



Glen Abrams in the kitchen of his farm in New Castle, Ind., in 1999. (Family photo)

May 26, Indiana

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Glen Abrams was born on a mountain in Kentucky with the help of a doctor who arrived on horseback. As a young boy in the early 1940s, he lived with his family in a wooden house with a tin roof and no electricity or plumbing. Every day, he walked to a nearby creek to fetch water.

“It was a hardscrabble life,” his wife, Elizabeth Abrams, recalled.

That hardship drove Abrams to earn a college degree later in life and go on to build an industrial lighting company in New Castle, Ind., northeast of Indianapolis.

Abrams, a lifelong horse lover, died May 26 at the Stonebrooke Rehabilitation Center in New Castle. He was 78.

Abrams was born in Kentucky and raised in Richmond, Ind. He attended Eastern Kentucky University for a year in 1960, but dropped out when his parents couldn’t afford the tuition.

He took on a factory job and met his future wife, whom he married in 1965. Seven years after he dropped out of college, Abrams decided to pick up his studies. So did his wife. They both earned education degrees at Ball State University in Indiana. Abrams taught high school and then opened the lighting company.

“We had a division of labor,” his wife recalled. “I certainly did not want to talk to customers. He enjoyed talking with people.”

Abrams told both his daughters that he expected them to attend college, said Katherine Fleming, his oldest daughter. Fleming graduated from Indiana University’s Kelley School of Business. Her sister, Angelita Abrams-Rains, earned two master’s degrees from Ball State and a third from Indiana State University.

“They knew what it was like to be a have-not, and they did not want their daughters to be have-nots,” Fleming said of her parents. “They’re two of the hardest workers I’ve ever known.”

In 1976, Abrams and his wife moved to a farm in New Castle, where Abrams managed dozens of horses. He gave away his last two, Cleopatra and Resurrection Sunday, when Alzheimer’s disease prevented him from riding any longer.

“I just remember him sitting, crying,” his wife said. “In a way, it ended a very large portion of his life. He had a couple more years [on the farm] after that, but his Alzheimer’s was getting worse and worse, and it got to the point that he wasn’t talking about his horses anymore.”

— *Eleanna Eimer*