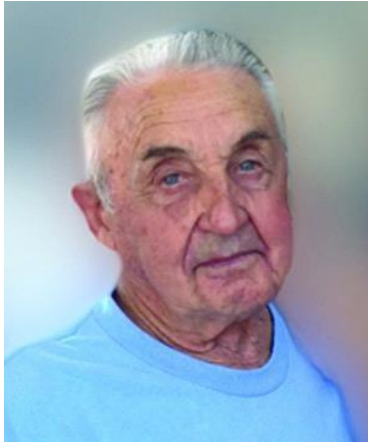


Michel Ohaco

1933-2023



MICHEL OHACO

April 21, 1933 December 15, 2023

Michel was born on April 21, 1933 to Michel Ohaco and Marie Sarioberry Ohaco in Urepel, France and passed away peacefully on December 15, 2023 in Bakersfield, California. Urepel is located in the Pyrenees Mountains that separates France from Spain in what is affectionately known as Basque Country. Michel was very proud of his Basque heritage.

Michel was the youngest of six children to include his five siblings, Kathy, Josephine, Martin, Joe and J.B. His parents, brothers and sisters, all preceded him in death.

While a youth in Urepel, Michel attended school through the age of 14. Michel kept busy by working on the family farm keeping themselves and the local community supplied with fresh eggs, meat, and produce. He recalled during World War II, as a child, German soldiers coming through Urepel. They fed the soldiers who then left. Michel also noted that his family was treated well by the soldiers. From 1954 to 1956 Michel served in the French Army. Upon discharge he returned to Urepel where he worked as a carpenter and a painter.

In 1959 Michel followed in his brother Joe's footsteps and emigrated to the United States in pursuit of a better life. It was here that Michel joined his brother and went to work as a shepherd for Michel and Filbert Etcheverry doing business as E.R.E. Sheep Company. Michel's hard work and dedication paid off as he was later elevated to camp tender and ultimately foreman. Michel's responsibilities would include the overseeing and care of thousands of sheep at any given time, 365 days a year.

In the fall, the sheep would lamb in the alfalfa fields of Bakersfield and Buttonwillow where they would remain until late winter. In the spring the sheep would then be transported to the high desert areas of Kern, Inyo, and Mono Counties to follow the green grass. Following the green grass would also necessitate relocating camp and the sheep once the feed supply was exhausted. This was ongoing. In the late spring to early summer months, the sheep would then be transported to ranches in northern Nevada, to again follow the green grass as determined by the melting snows which also provided an ample water supply by filling the creeks and streams. Here they would remain through the summer months. With the summer turning to fall, the sheep were then transported back to Bakersfield's more temperate climate for lambing and the whole process would begin again. This would be Michel's calling for the next 50 years with very little time off. This would epitomize the Basque work ethic.

After retirement, Michel lived at the Etcheverry ranch on Calloway Drive in Bakersfield. Here Michel would tend to the numerous pets, help with repairs including painting and help out in any way possible. What Michel was especially known for was his cooking skills. On a daily basis, excluding Sundays, as Michel's kitchen was closed, Michel would always have a pot of beans and vermicelli soup simmering on the stove. He would feed anyone and everyone that stopped by as he loved company. This, coupled with fried potatoes, with of course onion and garlic, Pyrenees french bread, Monterey Jack cheese, fried eggs, bacon or sausage...was a meal to behold. There are many who were spoiled by his cooking. As people would finish eating and prepare to leave, Michel would always remark, thank you for your visit.

Michel is survived by his many cousins and friends who will sorely miss his kind, gentle spirit. So much history encapsulated in 90 years.

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