

In Memoriam

John H. Kokoski

John H. Kokoski, Hadley, Mass., 77, passed away on July 7, 2026.

He was born on March 16, 1949, in Northampton, Mass., to the late Henry and Genevieve Kokoski. He shared 55 years with his beloved wife, Elaine Kokoski, who predeceased him in June 2025.

John had a larger-than-life presence, not solely due to his stature but also because of his warm, friendly nature that made everyone feel like an old friend. He made friends wherever he went and delighted in making even the smallest child smile despite his imposing size.

He grew up on Mapleline Farm in Hadley, where he raised field crops and tended a small herd of cows. As a teenager, he purchased a Jersey cow as a 4-H project, sparking a lifelong passion for the Jersey breed. That passion would take him across the country and introduce him to many of his closest friends.

After graduating from Hopkins Academy in 1967, John attended the Stockbridge School of Agriculture at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. He was a member of the basketball team and even scrimmaged against Julius "Dr. J" Erving, who played for the UMass Minutemen at the time.

While attending college, John worked at the local trucking company N&B Express. He later purchased the business with fellow employee Paul Mannheim, and over the next 26 years they grew it into one of New England's leading freight hauling companies.

In his younger years, John also played trumpet with the Polka Kings. It was while performing with the band and attending dances that he met the love of his life, Elaine, at the White Eagle Club in Northampton.

John was the fourth generation to operate Mapleline Farm, founded by his great-great-grandfather in 1904. He took over the farm from his father in 1984 and phased out the vegetable and tobacco operations to focus on growing the Jersey herd. Eager to learn, he became a lifetime member of the American Jersey Cattle Club (predecessor of the American Jersey Cattle Association) and sought guidance from some of the nation's most respected Jersey breeders.

In 1995, he fulfilled a longtime dream of bottling milk from the Mapleline herd, initially processing and bottling off-site and selling it from a small retail

store in the front of the barn. In 2004, an on-site processing facility was built, and the business grew into a successful wholesale milk distribution operation. John's business knowledge, dairy expertise and genuine desire to help others made him a trusted mentor to many young dairy farmers interested in processing and marketing their own milk.

After retiring in 2019, John and Elaine spent much of their time in Pennsylvania, a place they had enjoyed visiting throughout their lives. They especially enjoyed Lancaster County and its Amish community, where John frequented auctions and agricultural events. Over the years, they formed many lasting friendships and came to think of it as their second home.

Throughout his life, John gave generously of his time. One of his proudest accomplishments was serving seven years as president of National All-Jersey Inc., following earlier time on the board of directors. He was also president of the Massachusetts Jersey Cattle Club and the New England Jersey Breeders Association. In recognition of his decades of leadership and dedication to the breed, John received the national Jersey organization's Distinguished Service Award in 2024.

John was a former director of the New England Dairy Promotion Board, a board member of the Massachusetts Cooperative Milk Producers Federation, and an active supporter of Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture and the Massachusetts Farm Bureau. He was also a member of the Amherst Area Chamber of Commerce board, a longtime director of the Three County Fair, a member of the Hadley zoning board of appeals and a lieutenant with the Hadley fire department's volunteer force. He belonged to the Amherst Railway Society, where he enjoyed sharing his love of model railroading with others.

John is survived by his children, Paul (Leann) Kokoski, Jennifer Zina and Jessica (Chad) Dizek; seven grandchildren; three step-grandchildren; one great-granddaughter; his sister, Mary Ann Ziomek; and his brother, Lenny Kokoski.

He was preceded in death by his youngest brother, Stephen Kokoski, with whom he shared the same birthday, seven years apart.

Memorials may be made to Jersey Youth Academy, c/o American Jersey Cattle Association, 6486 East Main St., Reynoldsburg, OH 43068.