



## Wil Clay

January 13, 2011

Wil Clay, graphic designer, illustrator, painter, sculptor and storyteller, passed away on January 13, 2011, in Toledo, Ohio, at the young age of 72.

He is survived by his six children, more specifically five from his marriage to Ruth (Cureton) Clay, namely, Michael Clay (of Houston, Texas), Christina Clay Polite, Alecia Clay Cole (Patrick), Melinda Clay Reyes (Curtis), and Tamorah Clay Lopez (Alejandro); and one from his subsequent marriage to Glenna V. Parkinson, namely, Donato Jide Clay (of Los Angeles, Ca.). He also has five grandchildren: Michael DuWayne II, Tamika Michelle, Micala Danielle; Elena Madison, and Trystan; and two great grandchildren: Alex and Nathan.

He is also survived by his brothers: John Seay (Sandra), of Greenville, N.C., Theodore "Ted" Clay, of Providence, R.I., Lafayette Clay, Chicago, Ill.; and one sister, Bernita Swope, of Benton Harbor; and a host of nieces, nephews, and cousins. He thoroughly enjoyed seeing his family at the biennial family reunions.

Wil was a lover extraordinaire of art, illustration, graphics, and children's books.

Wil was a graduate of Macomber Vocational in Toledo, Ohio. After graduation, he entered into military service with the Navy, and was honorably discharged in 1962. He studied art at The American Academy of Art in Chicago and the Vesper George School of Art in Boston and University of Toledo in Ohio. He further attended the University of Toledo, and was just a few credit hours shy of receiving his Bachelors Degree.

Wil was self-employed, having owned his own art and graphic design business since shortly after his discharge from the Navy. He concentrated on corporate design in his Providence, R.I. studio for seven years before moving to Texas, where he headed a multifaceted graphic arts business for 17 years. In 1987, Mr. Clay returned to his hometown of Toledo, where he devoted most of his time to fine arts painting and sculpture. In 1988, he opened his studio at the Common Space Center for Creativity, where he also taught figure drawing. Among Wil's recent successes is "Radiance", a six-foot bronze and stainless steel sculpture that honors the late Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Wil was a primary designer and sculptor of the work, which became the "run-away favorite" in an invitational competition sponsored by the Arts Commission of Greater Toledo. "Radiance" features four strongly modeled heads of Dr. King mounted on a highly polished steel sphere. Viewers' reflections are a reminder that we are all one people. The work was dedicated in downtown Toledo in September, 1989.

In 1990, Wil traveled to Cameroon, Africa, for three months of independent study in conjunction with his art history and sculpture studies at the University of Toledo. Working primarily with the Bamileke people of the south and the Fulani people of the north, Wil did drawings, paintings and studied the relationship of art - including woodcarving, metalsmithing, beadwork and painting - to tribal festivals and dances.

Paintings, sketches and sculptures by Wil Clay are represented in private collections in California, Colorado, Washington, Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, Louisiana, Texas, Rhode Island, Massachusetts and Washington, D.C. in the United States, and in Canada, England, Jamaica, Sierra Leone and Cameroon, Africa.

In 1993 Wil's book, Little Eight John received the Coretta Scott King Honor Award for Illustration. During the school year Wil Clay enjoyed visiting elementary schools, libraries, colleges and professional organizations. At each venue he always promoted the importance of reading. His audiences enjoyed his animated way of storytelling. Words and characters just seem to

come alive. Older students delighted in his sharing of the creative process in producing a picture book. Younger students couldn't wait to try out secret drawing techniques learned during an assembly. Others would get excited about writing their own short story. It was a most rewarding time for Wil Clay to see students display enthusiasm for reading and illustrations. He often quoted the expression that one picture really is worth more than 10,000 words.

Wil will always be loved by countless family and friends, especially those in the art community who he revered. Amongst other places, he was a longtime patron, supporter and exhibitor at the Toledo Museum of Art. He will live on in our hearts and through his art. For viewing his art online, and for sharing comments and condolences, please visit his website at [www.wilclay.com](http://www.wilclay.com).

A Wake Service and viewing will be held Friday, January 21, 2011, from 5:00pm until 9:00pm, at the Dale-Riggs Funeral Home, 572 Nebraska Ave., Toledo, Ohio 43604. Ph. (419) 248-4254.