



Fern L. Bonifer

August 19, 1927 - September 21, 2020

DATELINE: Ireland, Indiana

Fern Bonifer, age 93, of Ireland, Indiana, passed away the morning of Monday, September, 21, 2020 at the home of her daughter, Anne Bonifer Mehringer. On September 8, she had fallen in her home and suffered a head injury, and spent her heroic final days in the company of loved ones before her spirit moved on.

Fern Louise Henke was born in her family's home in Stendal, Indiana, on Aug 19, 1927, the daughter of Marvin and Milda Henke. She expressed her vivid imagination at an early age with her three imaginary childhood friends, Hugo, Sophie and Roseadale. Her favorite pet was a dairy cow she named Whistle-Whistle. She gave names like Green Apples and Daisy Gold to her dresses.

A 1946 graduate of Huntingburg High school, Fern was a pioneering professional woman. Her lightning-fast shorthand and typing skills earned her a job as the court reporter for the Dubois County Circuit Court, and a staff position with circuit court judge Eldo Wood.

In 1952, she married Robert Lee Bonifer. Bob and Fern raised six children and produced a long-running series of adventures on their family farm southwest of Ireland. As Co-Owner and Chief Troubleshooter for Bonifer Enterprises, she deftly managed businesses that included: farming; farm equipment sales;

long-haul trucking; manufacture and sales of Fantastic Pig Feed; thoroughbred racing; and, most famously, Clover Leaf Park & Riding Stable, a family-operated theme park built around re-habilitated horses. And she never even liked horses. That she managed to see it through was proof of the unconditional love she had for her husband and her family.

In addition to all that, Fern had a busy social and community life. 93 years was barely enough to contain it all.

She quilted, crocheted and sewed, and at age 83, in partnership with her daughter, launched Fern Fashion to make and sell aprons on Etsy and at local craft shows. In 2020, she cut fabric for over 10,000 Covid masks her daughter and friends sewed and sold.

Fern was a lector and eucharistic minister at St. Mary Church in Ireland where she was a longtimer parishoner; she was a member of the BPW; sang with the Singing Seniors at local assisted living centers; bowled with her team, The Rubies, in a Tuesday Morning Women's Bowling league; served as a teacher's aide at 10th Street School in Jasper; was a member of Women of the Moose; served as President of the VFW Women's Auxiliary Post 673, where she got photos of all the past Presidents installed at the post; she was active in the Jasper High School Band Parents, and every year for 39 consecutive years presented the Brian Bonifer Award to the band's Outstanding Jazz Musician at the annual band banquet.

She and her husband were early adopters of CB radios. In the 1960s, they build their own, and operated under the call letters, '18Q3362.' Later, in the 1970s, when the CB radios got popular, Fern's handle was 'Delta Dawn.'

She played piano and co-hosted bonfire sing-alongs, and big family reunions on the family farm.

She was a regular at the Habig Center in Jasper, where she consistently relieved other seniors of their betting money in games of poker and Scrabble.

On Friday and Sunday nights she could be almost always found at a bingo game, and could be talked into a visit to the casino in French Lick on five minutes' notice.

She was an amazing cook. Her oatmeal cookies were legendary. She caused frequent squabbles at the dinner table over who got to eat the end pieces of her French bread.

She was a prodigious finder of four-leaf covers.

Fern was preceded in death by her grandson, Luke Mehringer, in 2008, her husband Bob, in 2005, and her son, Brian, in 1980.

She is survived by a sister, Jeanne (Joe) Rust of Holland and five children: Michael of Los Angeles; Mark of Indianapolis; Anne (Bucket) Mehringer of Ireland; Alan (Marilyn) of Tampa; Beth (Carl) Underwood of Ireland; eight grandchildren; and seven great-grandchildren.

A Mass of Catholic Burial for Fern Bonifer will be held at 10:00 AM on Friday, September 25, 2020, in St. Mary Catholic Church in Ireland, Indiana, with burial to follow in the church cemetery.

A visitation will be held from 2:00-8:00 PM on Thursday, September 24, 2020, at the Becher-Kluesner Downtown Chapel in Jasper, Indiana, and one hour before services on Friday from 9:00-10:00 AM at St. Mary Church. The Women of the Moose hold will a short memorial at 6:00 PM on Thursday at the Becher-Kluesner Chapel. Masks and social distancing will be required.

Online condolences can be made at www.becherkluesner.com

Memorial contributions can be made to the Women of the Moose, the Luke Mehringer Endowment Fund, the Jasper High School Jazz Band, or to a favorite charity.

Cemetery Details

St. Mary's Catholic Church Cemetery

2829 North 500 West
Jasper, IN 47546
(812) 482-4071

Previous Events

Visitation

SEP **24.** 2:00 PM - 8:00 PM (ET)

Becher & Kluesner Funeral Home - Downtown
214 East 7th Street
Jasper, IN 47546
(812) 482-4141
email@becherkluesner.com

Visitation

SEP **25.** 9:00 AM - 10:00 AM (ET)

St. Mary's Catholic Church Cemetery
2829 North 500 West
Jasper, IN 47546
(812) 482-4071

Mass of Christian Burial

SEP **25**. 10:00 AM (ET)

St. Mary's Catholic Church
2829 N 500 W
Ireland, IN

Tribute Wall



“ *Fern L. Bonifer*

January 01, 2023 at 10:54 AM



“ *Gone but never forgotten!*



Donna Mike Linette - September 29, 2020 at 06:39 PM



“ *So sorry for your loss. I always enjoyed playing cards and bingo with her. She would light up the room with smile 😊*

sharon buschkoetter - September 26, 2020 at 03:28 PM



“ *Sending my love to the Bonifer family at the passing of a great lady*
❤️

Cindy Seger - September 24, 2020 at 06:59 AM



“ *Going to miss you. Used to talk on CB.*



Brian Bachman - September 23, 2020 at 02:24 PM

CH

“ Thoughts and prayers for the family. Fern was an amazing woman in many ways!
Cheryl Knies and family

Cheryl - September 23, 2020 at 12:48 PM

AC

“ So sorry for your loss. She was the sweetest lady. Always had time to talk to you and her smile was infectious. My Mom would always speak of her at the Habig center. The both enjoyed their cards and bingo. She will be sadly missed. 🙏🙏

Anna Carrico - September 23, 2020 at 08:02 AM

MD

“ I learned to know Fern when we both worked at 10th Street School many years ago. She was such a wonderful lady and such a kind person. Sincere sympathy to the Bonifer family. You had a special mother. Marilyn Dittmer

Marilyn Dittmer - September 22, 2020 at 09:42 PM

TW

“ Tina/Brent Wehr sent a virtual gift in memory of Fern L. Bonifer



Tina/Brent Wehr - September 22, 2020 at 05:22 PM

GS

“ We will all miss Fern, she touched so many hearts
Randy and Gwen Schneider

Gwen Schneider - September 22, 2020 at 03:49 PM