



## Dennis Laurel Clay

July 3, 1947 - April 9, 2020

### DENNIS LAUREL CLAY

July 3rd 1947 ---April 9th 2020

Dennis was born in Ephrata Wa and raised in Moses Lake. He was a member of the DeMolay and became Master Councilor. He graduated from Moses Lake High School with the Great class of 1965. He joined the Army in 1966, and served for 9 years. He entered as a private, but was selected to attend Officer's Candidate School and then flight school. He became an officer and an Army aviator at 19 years old. He served one year in Vietnam where he flew Hueys and other Helicopters for the 9th Aviation Battalion of the 9th Infantry Division in the Mekong Delta. In 1968 he made the 10,000th Helo landing on the USS Benewah during the 18 months she had been operating in the brown waters of the Mekong Delta. He was awarded the Bronze Star Medal, 17 Air Medals, with one air medal awarded for every 25 combat missions, that means 425 combat missions. He soon attained rank of Captain. He also spent 18 months in South Korea as a pilot. After his Army career he returned to Moses Lake in 1975, and was employed for 30 years with Washington State Employment Security Department. His writing career began when he submitted a story to the Columbia Basin Herald in 1982. It was Published and his writing career never stopped. Dennis is an internationally known writer, photographer, columnist and broadcaster. His credits include stories published in Alaska Outdoors, Wild Sheep Magazine, British Columbia Sports Fishing, Ted Nugent Adventure Outdoors, The Outdoor Press, Boys' Life, Fishing and Hunting News and others. He has been writing an outdoor column for the Columbia Basin Herald for about 30 years. Other CBH credits include stories and photographs in Progress Editions, Strength Editions, several front page hard-news stories and the annual Hunting and Fishing Editions. His column-writing expertise has been expanded to include a weekly gardening column, during the gardening season, and a history and trivia column titled Bits & Pieces. His writings and photographs earned him numerous awards. In 1989 he won " Excellence in Craft", a black and white photo contest from the Northwest Outdoor Writers Association. His first national award was for a short story, "The Time Has Come, and Will Again," it placed first in the National Hunting & Fishing Day contest in 1991. Dennis has several awards from the Society of Professional Journalists of both the Inland Northwest and the Pacific Northwest chapters. Dennis and

Rock n' Roll star and hunter Ted Nugent teamed up to place third in one SPJ Sports Reporting contest about hunting ethics. Dennis spent the last 34 years as a member of the Northwest Outdoor Writers Association, where he served on the board for 16 years and became President in 2019. He is also a member of the Outdoor Writers Association of America, has written for the Columbia Basin Herald for 29 years and was host of a KBSN radio show for 23 years. He is also a graduate of the Washington State University Master Gardener program and the Master Composter program in Spokane, WA. Dennis was named Honorary Commander of the 92nd Air Refueling Squadron for facilitating the "Lunch with the Troops" when the airmen from Fairchild AFB were stationed in Moses Lake. Three years later he was named Honorary Commander of the 36th Rescue Squadron. Every Tuesday Dennis would give of his own time and picked up food from the food bank and delivered to over 60 households, for those who where unable to get there. In 2018 he was awarded the Lifetime Achievement Proclamation from the City of Moses Lake. He volunteered in serving his country, his community and his fellow citizens his entire life. He married the love of his life Garnet Wilson Clay in 1998. For several years they attended the SHOT Show in Las Vegas starting in the 90's meeting, interviewing and taking pictures of several celebrities, they included Ted Nugent, Willie Robertson, Aaron Tippin, Sammy Hagar, Nolan Ryan, Joe Mantegna, The lone survivor, Troy Landry, Craig Morgan, Tracy Lawrence and many many many more. This year Dennis got to visit with his favorite manufacturers and see lots of new products coming out that he could not write about, like Remington and Buck knives. Dennis and Garnet went to several Tomato Heirloom Fairs where they prepared and showed off the best of the Heirloom tomatoes, which was hosted by The Cedarbrook Lodge in SeaTac, Wa. Naturally they continued camping in their favorite place Pot Holes State Park #23 which was 23 miles from their home. After his demise Garnet found out he had already reserved a fishing resort for this year, which she had to cancel. They were happily married for 21 years. He is preceded in death by his father Max N Clay, mother Enid A Clay and 2 half sisters, twins Marlene and Charlene. He is survived by his wife Garnet Wilson Clay her son Clay Wilson of Moses Lake, sister Denise Dodge of Tri Cities, half sister JoAnne Pearson (John) of Oregon, Niece Roxee Dodge Tovar, (Scott) of Benton City, 2 great nieces Kizzy Dodge and Nia Tovar and 1 great nephew Zander Dodge. ALWAYS LOVED NEVER FORGOTTEN We are proud of you and miss you Uncle Denny.

