

Deacon Earl "Joe" Frederick Witte, 96, of Rapid City, SD, passed peacefully from his earthly abode on October 8, 2025, at Spearfish Canyon Healthcare, Spearfish, SD.

Joe was a strong, quiet man who was loved and respected by his family and friends. He was born to Herman Meinert Witte and Augusta Carolyn Bals Witte on January 3, 1929, in Rapid City, SD, the sixth of seven children. His very earliest years were lived in a one-room log cabin with his parents and siblings on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation near White River on Grass Creek. Later they moved to Cuny Table where his dad farmed wheat and ranched. He attended elementary school in Rapid City, SD, and the Assumption Academy in Chadron, NE where he served daily Mass at St. Patrick's parish. Joe graduated from Chadron High School where he was a straight-A student and excelled in football and basketball. After graduation, he continued to work with his dad and brothers on Cuny Table and the surrounding area.

In 1950, he joined the Air Force and was called to serve his country in the Korean Conflict along with time in Texas, California, Louisiana, and finally at Moody AFB in Georgia. While there, he met Bertha Lee (Bert), whom he fell in love with at first sight. They married on August 8, 1954. He was honorably discharged from the USAF in December 1954 and moved back to his ranch on Cuny Table, SD where they ranched until 1963. At that time, they bought an irrigated farm near Oral, SD, where they raised corn, alfalfa and cattle. They later ranched east of Hermosa on Spring Creek, selling the ranch in 1982.

On September 22, 1979, Joe was ordained to the diaconate for the Diocese of Rapid City. Deacon Joe served in this capacity at St. Michael's in Hermosa, Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Rapid City, and St. James in Edgemont. He is remembered fondly by many of the faithful for his service to the Church.

Joe and Bert retired in Edgemont, SD, where they enjoyed many years together loving their children and grandchildren. They both enjoyed gardening. Joe loved nature and the land; this can be seen and felt clearly in *Coyote*, the book he wrote for the enjoyment of his children and grandchildren. He loved Cuny Table and its people. During his last days, he often spoke of his years living there. He was a remarkable man, truly bigger than life. Southwestern South Dakota has lost one of the great old-time cowboys.

He is survived by his daughter, Joyce (Larry) Williamson of Sturgis, SD; and his sons Thomas (Colleen) of San Antonio, TX; Steven (Nancy) of Elizabeth, CO; Paul (Theresa) of Rapid City, SD; and Rusty (Hope) of Hot Springs, SD; and his daughter-in-law, Esperanza Witte of Hot Springs, SD. He also leaves 22 grandchildren, 39 great-grandchildren, and 5 great-great-grandchildren.

He was preceded in death by his beloved wife, Bert; his son, Harold; his parents, Herman and Augusta Witte; and all his siblings.

IN LOVING MEMORY



'JOE'
EARL F. WITTE

January 3, 1929-October 8, 2025
Rapid City, SD Spearfish, SD



A loving father
who will be missed dearly



PSALM 100

Sing joyfully to the LORD, all you lands;
serve the LORD with gladness;
come before him with joyful song.
Know that the LORD is God;
he made us, his we are;
his people, the flock he tends.
Enter his gates with thanksgiving,
his courts with praise;
Give thanks to him;
bless his name, for he is good:
the LORD, whose kindness endures forever,
and his faithfulness, to all generations



VISITATION
4:6pm, October 12, 2025
St. Anthony of Padua Catholic Church
Hot Springs, South Dakota

CHRISTIAN FUNERAL VIGIL
6pm, Sunday, October 12, 2025
St. Anthony of Padua Catholic Church
Hot Springs, South Dakota

CELEBRANT-Deacon Craig Pearson

CHRISTIAN FUNERAL MASS
1pm, Monday, October 13, 2025
Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church
Rapid City, South Dakota

CELEBRANT-Bishop Scott Bullock

MUSIC
Our Lady of Perpetual Help Music Ministry

CHRISTIAN FUNERAL COMMittal
10am, Tuesday, October 14, 2025
Black Hills National Cemetery
Sturgis, South Dakota

MILITARY FUNERAL HONORS
United States Air Force
Spearfish Veterans Honor Guard

LUNCHEON
After Mass

PALLBEARERS
Joe's grandchildren

MEMORIALS
In lieu of flowers, the family asks that
donations be made to the Diocese of
Rapid City Diaconate Program