

On a snowy New England afternoon, Mark Dana Ralston, 67, passed away at home with his family by his side.

Mark was born on a clear September night in Columbus Ohio, 1951. He began life in a small town nestled in a bend of the Ohio River. His grandfather owned the town general store and watching him fly missions to resupply the store shelves sparked his lifelong love affair with flight. He grew up with his father Vic, mother Evelyn and sister Vicki.

As a child, his family moved to Circleville where he became a vibrant part of the community, relishing summers as a lifeguard and winning swim competitions at Ted Lewis Park. He continued his athleticism in high school, adding wrestling and football to his repertoire. Upon graduation, he traveled to Colorado and attended the Air Force Academy where he learned to fly and found skiing, the sport that would last him forever.

After college, he stayed in the Air Force to teach flight instructors and jet pilots their craft. Then he worked as a professional pilot at Eastern Airlines, followed by 25 years at American Airlines.

Speed was in his blood: from cars to planes to skiing. He built it into his life, literally assembling an experimental airplane in the basement, which he flew for more than 20 years, fulfilling a dedicated career as an airline pilot and a lifetime of aerobatic flight.

He retired in 2016 to focus on what was most important to him: traveling with his wife, flying his homebuilt airplane and training for competitive ski racing. Skiing took him all over the world and though he trained all year, he always thought he could be doing "a little bit better."

In June of 2018, he was diagnosed with lung cancer and began treatment. On March 10, at age 67, he lost the fight.

He is survived by his wife, Bonnie, his son Matt (Italy, USAF), and daughter, Rachel (California).

He was a good, honest man who worked hard to improve both himself and the lives of the people around him. He was someone you could depend on. He will be dearly missed.