

Ralph E. Birk, 78 of Peru died on December 27, 2008 at Dukes Memorial Hospital after an accident and extended illness. Ralph was born in St. Joseph County, Ind., on Oct. 6, 1930, the son of Ralph Clayton Birk and Helena Mae (Fisher) Birk. Both preceded him in death.

On Aug. 1, 1954, he married Susan Schaefer and his wife of 54 years survives. He was a 1948 graduate of Lapaz High School in Lapaz, IN, served in the Indiana National Guard from 1948 to 1951 and went on to serve in the US Army during the Korean Conflict from 1951 to 1953. During the war, the Army was in dire need of men who could type and he had taken typing in high school and so the Army stationed him in Japan.

He worked for Associates Investment in South Bend, IN from right after graduation to 1966 (except for his military service) in their data processing and computer departments. In 1966, he and Susan purchased the One Hour Cleaners in Peru, IN and moved from Plymouth, IN in 1967. He founded Miami Computer Services, Inc. in July 1968, and worked there until his retirement in 2006.

As a teenager, he helped his dad farm with work horses on the family farm. Only when he went off to service did his dad finally buy a tractor. Being born in the Chinese Zodiac Year of the Horse, he lived out his dream of owning, breeding and racing Standardbreds such as FORTIS T, 3, 1:56.4M; BADFELLA T, 7, 1:54.4S \$259,972; COSMIC ORDER T, 2, 1:58.1F \$193,815; CHIEF SILVERHEELS P, 6, 1:50.1S \$256,635; AB SPUR P, 6, 1:52.1M; LADY HI HO P, 5, 1:54.0M; ON MY WAY; P, 3, 1:54.0M and etc. for the past 20 years.

Two sons survive - Christopher Birk of Peru and Alan Birk (wife June) of Phoenix, Ariz. One grandson, Regan Birk, also survives as do several nieces and nephews. A brother, Robert Birk (wife Jan) of Roann, IN, and three sisters: Dorothy Woolley of Plymouth, IN, Esther Paege (husband Harry) of South Bend, IN and Norma Dunnuck (husband Devon) of Claypool, IN, also survive. He was preceded in death by his parents, a sister Eleanor Lowman and a brother, Larry Birk.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Bunker Hill United Methodist Church (PO Box 487, Bunker Hill, IN 46914) or the Grissom Air Museum (1000 W Hoosier Blvd Peru, IN 46970).