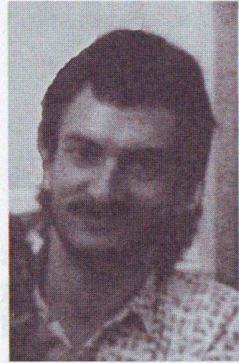


## Leif C. Eliason

### ARTS

Leif Chase Eliason, a 1977 graduate of the South Dakota for the Deaf (SDSD), was born profoundly deaf during the Rubella epidemic in Sioux Falls, S.D. on November 13, 1958. Along with four brothers, Mike, Eric, Joseph, and Tyrone and four sisters, Anne, Shelley, Lisa, and Angela, he spent his entire life in the Sioux Falls area.

He continued his education at Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C. immediately after his SDSD career where he enhanced his artistic skills through advanced courses in his chosen field. He passed away on May 24, 1994 at the young age of 36.



According to his sister, Shelley Ann Donovan, an educator in the Sioux Falls Public School System, Eliason "received an excellent education at the SDSD and, because of that, was able to be successful in whatever he pursued in life. His drawing skills were competitive with any of the state's best and displayed in many galleries throughout South Dakota. He was an easy-going gentleman and developed relationships that lasted. He never considered his deafness as a handicap, just an inconvenience that could easily be brushed off. He loved people and animals."

SDSD students during Eliason's time, just like those at the nation's other residential schools, were constantly encouraged, challenged, and trained to pursue the careers appropriate to their ability to succeed in higher education and the workplace. The statement, "I Can," was hailed as the magical formula which would start the wheels of success in motion, the students' deafness and hearing loss notwithstanding. "Success Comes in Cans" was literally the SDSD campus motto.

Careful evaluation of the individual student's assets, both real and potential, was part and parcel of the job description of the SDSD administration and staff members, often in collaboration with the personnel at the state's Department of Vocational Rehabilitation. Eliason was taught to be a dreamer geared to his individual interests and strengths. He ultimately decided to make the area of drawing and anything related to art as his goal.

Eliason found drawing a fantastic professional because it was one of the most immediate and accessible forms of artistic expression. Using the simplest of materials – a piece of chalk or a pencil on a scrap of paper – you can make a visual note, record a look, an idea, or an impression, and catch an atmosphere in just a few moments. Whatever the nature or medium of an artist's work, drawing invariably dies at the heart of it.

One of Eliason's proudest products is the pheasant artwork, representing the mascot of the SDSD, at the center of the basketball court in the Myklebust Gymnasium.



Artist: Leif Eliason, Class of 1977