December 31, 2013

The Life of Jean P. Ries

• Jean P. Ries, 95, Sioux Falls, formerly Groton, died Friday, December 27, 2013, at home after a long battle with cancer.

• Visitation will be January 1, 2014, from 5-7pm, with a prayer service at 6:30pm, at Heartland Funeral Home, Brandon, SD. Funeral Mass will begin at 11 a.m., January 2, at Holy Spirit Catholic Church, Sioux Falls, with Fr. Morgan officiating. Inurnment will take place at a later date at the Black Hills National Cemetery. A Memorial services will also take place at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church at a later date.

• Jean was born on March 4, 1918 in Watertown, SD to Mary Elizabeth and John A Ries. He was the 15th of 17 children. He grew up in Watertown, and was the high school State Golf Champion for two years. He attended Northern State College where he met his future bride, Betty Mae Sieh.

• He was a decorated veteran of WW II and served in the US Army 147th field artillery unit from Aberdeen, SD. One of his biggest memories was leaving Pearl Harbor just 7 days before it was bombed. He was stationed in Darwin, Australia as well as New Guinea. He also recounted how they had guns, but each soldier only had 4 bullets… three for the Japanese, and one for themselves. Since the ammo was so limited and they could see the Japanese overhead, they were able to fool them by moving their camps often and driving back and forth over the road making it look like there were a lot more troops than there really were.

• After being honorably discharged, he returned to Aberdeen, and married Betty on January 11, 1945, in Groton, SD. They started their family while living in Watertown, where he worked at a dry cleaning business. After their first two daughters were born, they moved to a farm near Groton where he learned to love the land.… and more children. In total, they had 7 girls and "each one had a brother." He and Betty farmed and built a successful Grade A Dairy business for 32 years in rural Groton. The family was very involved in many different areas throughout the years, including the NFO, REA, St John the Baptist Catholic Church, American Legion, James Valley Telephone Cooperative, United Family Farmers and Catholic Rural Life. After he retired, they built a home at Tacoma Park. Betty passed away in 1980 before she could fully enjoy "the park place".

• Jean always enjoyed fishing and after Betty passed, he moved to the mega capital of walleye fishing…Akaska, SD !! He lived here for 15 years and was considered a "local". He fished full time and helped the Bauers make bottom bouncers in his spare time. He even made friends with a couple of hungry garter snakes. They

were always waiting for the spent bait he would flip in their direction.

• Over the years he had also renewed a past love…. Cooking! He interviewed for his first job when he was in his late 70"s! He was the camp cook at 2 different "goose camps", one at John &Odie West nearOnida, and at Big Bend Ranch near Pierre. It was here he perfected his caramel rolls and school day cookies, and made the best stew anyone has ever tasted! He loved Pheasant and Goose hunting, and especially the annual deer hunt in the Black Hills, where he would serve an awesome meal to MANY hunters!After retiring, he spent many months in Alaska with his college friend, Ned Pooley, and his son Jim, starting a new tradition of hunting and fishing. In his later years, he loveddeep sea fishing in Florida (with daughter Barbara) and walleye fishing.

• In 2001, he moved from Akaska to Sioux Falls into his daughter Collette's home. Collette said "This assisted living works out well for both of us…he assists me a lot!" He lived there comfortably for 13 years. She provided the very best care for him up to the time of his death. She had many overnight visitors, some at a moments notice. She referred to her home as the"half star hotel", but it was a 5 star experience to everyone else.

• He had lots of friends through the years and many adventures too. He loved traveling, and made numerous trips to Alaska, Florida, Omaha, Lincoln, Salt Lake City, Texas, Arizona, and Colorado. At the age of 90, he camped out in the Big Horn Mtns on a trip to Yellowstone, a place he never thought he would ever get to go… Nothing like an old geezer by an old geyser!

• He was excited to go to his daughter Jackie's retirement from the Navy Reserve in 2007. In 2009, he attended the decommissioning of the USS Kitty Hawk in Seattle. His grandson, Ross, was stationed on this aircraft carrier and participated in the decommissioning. A very proud Grandpa! In 2010, he was able to go on the Honor Flight for WW II Vets to Washington DC. with Collette, and had a wonderful time.

• His activities in the artillery unit robbed him of his hearing, but not his spirit. He also kidded people by saying he had aides…."yah, one for each ear!" He had a wonderful sense of humor and always accused his kids of "stealing his lines". He enjoyed a good warm can of beer, playing cards, singing German songs and "Pony Boy" to all the little children. He treated friends like family, and family like friends. There wasn't a person who he didn't love, respect, and honor…including the person reading this.

• He kept in pretty good physical shape…walking on the "dreadmill" ½ mile twice a day, even up to just a few days before he died. I guess he needed to keep up his strength as he continued to make and share cookies and rolls as fast as he could

make them. He had a bag ready to go for every visitor that came…and also shared with medical staff, St. Francis House, and for the Hospice Staff.

• Survivors include his brother Joe Ries from Reno, NV; Jackie Graves, Omaha, NE; Collette Gesinger of Sioux Falls; Barbara Anderson of Jacksonville, FL; Pam Nelson of Clarksville, TN; Pierrette (Bill) Lyons of Whitewood, SD; John (Janet) Ries of Elk Point, SD; Rene' (Mark) Hill of Salt Lake City, UT. He had 15 grandchildren and 20 great grandchildren, as well as numerous nieces and nephews.

• He was preceded in death by his parents, 15 brothers and sisters, his wife, Betty; daughter, Michele Reid; granddaughters, Stephanie Nissen and Rene' Gesinger; great granddaughter, Hailey Gesinger; son-in-law, Terry Gesinger; and his special friend, Marion Davies.

• In lieu of flowers, the family requests memorials be directed to Feeding South Dakota…. (www.feedingsouthdakota.org/) Please carry on the tradition.

• Online condolences at www.heartlandfunerals.com