

*In Loving Memory Of*  
**Mary Erk**

***Born***

July 13, 1934  
Belle Fourche, South Dakota

***Died***

September 11, 2023  
Spearfish, South Dakota

***Funeral Service***

Monday, September 18, 2023, 10:00 a.m.  
St. Mary's Star of the Sea Catholic Church  
Newell, South Dakota

***Officiant***

Father Dan Juelfs

***Musicians***

Dr. Barry Furze  
Samantha Spear  
Andre Fischbach

***Pallbearers***

John Erk   Chad Erk   Jay Erk  
Andre Fischbach II   Andrew Hockran   Troy Spear

***Honorary Pallbearers***

All Her Grandchildren

***Special Music***

"Jealous of the Angels" "Ave Maria" "One Bread, One Body"  
"Here I Am Lord" "Hail Mary, Gentle Woman" "Song of Farewell"

***Final Resting Place***

Black Hills National Cemetery  
Sturgis, South Dakota

*In Loving Memory Of*



**Mary Erk**

***July 13, 1934 ~ September 11, 2023***



## Mary Erk Obituary 1934 - 2023



Mary Erk passed away September 11, 2023, at Edgewood Vista Assisted Living Center in Spearfish, SD. She was 89 years old.

Mary Klein was born July 13, 1934, in Belle Fourche, SD, to Joseph and Lendena (Werlinger) Klein. She was the fourth of nine children.

Mary started out life working hard on the Klein family farm located 5 miles east of Newell, SD. The main crops were sugar beets, grain and hay. She was expected during the spring months to help plant beets, in the summer months to thin and hoe the beets and in the fall months to top the beets. She also played an active role inside the home helping to cook, clean, wash clothes, iron, and help watch the younger children. When the farm and house work permitted, she attended Webb School which was a three mile walk from the farm. Mary also attended Newell High School through her sophomore year. At that time, she left school to help earn money for the family. She worked at the Ben Franklin, the Cove Cafe, and the Corner Cafe in Newell, SD.

In 1952, she met John Erk at the Butte County Fair. They married on February 24, 1954, in a double ring ceremony officiated by Fr. Gilbert Stack in the old St. Mary's Catholic Church in Newell, SD. They were married for 60 years until John's passing in 2014.

After their honeymoon in the Black Hills, they moved into the old homestead shack on the Erk Ranch where John grew up. In that same year, they began construction on a new house. They were able to move in and begin their family, making it a home. Mike was born January 1955, Jim in December 1955, Paul in October 1958, Mary Ann in February 1962, and Rosemary in August 1972. Mary and John shared a deep Catholic faith. They believed that God came first and that family was of the utmost importance. Each day started on the family ranch with morning prayer. Every meal started with grace and the rosary was prayed together at night.

The work of a ranch wife was never done, but Mary was a woman of many gifts and talents. She found fulfillment in working on the ranch each day with her husband and family. Her children were her pride and joy. Her home was always impeccably clean, the coffee was always on, and you could always find something freshly baked. The family grew a garden each year and she canned for the long winter months. She also made incredible chokecherry and buffaloberry jelly. She was an amazing cook and baker and made the best pies, kuchen and maple nut malts around. Her lamb ribs, roasts, and belly skin were family favorites along with Sunday's fried chicken and gravy meal. She was consistently busy, whether it be sewing, embroidering or crocheting. She sewed many of the family clothes, patched any hole that could still be mended and repaired the sheep teepees. Mary was an exceptional crocheter. She personalized each Afghan made to the color and pattern of the receiver. She also loved to embroider days of the week dish towel sets which she gave as gifts.



In 1977, John and Mary bought a house in Newell so the kids could go to school. Being in town now gave Mary the opportunity to give back to the community and volunteer more frequently. She spent much of her volunteer time at St. Mary's Church where she was a member of the altar society, choir, a sacristan, a religious education teacher, and where she attended daily Mass and Bible study. She enjoyed her time at school as a classroom parent and as a field trip chaperone. She also delivered Meals on Wheels in the Newell area. She took pleasure in her time outside watering the yard and maintaining her lovely flower gardens.

After John's passing and breaking her back in a badminton game with the great-grandchildren, she moved to Edgewood Vista Assisted Living Center in 2016. For the first time in many years, Mary found that she no longer had to cook, clean or do laundry. She took up many new hobbies like bingo, cards, Wii bowling, jewelry making, and other craft projects. She loved attending all the activities and socials that were offered with her friends and loved hosting ice cream socials in her hallway.

Mary is survived by her children; sons, Mike and Carla (Varland), Hot Springs, SD, Jim and Kerry (Fenton), Buffalo, SD, Paul and Beth (Curley), Newell, SD; daughters, Mary Ann and André Fischbach, Moneta, VA, and Rosemary and Paul Hockran, Misawa, Japan; she was a proud grandmother of 12, and a loving great-grandmother of 15; she was a caring step-grandmother of 5, and step-great grandmother of 14; her brother, Casmier Klein, Bismarck, ND; sisters, Cecilia Keller, Spearfish, SD, and Regina McCoy, Browerville, MN; sister-in-law, Virginia Klein, Sturgis, SD; as well as a host of nieces, nephews, and friends.

Mary was preceded in passing by her parents, Joseph and Lendena Klein; parents-in-law, Ludwig and Anna Erk; husband, John Erk; brothers, Michael Klein, Andrew Klein, Allen Klein, Edward Klein, and Valentine Klein; brothers-in-law, Alfred Silvernagel, Frank Keller, Kirk McCoy, Joe Erk, George Erk, and Neil Chauncey; sisters-in-law, Barbara Klein, Eva Klein, Carlene Klein, Rose Klein, Sheri Klein, Sister Celine Erk O.S.B., Elizabeth Chauncey, Violet Erk, and Helen Erk; daughter-in-law, Micki (Collins) Erk; step-great grandson, River Varland; and nephew, Tommy Erk.

The family would like to extend many thanks and appreciation to the Edgewood Vista staff and residents who have become like family over the last seven years. We would also like to thank Stillwater Hospice for their compassion and care in her final month.

Memorials have been established to St. Mary's Star of the Sea Catholic Church, and Stillwater Hospice Care.

Condolences may be sent to the family at [www.kinkadefunerals.com](http://www.kinkadefunerals.com).



*The family invites you to join them for fellowship and lunch  
In the church hall, following the service  
Thank you for your presence and condolences.*