



Elmer John "Papa John" Denman

December 6, 1949 - January 12, 2021

Wantage - Elmer John Denman, age 71 passed away peacefully on Tuesday, January 12, 2021 after a brief stay at Barn Hill Rehabilitation Center in Newton. Born to Elmer T. and Jeannie L. (Housel) Denman on December 6, 1949, he came home to their small farm in the Town of Greenville, NY. He grew up attending schools over the border in Wantage, where the family moved later in his childhood. After graduating high school, he attended the University of Georgia and served in the US National Guard for several years during the Vietnam era.

In Georgia, he met his wife-to-be, Joan Marie Ryan. They were married on August 14, 1970 at Emmanuel Episcopal Church in Athens, Georgia. They had five children and just recently celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. The two would try their hand at subsistence farming in various locales and John would work various jobs throughout. The family eventually settled back into the Tri-State region. John returned to work for Pleasant Acres Farm Campground, a business started by his parents and that he had helped to build. Here he was affectionately known as 'Papa John' in later years. Along with taking care of various maintenance and farm aspects, he helped in providing hospitality and recreation for hundreds of families throughout the years. John was the regular cook for morning breakfasts where he served up french toast or pancakes for campers waking up on their vacations. He'd help travelers get their trailers on or off site, even if it meant hooking up a tractor to do so. John also continued farming and raised rabbits for several decades,

providing bunnies for local pet shops. One of his greatest joys was introducing baby animals to the children who enjoyed their summers at the camp. He is certainly cherished and will be missed.

Besides his parents, John was predeceased by his brother, Bill Denman; his granddaughter, Mollie and his dear friend, Robert Kaltoff.

John is survived by a large family; including his devoted wife, Joan of Wantage, his children, Jeannie Denman of AR, Elmer Joseph Denman of NC, John Michael Denman and his partner Lisa Myers of Wantage, Jason Robert Denman of NC and James Aaron Denman and his wife Tanya Wilson of ME; his brothers, Daniel Lee Denman and his wife Denise of New York State, Kenneth Michael Denman and his wife Kathie of New York State, Richard Allen Denman and his wife Madeline of Wantage; and his sister, Beth Denman of Wantage; his three greatest joys, his granddaughters, Baylee Monaco, Maegyn Denman and Rachel Denman; and uncle to nearly a dozen nieces and nephews, to all of whom he taught something.

A memorial visitation will be held from 2 to 5 p.m. on Sunday, January 17, 2021 at the Pinkel Funeral Home, 31 Bank Street (Route 23) Sussex. Due to New Jersey government health restrictions, attendees will be limited to 50 visitors and are required to wear face masks at all times and practice proper social distancing. A celebration of life service will be held in the future. In lieu of flowers, please consider a donation in Elmer John Denman's memory to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, 501 St. Jude Place, Memphis, TN 38105. Online condolences may be offered to the family at www.pinkelfuneralhome.com

Cemetery Details

Private Cremation Services

Previous Events

Memorial Visitation

JAN 17. 2:00 PM - 5:00 PM (ET)

Pinkel Funeral Home, Inc.
31 Bank Street (Route 23)
Sussex, NJ 07461
(973) 875-3272
alexis@pinkelfuneralhome.com
<https://www.pinkelfuneralhome.com/>

Tribute Wall

DS

“ I had NO idea of John’s death. We grew up with the Denmans who were ALL GREAT people!! I’m SO VERY SORRY to hear this and send my condolences to the family.

Donnie Slate - August 13, 2025 at 02:06 PM

DB

“ So sorry to hear of John's passing. I remember "Elmer John" very well from grade school through high school, and the 4H Club. Haven't seen him since those days. He always seemed to have a smile, a very good hearted individual. Condolences to all his extended family.

Don Bliss - January 23, 2021 at 10:07 PM



“ Thoughts and prayers to the entire Denman family from Frank & Ingrid Morea. PAC will never be the same. We will all miss seeing him riding his tractor with his straw hat. May he RIP 🙏

Ingrid Morea - January 17, 2021 at 07:52 PM

DF

“ So sorry for your loss
The “Feeney “ Family

Dan Feeney - January 17, 2021 at 05:58 PM

VF

“ *Judy & Vinnie Fattizzi sending their Deepest Condolences to the Denman Family on the passing of Papa John, He will surly be missed.....*



Vincent Fattizzi - January 17, 2021 at 03:45 PM

SR

“ *Sharon Russman lit a candle in memory of Elmer John "Papa John" Denman*



Sharon Russman - January 17, 2021 at 01:03 PM

SR

“ *Sorry for the loss. John was a great person to know we went to school together and he was a great friend to all. He will be missed greatly.*

Sharon Russman - January 17, 2021 at 01:01 PM

FB

“ *John was the first person we met at Pac. He gave us a tour and we stayed 18 years. He was a wonderful man, always friendly & a big part of PAC. May John RIP. Our sympathies to the Denman family. Frank and Mary Baluch,*

Frank and Mary Baluch - January 14, 2021 at 07:56 PM

SM

“ We always loved Papa John mowing the lawn and moving tables. He was such a shining spirit. All our deepest sympathies to his family.

Sandy and Bob Montesano

Sandy Montesano - January 14, 2021 at 02:16 PM

JD

“ My condolences to Papa John's family on your loss. I had the pleasure of speaking to him on occasions when he took a break from mowing the lawns for a cold water. He was always very friendly and would wave if you passed him while he was out mowing or in his yard. He is one of the pleasant memories we have of Pleasant Acres!!

Jack and Pat Dahl - January 14, 2021 at 11:16 AM

PW

“ Our deepest sympathy to the Denman family. Fred and I, as well as our 3 children, have many fond memories of our 10 plus years at Pleasant Acres. We were served many delicious pancakes by John. One of my best memories was one winter season we had a "Ladies Night" where the men planned, shopped, and cooked dinner for the wives. John, dressed in a suit, with a white towel draped over his arm, greeted each lady at the game room door and escorted us to our seats. Special times. RIP John.

Pat Windecker - January 14, 2021 at 10:19 AM

JD

“ 5 files added to the album Memories Album



Joe Denman - January 14, 2021 at 08:32 AM

JD

“ 1 file added to the album Memories Album



Joe Denman - January 14, 2021 at 07:58 AM

MB

“ We will always remember Papa John cutting the grass at the campground. It looked like he could sleep and still do it. He always had a smile for us. He will truly be missed.

Madeline Bendick - January 14, 2021 at 05:08 AM

LL

“ John and I met as elementary school students. We would often share lunches and jokes. In high school, he and I took some adult education classes, learning to dance and play the guitar. I am so sorry to hear that 'Gentleman John', as we affectionately called him, has passed away. May his memory be for a blessing.

Linda Ettinger Lieberman - January 13, 2021 at 11:20 PM

TF

“ So sorry to hear of Papa John's passing. Praying for the Denman family. My children were lucky to know him and take part in his Sunday morning gatherings with the baby animals at Pleasant Acres. He was a kind gentleman and he will be missed.

The Bitetti/Knapp Family - January 13, 2021 at 11:11 PM

RR

“ Sorry to hear of Papa John's passing. Know he will never be far away as he lives in all of you and your memories. He will always be there in your heart.

Ruth Regavich - January 13, 2021 at 07:44 PM