

DAILY JOURNAL

KANKAKEE, ILLINOIS | FAMILY OWNED SINCE 1903

Longtime Cullom balloon pilot killed while canoeing

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CULLOM -- He was as much an institution in Cullom as the annual balloon ascension he made possible.

But Hoosier balloonist Peter Krieg's string of 30 ascensions ended June 23 on a West Virginia stretch of the Ohio River. The Cullom "balloon man" drowned during a solo canoe trip long planned in celebration of his retirement.

Krieg, 65, will be remembered as a polite and sprightly hot air balloon pilot who's cheerful nature and Hoosier civility added greatly to the village's celebration of its 19th Century tradition.

Krieg even managed an ascension or two in the village's old "smoke balloon," a relic of the 1890s and the principal mode of ascent up through the 1950.

Krieg, of Indianapolis, an engineer, outdoorsman and adventurer had been the balloonist for the ascension at Cullom Homecoming for the past 30 years, and was slated to appear in 2002 for the traditional lift-off. Memorial services were Tuesday in First Friends Church. Burial was in Crown Hill Cemetery.

Surviving are his wife, Marcia Ahrens Krieg; two daughters, Lisa Ann Krieg and Christy Ballweg Krieg; one brother, Frederick Krieg; and two grandsons.

A 1959 graduate of Purdue University where he studied mechanical engineering, he had been an engineer and later started his own company, Krieg Engineering Sales.

He built sailboats and tried them out in the Atlantic, raced iceboats, drove a VW bus across North Africa, and was a parachutist and airplane pilot. He built his own smoke balloon. At the time of his death, he is believed to be the last person still actively flying such a craft.

A veteran of the Army Reserve, he was a member of the First Congregational United Church of Christ.

Memorials may be made to the Indiana Chapter of The Nature Conservancy, the Indianapolis Museum of Art or YMCA Camp Eberhart, Camper Scholarships, 10300 Corey Lake Drive, Three Rivers MI 49093.