

John Lee Ertman
November 19, 1952 - August 27, 2023



John Lee Ertman, 70 of Lead, South Dakota passed away from natural causes on August 27 while doing an activity he loved - fishing at his favorite lake.

John was born in Newcastle on November 19, 1952, to John and Connie Ertman. Raised on the family ranch near Four Corners, John gained the skill set and love of working with his hands that would last through life. He graduated from Newcastle High

School and then went on to study agriculture at Sheridan College. Following his time in Sheridan, he returned home to work with his dad at the ranch.

In 1975, John took an opportunity to work at Homestake Gold Mine and relocated to Lead. John was employed at Homestake for 25 years, working in various departments and roles. Shortly after relocating to Lead, John was introduced to his future wife Helen through some mutual friends. John and Helen were married in a small intimate ceremony in Newcastle on August 5, 1976. After eleven years of marriage, they welcomed their first son Lee in December 1987 and had their second son Cody in December 1990.

In true rancher fashion, John was a master of many skills out of necessity. His whole life he made a living with his hands and the knowledge that came from an "I can figure it out" mindset. Following the closure of Homestake, John worked in construction, excavation, and building maintenance until "retiring" in 2020.

John's family and friends knew well that his hardworking personality made fully retiring impossible. John embraced that and poured himself into his custom knife and sword-making business he had been running since his early 20's. A true craftsman and bladesmith, he sold the functioning works of art he created at gun shows and Renaissance fairs around the area.

An avid, lifelong outdoorsman, John found joy spending time in the Black Hills hunting, camping and fishing with his family and friends. He passed his love of the outdoors to his family, who often accompanied him on fishing trips, creating family bonds and cherished memories. John was a lifelong member of the Black Hills Rod and Gun Club and volunteered his time with the club to benefit outdoor recreation in the area and the local community.

A family man through-and-through, John always put his family first, supporting his wife and children in whatever interest or crazy project they had. He never complained or judged, he only ever wanted to offer his assistance and teach the skills he could pass on. Whether it was helping his son Lee build a suitable food truck or helping his other son Cody renovate an old house, John's knowledge and willingness to help was invaluable to his family. In 2019 he became "papa" to his first granddaughter, Luna, who completely adored spending time with her grandparents. John opened his arms and welcomed more children into his life through Lee's marriage. He welcomed Keely, Mia, and Nate, accepting and treating them as if they were his own grandchildren.

John was preceded in death by his father John and his brother Clay. He is survived by his wife Helen, his sons Lee (Tasha) and Cody (Katie), his brother Ted (Marty), his mother Connie, his granddaughter Luna and numerous cousins, nieces, nephews, and friends.

Visitation was held Tuesday, September 5, 2023, from 3 to 5 p.m. at the Lead-Deadwood Memorial Chapel in Lead, South Dakota. The funeral service was held Wednesday, September 6, 2023, at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Whitewood at 10:00 a.m. The burial was held later that day at 2:00 p.m. at Boyd Cemetery, Four Corners.

Memorials have been established to Immanuel Lutheran Church and the Black Hills Rod and Gun Club.

Arrangements are under the care of Lead-Deadwood Memorial Chapel in Lead. Online condolences may be written at www.fidler-is-burgfuneralchapels.com.
