Seminole. Not only did he have a heart of gold, he donated some of his real estate to develop a community park. He named this park in honor of his best friend, William McKee. He made an arrangement with the city for the park to become city property as long as it kept the name of his best friend. If there was a dispute in keeping the name it would go to his estate. Just to mention a few more contributions to Oktibbeha County, he was involved with the development of Greensboro Subdivision, Greenbriar Subdivision and Colonial Hills. His contributions to Oktibbeha County go beyond the few described in this paper.

Spruill died August 12, 2000, he left the community physically but looking at the bigger picture he did not leave totally because he left his legacy. His legacy continues as others continue to help Oktibbeha County flourish through the paths he had already paved. Oktibbeha County has come a long way and still has a long way to go with the help of modeling individuals such as L.E. Spruill. Let's keep his legacy rising and remember this concrete covered marshmallow as we continue to develop this community.

References

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