

Half Staff – Alfred L. Birch, 85

July 8, 2007

Alfred L. Birch, 85, husband of Shirley (Jennings) Birch, died on Sunday, July 8, 2007 at the Addison Gilbert Hospital in Gloucester. Al was born on Feb. 5, 1922 in North Adams, son of the late Matthew and Margaret (Rochford) Birch. He attended Stamford High School and graduated from Stamford Trade School, Stamford, Connecticut.

On March 4, 1941, Al enlisted in the U.S. Navy. He served on the aircraft carrier USS Lexington from October 1941 until her sinking during the battle of the Coral Seas. Subsequently, as one of the original crew members and plank holders, Al served aboard the battleship USS Alabama. He was chief fire controlman until the conclusion of the war. After the war, he was assigned duty assisting in the “mothballing” of the USS Alabama, the USS Massachusetts and the USS Barnwell. Al was honorably discharged in January 1947.

After leaving the Navy, Al attended the University of Connecticut, earning his degree in electrical engineering.

He was employed at Western Electric Co., North Andover, for 29 years as an engineer and as department head of development engineering.

In June 1951, Al and Shirley (Jennings) married. In June 1955, their daughter, Debra was born.

While living in Groveland, Al served as chairman of the Conservation Commission and was president of the Groveland PTA while his daughter attended grade school.

Al was known by family and friends as being “able to do anything”. No problem or project was too daunting. This was most evident when he decided to build the Minoan, a 36-foot, ferroconcrete ketch in his backyard. Featured in Life Magazine in September 1970 and 10 years in the making, Al’s project became a highlight in the lives of family, friends, “his” engineers and even strangers from all over the states. The Minoan was moored in and sailed out of Rockport harbor for many years.

Al will be remembered for his fairness and his willingness to give of his time, knowledge, and assistance. He always gave his best.

Al is survived by his wife, Shirley; his daughter, Debra Legg; and his granddaughter, Amanda Legg, all of Rockport; his sister, Marion Marshall of South Carolina; his brother-in-law, Norman Jennings; three nephews; three nieces; and many special friends. He was predeceased by his brother, Thomas Birch; his sister-in-law, Elsie Jennings; his brother-in-law, George Marshall; and a nephew.

ARRANGEMENTS: Honoring Al’s wishes, there will be no services. The burial will be private. Contributions may be made in Al’s memory to the USS Alabama Foundation, P.O. Box 65, Mobile, AL 36601. Arrangements are by the Burgess & Mackey Funeral Home, 201 Main St., Rockport.