

Jean Pierre Bidegaray 1929 – 2012

Posted: Sunday, December 30, 2012 8:00 am

Jean Pierre Bidegaray passed away at the Sidney Health Center of congestive heart failure on Friday morning, Dec. 21, 2012.

A vigil was held at 6:30 p.m. at St. Bernard Catholic Church, Charley Creek, on Wednesday, Dec. 26, 2012. A Mass of Resurrection was held at 10 a.m. on Thursday, Dec. 27, 2012, at St. Bernard Catholic Church with interment at the St. Bernard Cemetery.

Jean Pierre was born on Sept. 28, 1929, to Jean and Gracianne Bidegaray in Mendive, France in the Pyrenees Atlantiques. After joining the French Army, he trained as a paratrooper in the Brevet Militaire Parachute Bataillon in 1950. He loved the thrill of parachuting from an airplane. After receiving a Certificate of Good conduct, he got two weeks of leave to see Lourdes, France. He was able to take a drink of the miracle water.

In 1951, with his older brother, Bert Bidegaray, Jean Pierre was invited by his Montana uncle, Bert Salaberry, to come to Montana. Both Bidegaray brothers worked as sheep-herders and farm hands for their cousins David and Calvin Stepler in the Elmdale area. In 1957, Jean Pierre became a USA citizen.

With assistance from his Uncles Bert and John, Jean Pierre became a farmer and rancher in the Yellowstone Valley in Sidney. Soon after, he went back to Mendive, France to marry Marie Louise Poutcou in 1964. After returning to Montana, Jean and Marie Lou started their family (Josy, Jeanine, Patrick) and continued to farm in the Yellowstone Valley.

In 1967, Jean and his young family moved to south of Brockton to farm and ranch in the Charley Creek area. Jean was a hard-working farmer and rancher irrigating silage corn, wheat, alfalfa and raising beef cattle – along with six children.

He loved to fish and his generosity in giving fish to friends and family became a Christmas Eve tradition. He was probably most proud of teaching all of us to enjoy playing pinochle and muss. He could play for hours. In fact one of his favorite sayings at the table when someone misplayed was to say “Play like a feesh!” We knew when we heard that phrase from him that we weren’t playing very smart. He was also proud to be married to one of the best cooks in the land – he loved gathering around one of Mom’s delicious dinners whether it be for brandings, holidays or family gatherings. We will always cherish these memories.

Jean was preceded in death by his parents, uncles John and Bert, Auntie (Therese Salaberry), brothers and sisters (Francois, Marie Gracie, Bertrand, Lucie), and first cousins Frances and Jane Stepler who were like sisters to him when he came to America.

Jean is survived by his wife of 49 years, Marie Lou, daughters Josy McLean, Great Falls, (Mike, Jayse); Jeanine Granada of the family farm (Dominica, Renee, Gabriel); Gabriele Powell, South Carolina, (Jeremy, Nora, Gage); and sons Patrick Bidegaray, Culbertson (Lanette, Colton, Landon, Alexi); and Claude and Remi Bidegaray of the family farm in Charley Creek; his sister-in-law, Therese Bidegaray, and his beloved nephews and nieces Kathy Bidegaray, Michele Bidegaray, Debbie Berry, Beverly Anderson, Daniel Bidegaray, Mary Bidegaray and the Stepler families.

Memorial contributions are suggested to the Emmaus House of St. Bernard Catholic Church, Sidney Health Center or an organization of one's choice.

Special thanks to the St. Bernard Altar Society, St. Vincent's in Billings,

Great Falls Clinic, Park Place Rehabilitation in Great Falls, and the doctors and staff at Culbertson Memorial and Sidney Health Center. We will always be grateful for the love and support that Dad and our family received over his last few days from family and friends.

Clayton Stevenson Memorial Chapel of Wolf Point has been entrusted with his arrangements. Condolences may be sent to stevensonandsons.com