

# OBITUARIES



## HELEN MARIE KITTS CROOK

Helen Marie Kitts Crook gained her heavenly wings on January 1, 2026. She was born on September 15, 1932, in Lacon, IL, to Elbert Bruce Kitts and Martha Marie Shafer Kitts.

Helen graduated in 1950 from Mid County High School in Varna, IL. She married Alford Marion Crook on November 16, 1952, in Putnam, IL. Alford preceded her in death on July 15, 1964.

Helen worked in retail most of her life, with her final working years spent at Bernardi Foods in Toluca, IL.

Helen lived a life defined by strength, resilience, and quiet determination, never allowing loss to define her. She was known for her humor, her deep love for family and her dogs, and her enthusiastic - sometimes insistent - gift giving. Helen firmly believed that if she offered you something, you were taking it.

Helen spoke with a gentle bluntness that was always polite, sincere, and unmistakably her own. She adored her children and grandchildren and was immensely proud of them.

Helen is survived by her children, Marsha Lindstrom (Dale Cox) of Pekin, IL; Doug Crook of Lacon; Kathy Thierer of Lacon; and daughter-in-law Diane Crook of Lacon. She is also survived by her grandchildren: Matt Curtis (Erica) of Edelstein; Derek Taylor of Lacon; Stuart Thierer (Coral) of Chillicothe, IL; Andrew Crook of Carrboro, NC; and Stephanie Hoesly (Kevin) of Lacon. She was a proud great-grandmother to Ronin Curtis, Brooks Toren, and Lin-

coln Barnard.

She is further survived by her sister, Georgann Borngasser of Fairbury, IL, and her sister-in-law, Marion Kitts of Lacon.

She was preceded in death by her parents; her siblings Martha Kitts Pawlowski, Wilma Kitts Koch, Dale Kitts, and James Kitts; and her son, Norman Crook.

Her legacy lives on in the laughter, honesty, and love she shared so freely with those around her. "We will endure a lifetime of missing you for the privilege of loving you."

A service will be held at Lenz Funeral Home in Lacon, on January 10, 2026. Services will begin at 11:00 a.m., with visitation one hour prior. The family will hold a private burial at a later date in Putnam, where Helen will be laid to rest alongside her husband, Alford.

In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to The Ark Animal Shelter of Lacon, or the Lacon-Sparland Ambulance Service. Online condolences can be left at lenzmemorialhome.com



## BARNEY JOE SCHUPP

Barney Joe Schupp, 84, of rural Lacon, IL died on December 29, 2025 at OSF Saint Francis Medical Center in Peoria, IL. Born on April 10, 1941 on the family farm to the late Barney and Oma (Renaa) Schupp. Joe served his country as an MP in the United States Army.

Joe returned to take over the family farm and to become an Angus cattleman. He would travel to the National Western Stock Show in Denver almost every year. With

his dry wit and no nonsense conversation, Joe was usually the chairman of most coffee tables at the restaurants in town. Ready to do anything to help anyone who is honest and hard-working, he made many friends over the years.

Joe is survived by his son Tony (Teresa) McClain of Greenville, IL; daughter-in-law Carrie Schupp of Lacon; sister Barb Strong of Lacon; grandchildren Cody, Mackenna, Samantha, Toby and Trystan; his girlfriend Julie Weide of Chillicothe; and many nieces & nephews. He was preceded in death by his son Joe; brother James; and sisters Karen Jason, Pat Strong, and Mary Matern.

Cremation rites have been accorded and there will be no service at this time. Joe's remains will be scattered at the family farm at a later date. Online condolences can be left at lenzmemorialhome.com.



## RANDAL L. FITSCHEN

Randal L. Fitschen, age 67, of Peoria, passed away on Saturday, December 27, 2025 at his home.

Randy was born on January 25, 1958 in Spring Valley, IL to the late Loel George and Betty Ann (Mast) Fitschen. He married Ellen Seelye on May 1, 2000 in Las Vegas, NV.

