



R. D. "Dennie" Helms

August 23, 1911 - January 15, 2004

R. D. "Dennie" Helms was born in Reagan, Tennessee on August 23, 1911, the fourth of seven children. His surviving siblings are Edith Fesmire and Lavonia (Alan) Peterson, whom he affectionately referred to as "Tip" and "Tobe." Brothers Bill Brooks, Brooks Helms, Paul Helms, and Max Helms preceded him in death. Football, basketball and baseball games were a constant in his life, whether playing, coaching or refereeing. He left Reagan for Lexington at age 14, to work at the Coca-Cola bottling works, in order to play on the Lexington High School teams. His athletic skill earned him a scholarship to UT Junior College (later UT Martin), where he graduated in 1935. R.D. also played basketball (beating Harvard, Yale, Princeton and Brown Univ.) and baseball in the Navy. He served as Chief Petty Officer in the Pacific Theatre during World War II, spending eighteen months in the Philippine Islands, working with the "Seabees" Construction Battalion. The day after he returned from the war, he went back to work at "the coke plant," where he would remain until his retirement in 1989, after 65 years of loyal service. He recalled taking the new product around to rural stores, where he was told, "nobody" would ever pay a nickel for a six-ounce coca-cola. In 1997 and 1998, Lexington was recognized as the "highest U.S. per capita for Coca-Cola products." Those who knew Dennie might agree that the personal relationships he formed over 65 years had a great deal to do with that success. In 1945, Dennie married Eva Louise Pafford. He supported Eva in the purchase and operations of Pafford Funeral Home, including the 24-hour

ambulance service that the business provided in those days. Dennie and Eva had two children, Dian (Bill) Brown and Robert (Carol) Helms, and four grandchildren, Marci and Ben (Monica) Harris, Christin and Weston Helms. R.D. continued to promote and encourage youth sports throughout his life. In 1946, he led the Lexington Lion's Club in sponsoring the Lexington Chicks Independent baseball team. He worked to facilitate the construction of baseball fields and amenities, and was honored by the Henderson County Baseball Hall of Fame. He officiated TSSAA basketball and football for 28 years. R.D. bought the first Tennessee walking horse to Henderson County in 1955, and enjoyed attending and entering horse shows around the state. In 1979, his horse, Bum's Delight, won the National Celebration Reserve Champion. He established the Open Stake Champion Class award given each year in memory of Eva Helms at the Parker's Crossroads Racking Horse show. R. D. "Dennie" Helms lived a long and full life. He approached every day with strong spirit and touched many with his quick wit, easy smile, and generous nature. The family will receive friends Friday from 11:00 AM till 10:00 PM and 9:00 AM until service time on Saturday. Funeral Services are scheduled for Saturday, January 17, at 11:00 AM in the Chapel of Pafford Funeral Home with burial at Ebenezer Cemetery in the Shady Hill Community.