



John Martin Erk was born September 21, 1925, to Ludwig and Anna (Jestl) Erk on the family ranch between Castle Rock and Deer's Ears Buttes north of Newell, South Dakota and near the little homestead settlement of Deermont. He was the fourth of five children.

He passed away October 23, 2014 in the Hospice Unit at the VA BHHCS at Ft. Meade, South Dakota, where he had been since October 20.

His childhood included hard work and herding sheep on the open range. He and his brothers built some of the "stone Johnnies" that still grace the hills and small buttes of the ranch while

herding sheep. He attended the Deermont School through the eighth grade. After eighth grade, John stayed home and worked on the ranch while his brother, George, finished high school. Later, he attended St. Martin's High School in Sturgis, South Dakota for one year, then returned to the ranch at age 18.

He was drafted into the Army in 1945 and went to basic training at Camp Robinson in Little Rock, Arkansas. After completing his training, he transferred to the Army Air Force and was shipped to Japan in the spring of 1946. He served there through December 1946 when the draftees were sent home. John returned home to the ranch in January of 1947.

He formed a partnership with his brothers, Joe and George, in the 1950's (later dissolved in the 1970's) and they started the registered Rambouillet sheep that are still raised on the Erk Ranch today. In 1952, he met Mary Klein at the county fair and they were later married on February 24, 1954.

They set up housekeeping in the old homestead shack where John grew up and started building a new home in 1954. At this time, they also started their family. Mike was born January 1955, Jim in December 1955, Paul in October 1958, Mary Ann in February 1962 and Rosemary in August 1972.

In 1977, John and Mary bought a house in Newell so the kids could go to school and John drove back and forth to the ranch. In the mid 80's



Paul took over the ranch and John moved to town and pursued the sheep order buying business he had started while he was still on the ranch.

He was an order buyer of sheep for nearly 30 years and finally retired when he was 84, after buying lambs for feeders all over the country.

John was a founding member of the Castle Rock Volunteer Fire Department and the Knights of Columbus Divine Shepherd Council #13088. He was also a member of the Castle Rock Election Board, past council member of St. Mary's Star of the Sea Catholic Church, Butte County Planning Commission for over 20 years, Honorary Chapter Farmer of the Newell FFA, and a lifetime member of the VFW.

Throughout his life, John's faith and trust in God kept him going through the good times and the bad. He was proud of his family and was a loving husband, dad, grandpa and great-grandpa. His devotion to the sheep industry and to the fine wool Rambouillets that have been the cornerstone of the Erk Ranch never wavered. In his final months, he declared that he had a good life. It was not an easy one, but a good one and he would not have changed a thing.

John is survived by his beloved wife of 60 years, Mary; sons, Mike and Carla (Varland), Hot Springs, SD, Jim and Kerry (Fenton), Buffalo, SD, Paul and Beth (Curley), Newell, SD; daughters, Mary Ann and Andre' Fischbach, Seoul, South Korea, and Rosemary and Paul Hockran, Carlisle, PA. He was a proud grandfather of 12 and a step-grandfather of 5. He was a great-grandfather of 10 and a step-great-grandfather of 7. He is also survived by his sister, Elizabeth (Neil) Chauncey, Denison, TX; sisters-in-law, Helen Erk, Spearfish, SD, Violet Erk, Vale, SD; as well as a host of nieces, nephews and friends.

He was preceded in death by his parents; brothers, Joe and George; sister, Sister Celine O.S.B.; and daughter-in-law, Micki (Collins) Erk.

Memorials have been established to St. Mary's Star of the Sea Catholic Church and The Castle Rock Volunteer Fire Department.

Condolences may be sent to the family at www.kinkadefunerals.com.



The family invites you to join them for fellowship and lunch in the church hall immediately following the funeral mass. The procession to Black Hills National Cemetery will begin following the lunch.

We thank you for your presence and condolences.

In Loving Memory Of
John Martin Erk

Born	Died
September 21, 1925	October 23, 2014
Castle Rock, South Dakota	Fort Meade, South Dakota

Vigil

Sunday, October 26, 2014, at 7:00 p.m.
St. Mary's Star of the Sea Catholic Church
Newell, South Dakota

Monsignor Michael Woster ~ Deacon Ray Klein

Mass of Christian Burial

Monday, October 27, 2014, at 11:00 a.m.
St. Mary's Star of the Sea Catholic Church

Celebrant ~ Monsignor Michael Woster

Concelebrant ~ Father Arnold Kari

Deacon ~ Ray Klein

Accompanist ~ Janet Higbee

Soloist ~ Andre' Fischbach

Musical Selections

"Precious Lord, Take My Hand" ~ "Mother Dear, Oh Pray For Me"

"I Am The Bread Of Life" ~ "Ave Maria"

"Song Of Farewell" ~ "How Great Thou Art"

Pallbearers

Mark Kirby ~ Darrell Cox ~ John Heisler
Dwight Kitzan ~ Tim McCann ~ Doug Hohenberger

Honorary Pallbearers

All Other Divine Shepherd Council #13088 Members
And All Grand and Great-Grandchildren

Interment

Black Hills National Cemetery
Sturgis, South Dakota

In Loving Memory Of
John Martin Erk

1925 ~ 2014



The Twenty-Third Psalm

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:
He leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul:
He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.
Yea, though I walk through the valley of
the shadow of death, I will fear no evil:
for thou art with me; Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.
Thou preparest a table before me in the presence
of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life: and I will dwell
in the house of the Lord forever.