

Clayton Ray Williams

December 3, 1926 ~ June 25, 2023

On Sunday, June 25, 2023, Clayton Ray Williams, our beloved father, grandfather, and great-grandfather, peacefully passed away in his home. He was 96 years old. Born to Florence Campbell and Gilbert Winder Williams on Dec. 3, 1926, Clayton lived an amazing life – it was the stuff of movies.

He was raised on the Avenues in Salt Lake City. His fun and warm early experiences in the neighborhood, with close friends and cousins who became like brothers (and enjoyed many high jinks together!), seemed to set the stage for how he would interact with others for the rest of his life.

He and his buddies signed up to serve their country after Pearl Harbor was attacked in 1941. Clayton spent two years in the Coast Guard, serving on a ship in the Atlantic. He worked the Morse code machines, communicating with those on land and sea. He was proud to serve his country.

In 1953, he graduated from the University of Utah in Mechanical Engineering. He was a member of the Sigma Chi fraternity. While still attending school, he joined his father and brother in what eventually became Williams Equipment and Controls, an industrial heating and cooling company.

After serving a 2 ½ year mission to Norway for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, he married Marilyn Covey in 1950 in the Salt Lake Temple. They built their dream home together on Neptune Drive in Mt. Olympus Cove. They had six children. Music and laughter were abundant in this home. Clayton and Marilyn later divorced, in 1979.

Clayton served as president of the Rotary Club of Salt Lake City, from 1976-78. He found fulfillment in this role, establishing a foundation that has given financial assistance to thousands of at-risk children in subsequent decades. He also led and assisted many charitable organizations throughout the years. This, he learned from his parents, “always give back to your community.”

He married Elaine Stevens in 1980. They had a full life together, including traveling the world and giving exquisite dinner parties.

Clayton faithfully served in various callings for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He especially enjoyed his service to the young men in his ward as Priest Quorum Advisor, and as a High Councilor and High Priest Group Leader.

Clayton’s full talents blossomed when, in 1986, he sold the family business and opened an art gallery, Williams Fine Art. As he put it, he went from “left brain to right brain.” Finally, he was able to fully use his innate artistic talents and love of beauty, inherited from his artistic mother. He began painting seriously—mostly with oils. He became a well-known, popular local artist. But his real mission (as he saw it) was to champion the early Utah artists-- such as J.T. Harwood and John Hafen--who began the “Utah landscape tradition” in the 1890s. He

meticulously studied their lives, becoming an expert on their work and careers. Over the course of three decades, Clayton became a significant force within the Utah art community.

He spent his early childhood summers at the family cabin in Holiday Park (in the Uintahs) and always loved spending time there with family and friends, especially fishing at Yellow Lake. His stories of attempting to land the great fish “Jumbo” became family legend.

Clayton loved progress. He loved helping and inspiring people to advance all good causes, especially those that bring joy and beauty into the world. He always wanted to be where the action was. Never a passive participant of life, he was a catalyst for making things better. He has left an indelible mark on his family and community.

He is survived by his children, Cathy Tait (Steve), Louise Nelson (Gary), Clayton Williams (Denise), Stephen Williams, Dan Williams (Cynthia), and Florence Jackson (Steven). He is survived by 25 grandchildren and 71 great grandchildren. He is preceded in death by his wife, Elaine Williams, grandson Claytie Williams and his great grandson Ben Tait.

His funeral will be held on Wednesday, July 5, 2023 at 11:00 a.m. at the Monument Park Stake Center, located at 1320 Wasatch Drive in Salt Lake City, Utah. A viewing will be held at 9:00 a.m. before the funeral at the same location. Clayton will be buried in the Salt Lake City Cemetery, next to his parents.