# Comments

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“ Denny Clay and I met at the Army Aviation Center at Fort Rucker Alabama in the summer of 1969. Denny had just arrived back from a tour in the Delta in RVN flying Hueys with the 9th Inf Division. He was a real hero being awarded the Bronze Star with V and 17 Air Medals representing over 400 combat missions. He shared many of his experiences with me. He had volunteered as a Private in the US Army in 1967 and got his commission through OCS and then qualified for Rotary Wing Flight school at Fort Rucker. His first assignment out of flight school was Vietnam. When I met him he was a Captain which was really something for a young officer. He had just returned to Fort Rucker as a member of an Aviation Company. I had just been assigned to Fort Rucker as a Judge Advocate Officer. He realized I was from Oregon and was a fisherman. Being a very friendly guy he introduced himself and asked me whether I wanted to fly in a Huey. I said sure and there ensued a wonderful friendship that continued throughout our tour years together including many fishing adventures. He was hands down my best friend at Fort Rucker. I'll never forget his great smile and good cheer. We even watched together man setting foot on the moon in a seedy country bar in De Funiak Springs, Florida on our return from a fishing trip in the Gulf. Denny's ex wife Rose nearly got us in a fight with some country boys dancing to a juke box there and not watching this very historical event. She pulled the plug on the juke box and when she explained the severity of their patriotic error of judgement they cheered us and we were all best of friends. I served 28 years in the Army and never met a nicer guy. With Denny there was no bad day even when he flew his Huey sitting on his steel pot so he wouldn't catch a wayward round. My then wife and I followed him through his next assignment to Fort Hood and then after a tour in Korea and his separation from the Army he visited us in Oregon City. That was our last visit together. I tried to find his whereabouts since then to get reacquainted but wasn't successful until last Thursday. I was watching the Smithsonian channel broadcasting a series on USTSB [US Transportation Safety Board] investigation of the causes of serious aircraft accidents. While at Fort Rucker I was responsible for legal review of aircraft accidents at Fort Rucker usually involving fatalities. That reminded me of a problem of the rear rotor of UH1 Huey's shearing off in flight with very bad results. There were issues of possible design defects. I had told Denny about that at the time as he flew Hueys. For some reason it popped into my head now to do another Google search for him. And that is how I came across his obituary, just a few days after his funeral. I wish I could have been there. He loved Moses Lake and its community. I am not surprised about his amazing career as a journalist, author, a great husband, and everybody's best friend! He was certainly one of mine!

Bless you Denny.

A Great Friend from the Past

Jack Hammond

Col, US Army[Retired]

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May 2, 2020



“ I met Dennis when I was 14. He and his date were along with me and my date to see a movie at the Skyline drive-in theater in Moses Lake where I grew up. We never kept in touch but after 60 years, we reconnected by phone and he was kind enough to help me try to locate an old friend. He was patient and helpful. His willingness to help was so appreciated. I also (by phone) met his lovely wife Garnet. We talked for nearly an hour just like we had known each other for years. My prayers and condolences to his many friends and especially to Garnet and the entire Clay family. Heaven has welcomed another angel.

Terry Hieb - Class of '67



Terry Hieb - April 22, 2020 at 07:18 PM

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“ So very sorry for your loss. Dennis was an amazing person and I only wish we could have known him. He will be missed by so many people who he touched their lives especially in the sports . God Bless.

Gaylene Rudy - April 22, 2020 at 12:28 PM

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“ Denise and Clay family - so sorry to read of Dennis' death. He was such a nice person, always a friend to others, and a wonderful writer.

LARRY RIGSBY - April 20, 2020 at 12:49 PM

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“ Garnet i am so sorry for your loss.  
he was a very nice man he brought a man to the store to help him get the most for his money. He was always very kind.



**Annemarie Hermann** - April 20, 2020 at 11:04 AM

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“ I was so sad to hear of the passing of my friend. I worked with Dennis for many years at the Columbia Basin Herald. I so enjoyed reading his many columns. Our readers sure did, and I told Dennis his articles made my job of growing CBH readership much easier. I often listened to Dennis each Saturday morning on KBSN as I worked at my desk. We've lost a gifted writer, broadcaster and area historian.

God bless Garnet and family during this difficult time. May the good Lord grant them peace and understanding.

**Tom Hinde** - April 17, 2020 at 11:38 PM

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“ My prayers , condolences are with Garnet and the family. He was the nicest man with a big heart. Be at peace my friend



**Regina Hovgaard** - April 17, 2020 at 07:24 PM

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“ My thoughts and prayers for you Garnet & family with the loss of Dennis. A good man with a contagious smile who never knew a stranger. Never to be forgotten.

**Sally Goodwin** - April 17, 2020 at 10:12 AM



“ Ayna Amaya lit a candle in memory of Dennis Laurel Clay



**ayna amaya** - April 17, 2020 at 01:33 AM

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“ I met Dennis about 7yrs ago with Garnet and Larry at Fairchild AFB Airshow. He was very much in tuned with the sound of Apache Helicopters, bought back lots of memories he said. He like many I know and appreciate became my Hero that day. I appreciate his services always. He even wrote a nice article in the paper about us and the event. He was having a blast riding around the airport in Golf cart handing out water! I spotted him at the fair one day giving away diet water (lol) My heart breaks for Garnett and Brenda Garnett and I would met Friday mornings at Walmart always in a hurry to get back to Brenda there lil dog rolled up in blankets. I will miss seeing him at Safeway with a bouquet of flowers and Scratch tickets. Thank you for protecting us on earth and now as Gods Soldier! I could only imagine! How beautiful it must be there!!

**ayna amaya** - April 17, 2020 at 01:31 AM

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“ Dennis has an impressive history as we know. Nevertheless, I believe that the greatest thing about Dennis was that he was absolutely the nicest guy that anyone would ever want to meet. I will miss him. God bless his family.

**Richard Willis** - April 16, 2020 at 09:15 PM

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“ Joan & David H Lobie lit a candle in memory of Dennis Laurel Clay



Joan & David H Lobie - April 16, 2020 at 06:20 PM