

DONOR STORIES

JOHN AND JEAN SHIELDS “John and Jean Shields Family Fund”

Make the best of every situation and place where you are planted; this is how John and Jean Shields lived their lives.

Jean Lichty was born on August 31, 1918 in Waterloo to Burr and Winnifred Lichty. Her family loved Waterloo and her father operated a successful business, Smith, Lichty and Hillman Company. Jean remained in her hometown throughout most of her life until a permanent move in 1995 to North Carolina.

John Shields was born in Colorado Springs, Colorado on March 1, 1915 to his parents, George and Edna. Farming was very common in John’s mother’s family; they owned farms near Hudson as well as in Orange Township near Waterloo. The “family business” is what brought John and his parents to Iowa and what kept him here for most of his life.

The demands of the land and the business background needed to operate the farms became a full time job for John. In 1936, he moved to the farm near Hudson where he served the manager. It was a challenging career for him as he had never been involved in planting, fixing machinery, etc. He quickly learned and became successful in his own right.

Over the years Jean and John were active contributors to the betterment of the entire community.

In 1940, Edna Shields and Winnifred Lichty had built a friendship and decided their two children should meet; after all, John was new to Waterloo and Jean was very familiar with the area having grown up in town. The initial introduction orchestrated by the mothers lead to a very loving and long lasting relationship.

The Lichty household at 1481 Newell Street was bustling on June 27, 1940 as John and Jean exchanged wedding vows and became husband and wife. Following the ceremony the couple greeted guests and celebrated with family and friends at the Sunnyside Country Club (now at the Porky’s location).

With their lives ahead of them the couple decided to continue farming and Jean moved to the homestead. For Jean this was quite a change from the life she had lived in Waterloo but was determined to work hard and help operate the farm. Jean remembers many hard times that come about, especially during World War II, as the couple learned together the importance of dedication and perseverance. So many young men were being sent overseas that John was ordered to stay working on the farm in order to maintain the agricultural base needed in the states. What a blessing to keep their family together.

On August 11, 1941 Leila Shields was born and on June 12, 1944 the family grew again with the birth of Nancy. In 1946, while the girls were still quite young John and Jean decided that a move back to town would be best as John was still able to manage the farms.

Over the years Jean and John were active contributors to the betterment of the entire community. They realized there was so much that could be done and they were excited to help in any way possible. Both were very active with scouting. Jean served as a Girl Scout leader for both of her daughter's troops. John was also active in the boy scouts. His involvement progressed from leader of a troop, to community treasurer and finally president.

After the couple moved back into town, John volunteered to be on the board for the Memorial Park Cemetery. This contribution led to part time caretaker and eventually manager of the cemetery. His commitment to the cemetery and dedication to the community allowed him to be instrumental in the construction of the Memorial Park Chapel.

Jean also remained active in the community. Being a stay at home mom, she was always eager to lend a hand to those organizations in need. Her willingness to give can be seen through her involvement in the Junior League leading up to her role as President in 1937.

Although John and Jean gave generously to the community, that which they valued most was family. Being blessed with only two daughters, the death of their youngest daughter, Nancy, on June 24, 1991 at the age of 47, was all too soon. Nonetheless, John and Jean maintained a positive outlook on life and were surrounded by love from their daughter and several grandchildren. John passed away on March 6, 1999.

John and Jean were hard workers that consistently gave of themselves to the community as a way of saying thank you for all the good years they had here. Their example of faithful commitment to philanthropy was recognized by many and contributed to the early success of the Community Foundation. It was because of this dedication and sincere appreciation for this community that the John and Jean Shields Family Fund was established at the Community Foundation of Waterloo/Cedar Falls and Northeast Iowa. By contributing to the community in this way, their investment will help to insure that others are able to make the best of every situation- no matter where they are planted.

*Historical vignette prepared by the Community Foundation of Northeast Iowa.