

# Family remembers generosity of opry co-owner

By LORI LOYD  
Contributor

On Dec. 22, Billy John Ingram, former co-owner of the Mesquite Opry, died in the home he shared with his wife, Janet McBride, in Forney.

Born July 3, 1931, in Mineola, Ingram developed a strong work ethic from an early age.

At 12, he worked at the Select Theatre. Before the U.S. Air Force earned its own branch of the military, Ingram joined the Army Air Corps at age 16 with his mother's signed permission, and served his country for five years. Ingram's professional career ended in retirement from Dallas County, where he served as a deputy for the Dallas County Sheriff's Department and, in 1985, was appointed to the position chief bailiff of the Dallas County Grand Jury.

As a divorced father of two boys, Gary and John Patrick, Ingram met his future wife, Janet McBride, in 1976 through friends.

"I was looking for a good, steady man — one that worked hard during the day and came home every night," McBride said.

After praying and enlisting friends' help, she was introduced to Ingram and the rest is history. From that day forward, Ingram had no intention of leaving, McBride



**Left:** Janet McBride holds a photo of her husband, John Ingram, while sitting in his favorite chair. **Right:** Ingram enlisted in the Army Air Corps at age 16 with his mother's permission. He served for five years. Ingram died Dec. 20 at age 79.



Photos submitted by LORI LOYD

said. Ingram influenced McBride in two major ways. He encouraged her to join the Dallas County Sheriff's Department as a deputy, which has provided her a dependable retirement. He also encouraged her to return to singing.

## At the opry

Her performing at the Grapevine Opry and Stephenville Opry led the couple to become half owners of the Mesquite Opry in 1981, and full owners by 1985, which they operated for 15 years.

Ingram became the soundman at the opry through trial by fire. He also was responsible for supplies, the budget, janitorial duties, supervising all building repairs, as well as comedy skits on stage. "I could not have run the opry without him," McBride said. Furthermore, John was a founding member and deacon of the Country Church held in the Mesquite Opry building and described as a good Christian man.

Ingram was also a positive influence on McBride's two teenage boys.

"John was probably the reason we both became police officers," said Mark

## Still giving

John Ingram donated his time with Janet McBride to the Buckaroo Club at the Cowtown Opry in Fort Worth.

Established in 1998, the purpose of the club is to mentor kids younger than 18 to learn and perform Texas heritage music derived from the cattle ranching culture. The Cowtown Opry has a scholarship fund, which benefits the Buckaroos to fund lessons, instruments, equipment and college.

Ingram continued giving, even in death, by donating his body to the UT Southwestern Medical School. No memorial service was held.

## DONATIONS

In lieu of flowers, donations may be given to the Cowtown Opry's Buckaroo Scholarship Fund at 131 E. Exchange Ave. #140, Fort Worth, TX 76164-8200. For more information, call 817-366-9675.

McBride, who was 15 years old when John and Janet married. "He always set a great example — went to church, and did things with dignity."

After retiring from Dallas County and selling the opry, the couple settled into a busy retirement of traveling the country and abroad to festivals where they performed, and not always for pay.

*Lori Loyd is a frequent neighborsgo.com contributor.*

## CAMPUS LIFE

# Balch Springs city officials donate \$1,500 to UNT Dallas

By DAVID PORTER  
Contributor

Leaders with the city of Balch Springs made a donation to the University of North Texas at Dallas on Jan. 4 as seed money for a conference the school is planning.

Balch Springs Mayor Carrie Gordon, Type A president Debbie Zanolini, Type B president David Roffino, and director of the city's Economic Development Commission John Hubbard presented a check for \$1,500 to UNT Dallas president John Ellis Price. The money will help fund a community economic development conference the univer-

sity is planning for later this spring.

The conference is intended as a forum to discuss and launch the "community-university partnerships" UNT Dallas hopes will become an integral part of the university's future, Price said.

"The city recognizes the importance of universities in economic development, and we wanted to be a part of supporting UNT Dallas," Hubbard said. "We think it's important that we have a partnership with the university."

*David Porter contributes to neighborsgo.com on behalf of the University of North Texas at Dallas.*



Photo submitted by DAVID PORTER

**Balch Springs city officials** David Roffino, Mayor Carrie Gordon, Debbie Zanolini and John Hubbard, present a check to University of North Texas at Dallas president John Ellis Price (center) on Jan. 4.