



The Life of John Sieh

Memorial Mass of Christian Burial for John Sieh, 89, Aberdeen is 10 a.m., Wednesday, April 1, 2015 at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church with Father Mike Kelly, Celebrant. Inurnment at Groton Union Cemetery with military honors by Groton American Legion Post 39. John died Saturday, March 28, 2015 at Avera Mother Joseph Manor.

There will be a wake service at 7:00 pm, Tuesday, March 31 at the church in Groton.

John Sieh was born in Aberdeen, S.D., on November 26, 1925. He was raised on a farm 20 miles east-northeast of Aberdeen. He went to grade school at the 2-room Yorkville school and high school in Groton. One of his favorite classes was debate, but he also enjoyed 4-H.

He served in the Army and was honorably discharged from Ft. Smith, Arkansas.

After his military service, he went to work for the National Farmer's Union. He travelled extensively in Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas, finding all the best diners and restaurants in those states. This served the family well as they travelled years later on vacation. He always knew "a place with the best biscuits and

gravy," or any other type of food.

During his time with the National Farmer's Union, he met and married his wife of 29 years, Lois Ann Porter, who also worked with the organization. They were married in Beloit, Kan., in 1956.

They moved back to the family farm in 1957 to take the land over from his father, William J. Sieh, and to raise their family.

During the late 1960s and '70s, John became active in the fight against the Oahe Irrigation Project. With the help of his many friends and political allies, John became the chairman of the Oahe Conservancy Subdistrict board and was eventually able to help redirect the Oahe Irrigation Project funding into the creation of the WEB Rural Water System - the first system of its kind in the United States.

At the same time, he was building an egg production company, Red Barn Eggs, which delivered eggs from Webster to Mobridge, S.D., and was awarded the Egg Producer of the Year. In the late 1970s, a fire destroyed the primary Red Barn Eggs production facility, and after a number of years working the egg business out of Aberdeen, John redirected his efforts to the creation of the John Sieh Agency, an independent insurance agency in Aberdeen. John worked with his daughter, Kathryn Johnson, at the agency until his retirement.

John's wife, Lois, died of cancer in March 1985. After living alone on the farm for a few years and a long trip to Europe, John met and married Leone Kriech in 1991.

John then embarked on one of his most ambitious projects: the Granary Rural Cultural Center. The core of the cultural center was the granary originally built by his father, William J. Sieh. But with the help of innumerable volunteers, the campus grew to include the original Putney Hall and an interpretive sculpture walk. The Granary's featured event was the All Dakota High School Fine Art Exhibition, which hosted art students from North and South Dakota High Schools. The Granary Rural Cultural Center was donated to Brown County in the spring of 2012.

Throughout John's life, he hired young men from the area to work on the farm and the Granary. There was hardly a time when these men weren't at table with the family, and in many cases were treated as members of the family.

He was a member of Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church, Groton, SD.

He leaves his children William Sieh, David Sieh and Kathryn (Sieh) Johnson and many grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

He was preceded in death by his father, William J. Sieh; his mother, Dorothy (Wallace) Sieh; his sister Betty (Sieh) Ries; his first wife and mother of his children Lois (Porter) Sieh; and his second wife of 24 years, Leone (Kriech) Sieh.

In lieu of flowers the family requests memorials be sent to the Granary Rural Cultural Center (<http://brown.sd.us/granary> - Dacotah Prairie Museum, 25 Market Street, Aberdeen SD, 57401).