Surviving are his wife, Ellen; his children, April (Darron) Phillips of Holly Springs, NC, Adreanne (Dean) Mitchell of Mackinaw, Nicholas (Kelsy) Fitschen of Lacon, IL, Nicole Fitschen of Peoria Heights, IL and Heather Seelye of Dunlap, IL; his stepchildren, Brandy (Mark) Bumbalough of Manito, IL and Crystal Tower of Greenview, IL; his grandchildren, Anjelina, Sam, Maddie, Katherine and Ellie; his step-grandchildren, Trinity, Marcus, Dakota, Christopher, Brighton; and his sister, Lisa (Kevin) Morgan of Washburn, IL.

Randy graduated from Washburn High School and was a painter and sandblaster for almost 50 years. He enjoyed races of any kind, but especially drag racing. He even helped with the pit crew for Jeff Cochran Racing. Randy also enjoyed boating and snowmobiling.

A visitation was held on Friday, January 2, 2026 from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. at Weber-Hurd Funeral Home in Chillicothe with a service held at 7:00 p.m. Cremation rites were accorded following the services. Memorials in Randy's name may be made to Illinois Cancer Care.

## Upcoming Putnam Co Library Program To Highlight IL Centennial Soil Archive Project

Ever wonder how our soil has changed over the last 100 years? Discover the incredible story behind the University of Illinois Soil Lab's Centennial Soil Archive Project. A key piece of Illinois' agricultural heritage is a world-class, one-of-a-kind soil sample archive collected when local soils were first surveyed. As early as 1899, soil types across the state were mapped by sampling fields to three-foot depth and characterizing the distinct soil layers. Predecessors had the foresight to keep records of sampling locations and to store these soil samples on the University of Illinois' Urbana-Champaign campus.

Join us at the Putnam County

Library - Granville Branch (214 S. McCoy St., Granville, IL 61326) on January 13, 2026, from 6:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m. to learn how this historical treasure helps us understand everything from the impact of farming practices to the effects of climate change. Participants will also learn about the resampling efforts going on across the state and how you can get involved. Register online at [go.illinois.edu/CentennialSoils](http://go.illinois.edu/CentennialSoils).

If you need an accommodation to participate, please contact Emily Hansen at [emhansen@illinois.edu](mailto:emhansen@illinois.edu) or 815-224-0896. Early requests are strongly encouraged to allow sufficient time to meet your access needs.

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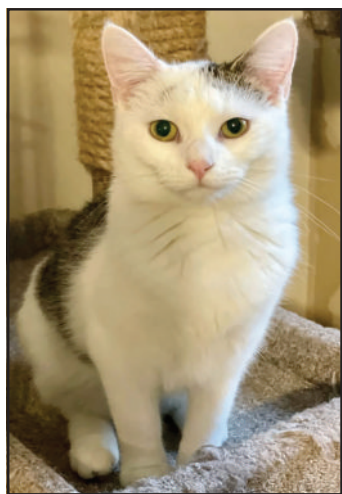
## PETS OF THE WEEK

For more information call The A.R.K. 477 State Route 26, Lacon, at 309-246-4275, or email us at [arkanimalshelter@yahoo.com](mailto:arkanimalshelter@yahoo.com).



### Diva

Diva is a happy one-year old Great Dane mix. She is silly and friendly with everyone and gets along well with other dogs too. (She goes out in a play group with her best pal, Ocean.) This sweet girl has a wonderful temperament, is easy to fall in love with and she knows some basic commands. She is also spayed, micro-chipped and current on all her shots.



### SCRABBLE

Scrabble is a beautiful young white/tabby girl who lives in Molly's room at the shelter. Her pretty pink nose and bushy tabby tail add to her gentle beauty. She is calm, content and sociable with the other kitties in her room. She is also spayed, micro-chipped and current on all her shots.

**Local ownership.  
Local decisions.**

**Local People**

Denise Salisbury was born & raised in Lacon, and is proud to serve her neighbors every day!



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