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William Henry Sparling East

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William East Obituary

EAST _ Dr. William Henry Sparling FERNIE, British Columbia: Sparling, or "Doc East", passed away peacefully on June 23, 2007 in Fernie, B.C. Born in Winnipeg on September 19, 1912, Sparling was predeceased by parents Rev. Samuel and Anne, brothers Rev. Stewart and Lloyd, and sisters Margaret and Dorothy, and daughter-in-law, Libby. Surviving are Mary, his devoted wife of 65 years, sons Stewart (Pauline), Craig (Rosemary), Fraser, Blair (Janie) and niece Donna Wilson (Mike). Seven grandchildren and six great grandchildren are left with cherished memories of "G.G. Spar" and the family gatherings at the Fernie home or the East Wing cabins at Rosen Lake. Dad experienced a full and varied 94 years beginning with a number of Saskatchewan and Manitoba towns his father served, high school at Regina's Scott Collegiate, Regina Normal School, teaching in various rural Saskatchewan schools, attending University of Saskatchewan and Manitoba Medical School. After graduating as a medical doctor in 1941 he interned at the Winnipeg General and St. Boniface hospitals before enlisting in the Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps with war service in Canada, Holland, France, and Germany. Mom, a nurse, met Dad at the Winnipeg General and they married in 1942

before Dad went overseas. After his discharge, but in his army uniform, Sparling arrived in Fernie in December 1945 to begin a 46 year practice until his retirement in December 1991. The clinics on Second Avenue were very busy for Dad with his delivery of around 2,600 babies, and a family medical practice spanning up to five generations in a few instances. In what became his beloved Fernie, Sparling became actively involved in the Fernie Royal Canadian Legion Branch, the Chamber of Commerce, the Rotary Club and the Fernie Senior Citizen's Association. He served as president of the Fernie Legion, Rotary Club, Boy Scout District, and the East Kootenay Medical and the B.C. Coroner's Associations, and the medical staff at the Fernie District Hospital. He was also a member of the Michel-Natal-Sparwood Hospitals medical staff for 35 years. Dad, with his early interest in education, became involved in School District Number One (Fernie) as a Trustee for 17 years of which 7 years he served as Chair. Other Fernie activities included being a 60 year member of the Elk River Masonry Lodge No. 35, and an honorary physician to the Knights of Columbus. In 1987 Dad was recognized as an Honorary Member of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of B.C. and, in 1992, for 35 years service and as a Founding Member of the College of Family Physicians of Canada. The City of Fernie, in 1996, inducted Dad as an honoured member to the Fernie Wall of Fame, and, in 2002, Dad was awarded the Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal for his community involvement. To commemorate his lengthy medical service, the medical staff and Board of the Fernie District Hospital established the Dr. Sparling East Scholarship Fund in 1992 which provides annual scholarships to graduating Fernie Senior Secondary students entering some aspect of post secondary medical education. 'Doc' or 'Doc East', as the players called him, loved his Fernie hockey teams. Spar served as the team doctor for the Rangers, the Sabres, and the Elk Valley Blazers from 1955 to 1987. More recently Dad was an avid fan of the Junior Ghostriders. (A special railing was installed to enable Dad to get to his favourite seat). The East Family would like to thank Dr. Geddis, Dr. McBeath, and the wonderful Staff of Elk Valley Hospital for their mindful care during Dad's final days. To the people of the communities of Fernie, the South Country and the Elk Valley for their kind thoughts and support, we extend our heartfelt gratitude. A service for "Doc East" was held at the Fernie Community Centre on June 26, 2007. Interment followed at St. Margaret's Cemetery. The Family would appreciate that in lieu of flowers donations may be made to: The Elk Valley Hospital Foundation and /or The Fernie Rotary Club for the development of the Rotary Park.