

**Dan Epperson**  
**May 22, 1943 — July 13, 2024**



Dan Epperson, 81, of Newcastle peacefully passed away surrounded by family, on July 13, 2024 at Weston County Health Services. Dan lived a full life of love, laughter, and many adventures.

Dan was born on May 22, 1943 in Fairbury, Illinois to Dick and Frances Epperson. The oldest of two siblings, Dan spent his youth frequenting the local library to read all of the western, adventure, and history books that he could get his hands on while also obtaining the rank of Star Scout in Boy Scouts. The family eventually moved to Gordon, Nebraska in

1958 while Dan was in high school where he was involved in FFA and drama. Dan's stories always made it sound like he spent a fair amount of time in the principal's office. He would even tell you he thought he still owed some more time! But, it didn't keep him from graduating in 1961.

Dan married his high school sweetheart Vanita Saxton, on December 15, 1962. The couple lived in Rapid City, South Dakota and welcomed two daughters while there. Dan's employment advancement opportunities moved the family to Newcastle, Gillette, and Buffalo. They returned to Newcastle in June 1976 and this became their permanent home. Dan and Vanita welcomed a son the following year.

Dan was always on the search for knowledge and found that he enjoyed the wide range of skills he was able to obtain by job jumping in different career fields. Throughout his lengthy resume, his employment records often took a circular path.

Dan began his work life during his high school years delivering milk for Sheridan Dairy in Gordon. He even delivered milk to his future mother-in-law. He would also drive along with his father as Dick delivered propane. Dan would, several years later, end his

working years selling propane for Wesco Gas in Newcastle. During high school, he also worked for Brakeman Radio and TV after school and on Saturdays where he would fine-tune his tinkering skills on various electronics, including radios. Later, Dan would find himself back in the electronics business at Electrocraft Inc in Rapid City. There Dan undoubtedly thrived as a two-way radio technician for commercial and private AM radio stations. A few years later, his journey took him to Mayer Radio where he built radio towers and helped maintain sound systems - including those for some Johnny Cash shows.

According to a work experience autobiography he penned in 1988, he first retired the same year from Hoskins-Western-Sonderegger, Inc. But his work life was far from over. In 1989, Dan worked for Environmental Protective Actions doing asbestos abatement. In 1992 he began work as the Executive Director of the Weston County Economic Development Board. In 1994 he opened The Weeping Heart in Custer, South Dakota; a rock shop where, for nearly ten years, he would help those traveling through the Black Hills leave with rocks and the most unbelievable, yet mostly true, stories you've ever heard. His ability to amuse and entrance others through his storytelling skills continued as he transported crews of the Burlington Railroad from place to place. After working for Wesco Gas from 2005-2013, he finally officially retired, completing his employment journey the same way he started it - serving his community by delivering an essential product. He wrote in his autobiography, "I have maneuvered through the business world armed only with a high school diploma." While that is true, he was also armed with grit, perseverance, and a good sense of humor.

Dan was an active member in the community. He was a member of the United States Jaycees with a Senatorship and an Ambassadorship and was awarded the Young Businessman of the Year 1977-1978. He was a life member of the National Rifle Association and the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation. Dan believed in the potential of Newcastle. He worked hard to promote the community through his work on the Economic Development Board and the CANAM International Highway Association, where Dan served a one year term as International President. He was also instrumental in founding, developing, and securing funding for the Cambria Improvement and Service District.

Around the age of five, Dan was introduced to hunting and fishing as a means to enjoy the great outdoors. He pursued those interests for the rest of his life, developing a passion for firearms - especially muzzleloaders and black powder cartridge. Some of his occupations weaved his passion for guns with his entrepreneurial skills and others where he worked for gun shops doing what he loved. In 1991 Dan was the President of the Weston County Sportsman's Club, a place founded with the purpose of providing a safe location where sportsmen and women could enjoy the love of shooting. The club hosted their first annual gun show in 1992, an event that Dan cherished and looked forward to every year. He also was a founding member of the Tubb Town Muzzleloaders, Muzzleloaders of the Black Hills, and the Wyoming State Muzzleloading Association. The latter two organizations remain active today, continuing the legacy of one of his favorite activities. Dan was an avid hunter as well as shooting sport enthusiast. In 2016, Dan traveled to Africa with his dear friend Ted and nephew Tanner, where he fulfilled his lifelong dream to go wild game hunting; while keeping his promise to his great granddaughter not to hunt a zebra.

Dan is survived by his wife, Vanita; daughters Tami (Bob) Thaler of Newcastle, Danita Stanton of Grand Island, Nebraska, and son Richard Epperson of Newcastle; brother Gary (Doris) Epperson of Rockport, Texas; four grandchildren: Jeralynn (Brian) Moser of Mason City, Nebraska, Jake Thaler of Laramie, Brittney (Jimmy) Thyarks of Cheyenne, and Hope Stanton of Shelton, Nebraska; great grandchildren Kaia, Adelaide, Emerson, Colby and Mo; numerous nieces, nephews, great nieces, great nephews, in-laws, and friends.

Dan was preceded in death by his parents, Dick and Frances Epperson, and father and mother-in-law, Hugh and Hope Saxton.

Services were held July 19, 2024 at First United Methodist Church in Newcastle. A viewing was held at 10:00 a.m. and service at 11:00 a.m. with lunch following in the fellowship hall. A graveside service was held at the Cemetery in Gordon, Nebraska on July 20, 2024 at 9:00 a.m. with a gathering at the Presbyterian Church following.

To honor Dan, in lieu of flowers, donations can be made in his name to local libraries, organizations that promote youth shooting sports, such as Upton Young Guns, or the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation.

Meridian Mortuary was in charge of the arrangements.