



## Thurman Charles Riffle

May 29, 1918 - October 24, 2007

Thurman Riffle was a very modest man, yet proud of all his family; and his business cards he handed out reflected just that: "Thurman C. Riffle, Retired Gentleman Farmer, Pa, Grandpa, Great Grandpa." He was very family oriented and worked hard all his life to be a good provider. Thurman was a gentle and caring man, who treated everyone he met with the utmost degree of respect and honesty. In 1918, life in the United States was very different from what it is today. Things such as women's right to vote, long distance travel and communications, and workplace rights and safety were not realities. For Charles A. Riffle and his wife, Bessie (Mendenhall), living in Greenville, Ohio, daily concerns were not of voting rights and workplace safety, but rather of providing a home for themselves and their children. On May 29, 1918, their family got a little larger with the arrival of their fifth child, a son they named Thurman Charles. The Riffle home would eventually ring with the joy and busyness of fifteen children. With eight sisters and six brothers, Thurman had plenty of opportunity to create unforgettable childhood memories. His father worked hard as a horse trader to support their family while Bessie undoubtedly had her hands full at home. Because of where they lived in Ohio, tornados were very prevalent, so the family moved to Michigan in 1923, settling in the Fountain area in Mason County. Thurman's father began farming around the area, basically wherever work could be found, which meant the family made many moves. But through it all, Thurman always found ways to have fun. He loved to fly fish and play baseball on the Fountain team as the catcher. Like many young men of the time, Thurman only attended school through the ninth grade. As a teenager, Thurman attended many dances in Fountain and Walhalla, and on one particular evening of dancing, he met a lovely young lady named Beatrice Alice Marrison. The two literally became even closer when Beatrice's brother, Maynard, married Thurman's sister, Beulah in 1935, but it is also where their romance blossomed. After a two year courtship, Thurman and Beatrice were happily married with Maynard and Beulah as attendants at the home of Rev. Frederick Stewart on January 2, 1937. Over the next several years, the couple filled their home with the joy and laughter of four children: Norman, Keith, Ivan and Debbie. Like his father, Thurman worked as a farmer around the Fountain area. After some time, he purchased a farm on Tuttle Road, and later a farm on North Custer Road, which his son, Keith purchased and operated, and his grandson Bruce

operates today. They did everything from dairy and grain farming to growing beans for Stokely's Cannery. Although busy in the home raising four children, Beatrice helped along with the farm, including haying, driving the tractor or their first Ford pickup truck Thurman named Wheezic. Besides farming, Thurman also worked as a mail carrier for a time before taking a job with the Mason County Road Commission in 1953. He did everything from driving the truck and snowplowing to eventually becoming a mechanic. Thurman retired from the Road Commission after 27 years of service on January 1, 1981. A real jack-of-all-trades, there wasn't anything that Thurman couldn't do, and he was meticulous with every task he took on. He had remodeled the old farmhouse, and along the way he taught his sons how to fix and maintain things, which was very handy around the farm. Thurman was also a skilled woodworker, and built many beautiful bookcases, desks and dressers for the family over the years. And of course, Thurman liked to be in charge, to give the commands, though patience was not one of his strong points, because he always wanted answers now! Time together as a family was always important to Thurman and Beatrice, and just about every Sunday they would head out on a road trip to Northern Michigan, and along the way, they would stop at a roadside park for a picnic lunch. This is what made Thurman the happiest – spending a day with his family. It wasn't until later in life that Thurman softened and became more romantic with his beloved wife, Beatrice. His family later found letters he wrote to Beatrice early in their marriage while in the Tuttle Road farm house. On the occasion of their 50th anniversary, their children sent them to stay at the Grand Hotel on Mackinaw Island, which they both enjoyed immensely. They also enjoyed taking their first airplane ride to Florida with their daughter, Debbie, where they visited Disney World and saw the Atlantic Ocean for the first time, which just fascinated Beatrice. Later on, when Beatrice's health began to fail, Thurman tenderly cared for her every need until she died on April 13, 2001, after 64 years of marriage. Shortly thereafter, Thurman took an interest in John Deere memorabilia and had accumulated a very large collection, which he proudly showed to anyone who came to visit. His daughter, Debbie, even took him to the John Deere Museum in Moline, Illinois, where Thurman was completely captivated with the newer and bigger machinery. Thurman always kept himself busy doing something. He enjoyed visiting Debbie in Aurora and tinkering around her house or getting together with the family and playing cribbage, dominoes and Uno with the grandkids. Family was undoubtedly the cornerstone of Thurman's life, and he took many opportunities to return to Greenville for family reunions and to spend the holidays. And although he may have lived many miles away, he never forgot to send birthday cards to everyone in the family with his love and well wishes. Thurman was a kind, honest and hardworking man, known for his big heart and his deep commitment to his family. He placed his loved ones at the center of his life, and in their company you could always find a big smile on his face, beaming with pride and joy. His legacy of love and dedication leaves his loved ones with wonderful memories and a

strong foundation to look to for comfort. Thurman Charles Riffle died on Wednesday morning, October 24, 2007, at the Ludington Woods Living Center. He was preceded in death by his wife, Beatrice; son, Norman Riffle, in September 1999; sisters: Beulah Marrison, Nina Riffle and Glendora Ray; his brothers: Russell, Roger who died in WW II, H.B. "Bud" and James Riffle. He will be lovingly remembered by his children: Keith (Beth) Riffle of Scottville, Ivan (Paulette) Riffle of Howell, and Debbie (Frank) Turner of Aurora, IL; his daughter-in-law, Lois Riffle of Fountain; his grandchildren: Candy (Kelly) Lemire, Norman (Lisa) Riffle Jr., Marc (Deb) Riffle, Kevin (Carol) Riffle, Bruce (Kim) Riffle, Barbra (Alan) Wills, Chris (Cathy) Riffle, Pam (Bruce) Rose, Stephanie (Jason) Wayman, Michelle (Ben) Koliqi, Andrew (Melissa) Turner, and Alicia Turner; his great-grandchildren: Chad, Holly, Sydney, Logan, Rebekah, Hope, Alaina, Kelly Jr., Naaman, Zachary, Erik, Elise, Jesse, Sam, Autumn, Trinity, Tristin, Justin, Nathan, Brandon, Lorraine, Kara, Jared, Andrew, Seth, Sadie, Caleb, Gentiana, Viosa, and Adriana; his brothers and sisters: Thelma Stark of Custer, Betty ( Bill) Courtland of Scottville, Marguerite Renwick of Alabama, Beatrice Riffle of Ludington, Charles (Sadie) Riffle Jr., Curtis (Ruth) Riffle, all of Custer, and Corinne (Joe) Lavas of Fountain; his sister-in-law, Marian Riffle of Ludington; and numerous nieces and nephews. Funeral services will be held for Thurman at 2:00 p.m. on Sunday, October 28, at Bachelor Evangelical Covenant Church with his pastor, the Rev. Norman Letsinger, officiating. Burial will follow at Fountain Cemetery. Friends may meet with his family for a time of visitation on Saturday, October 27, from 4:00 - 9:00 p.m. at the Stephens Funeral Home in Scottville. Those who wish may make memorial contributions to the Bachelor Evangelical Covenant Church, or the American Diabetes Association. Funeral arrangements are being cared for by the Wyman Funeral & Cremation Services ~ Stephens Funeral Home.