



## Joan Hepner Wentzell

December 27, 2015

Joan Ann Hepner was born February 13 , 1935 at her grandparent's home in Harrisonville. She passed away in her sleep at her home in Ruskin, Fla on December 27, 2015.

She grew up in Daretown and started her own business mowing her neighbors' lawns at a young age. She went to Woodstown High School and was very active in sports. She earned letters in three sports as well as serving as Captain. She also pitched in the local Church men's baseball team. After high school while working at the Pole Tavern Diner she met Glen Wentzell. They were married September 10, 1956 and had three children together. They lived in his home at the end of North Main Street in Elmer. Joan was very active in the community despite raising three children and still working at the Pole Tavern Diner. She was the Vice President of the Woman's Auxiliary at the Elmer hospital in 1963. Her mother, Anna Hepner, was the President and they helped make the dream of a first class hospital possible for the residents of Elmer.

Joan and Glen divorced in 1964 and she took her three young children to live with her parents at her childhood home in Daretown. While there she worked three jobs at once trying to save up the money needed to buy the old Crosstown Diner east of Elmer on Route 40. Her father, George Hepner, had to cosign for her. The Diner became the Kountry Kitchen Restaurant in 1965. Her mother worked there too, making her famous old fashioned Chicken Pot Pie on Sunday. People would bring in their own pots and pans to get orders to

go for Sunday dinner.

Over the years she added on to the tiny restaurant adding a home overhead and a banquet room after that. The popular Restaurant was a must stop for travelers going to and from the shore. She kept photo albums of the local families that ate there together year after year. Many local teenagers got their first job working at the Kountry Kitchen.

Her concern for the preservation of local history prompted her to buy the abandoned Elmer Train station. She had it moved and restored at great expense to behind the restaurant. There it was first a museum and later a gift shop. A few years back she donated it back to the town of Elmer.

Joan could be counted on to help her neighbors. Many times at Christmas she would have collection boxes in the restaurant for local families in need. And if it wasn't full by Christmas Eve, Joan would fill it herself. What most people don't know is she would go to the local bank or church to see if there was a family in need at Christmas. She would then buy food, clothes and presents so the family would have a wonderful Christmas. The Salem County Commission on Woman honored Joan as a Woman of Achievement in 1995. The Pittsgrove Republican Party recognized her service as well in 1999. Joan's children Sharon and Steven managed the Kountry Kitchen for many years after she retired to Florida.

She is pre-deceased by her parents, George and Anna Hepner, and her former husband, Glen Wentzell.

She is survived by her children, Douglas (Denise) Wentzell, Sharon (Bruce) Wentzell and Steven (Diane)Wentzell, her sister, Jean Hepner Jack, and her life-partner of 30 years, Mary Chorney.

There will be a celebration of her life on Monday, January 25, 2016 at the Adams Funeral Home, 111 S.Main St., Elmer, NJ 08318. The family will be available starting at 6:00 PM with the service following at 7 PM. Interment is private. The family has suggested that donations can be made to the Elmer Library, P.O. Box 372, Elmer, NJ 08318 or to a charity of one's choice in Joan's memory. [www.adamsfuneralhome.org](http://www.adamsfuneralhome.org)



# Previous Events

## Visitation

JAN 25. 6:00 PM - 7:00 PM (ET)

Adams Funeral Home - South Jersey Cremation Services (Elmer)  
111 South Main Street  
Elmer, NJ 08318  
(856) 358-3737

## Memorial Service

JAN 25. 7:00 PM (ET)

Adams Funeral Home - South Jersey Cremation Services (Elmer)  
111 South Main Street  
Elmer, NJ 08318  
(856) 358-3737

# Tribute Wall

JM

“*Mary, Jean, Doug, Sharon, Steven and Diane... I am so sorry to hear this. I was just thinking of Aunt Joan and our times at the restaurant. Please know my thoughts and prayers are with you. She was a great! xoxo*

*Jamie Moore*

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**Jamie Moore** - January 20, 2016 at 09:12 AM

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*Thank you very much Jamie*

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**steven e Wentzell** - January 25, 2016 at 02:40 PM