

**William (Bill) Birk**

Bill was born in Huntingburg, Indiana on May 4, 1930—just as the depression was getting started, and a little more than a year after the Brownsburg Lions Club was chartered. Huntingburg is a small town close to Jasper and was so-named because of the abundance of wildlife in the area.

His mother was a farm girl and a strong catholic. That qualified Bill to be a church server. His dad owned a grocery store. He had three younger sisters. The Birk children walked to the local school, which was about a mile away. The school had grades one through eight with about 50-60 kids per grade. Bill got his first bicycle in high school.

Trains passed through Huntingburg several times each day on their way to supply the industries in Princeton. In high school Bill liked biology, especially the study of bugs. He claims that he was never good enough for regular sports. He was a boy scout, and scouting was lots of fun. He was visiting an aunt on December 7, 1941, when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. He was in scout camp on D-Day in 1944.

Following graduation from high school he worked for a grocery store for a couple of years; he delivered groceries using a business model that pre-dates today by about 65 years.

In the early 1950's one of Bill's sisters introduced him to Doris, who was to become his future wife. She lived in Schnellville, about 13 miles away, and they were married in October of 1954. Seven children were to follow.

Bill joined the Army in 1951 and his army experience took him Sandia Base, New Mexico, where he attended a class on atomic energy. Then he was off to White Sands. He attended the Adjuvant General School for personnel in Indianapolis.

At Ft. Bragg, North Carolina, he was the personnel officer in charge of selecting and educating 200 people in the first atomic artillery unit. He described the field piece as a "very big gun". Bill was a Corporal, and ultimately turned his command over to a Lieutenant. The atomic artillery unit shipped out to Germany, but Bill's enlistment was nearly finished, and so he finished his service stateside. When he left the army, Bill worked for Allison as a helicopter parts administrator. Helicopters were in demand by the army, and so the Army became Bill's largest customer. He ultimately covered helicopters, aircraft and diesel. He moved to

transmission parts in 1958 and helped Allison move to a computer based parts supply program. He retired from Allison in 1985.

Bill joined the Lions in 1968 and over the years served as Chairman of Fruit Sales, Chairman of Christmas Tree Sales and Club President. The winters were cold and working the fruit sales and Christmas tree sales was a brutal task. He worked with Lions Dick McClod and Ted Ward to build a trailer that could be used for outside sales. for many years. He remembers that local business leaders like the automotive dealers Blanck and Carson took their assigned shifts during the fruit and tree sales.

As he worked with the Lions, Bill became interested in helping the hard of hearing through a District Program. In 1979 Bill at the State Convention in South Bend he was begging the Lions of Indiana to provide support for the hard of hearing. A member of the audience proposed that Speech and Hearing become a State project. The motion passed and in 1980 Bill Birk became the first Chairman of Indiana Lions Speech and Hearing, Inc. He served in that capacity until 1983, when he resigned to become District Governor.

Bill is a Melvin Jones Fellow, the first Richard T. Miyamoto Fellow, and a W.P. Woods Fellow, recognition that goes only to those who have answered the call of service in exemplary fashion. His den contains hard proof that he is a Lion of action and service with influence far beyond the confines of Brownsburg.

While the Lions Club has been a primary focus, Bill is also a member of the American Legion and the Knights of Columbus. He served a term on the Brownsburg Park Board, and was the first courier for the Hendricks County Bank.

Bill and Doris have 7 children, 14 grandchildren, and 10 great grandchildren. When asked about the future, Bill is optimistic. His forward vision, has made him valuable as a soldier, a citizen and a Lion.