



J Paul Cornelius

October 12, 1929 - February 22, 2019

J Paul (Jigger) Cornelius, 89, departed this life surrounded by his family on February 22, 2019 at Jack C. Montgomery VA Hospital in Muskogee, OK. He was born on October 12, 1929 in Cookietown, OK to William A. and Elloda Bruner Cornelius. Paul was the youngest of six boys and one girl.

Paul moved to Marlow, OK in August 1930 where he and his five brothers all attended school. After high school, he entered the US Army in April 1948, where he served 25 years. He was medically retired in January of 1973. Paul served in the Korean War and Vietnam. He was awarded the Combat Infantry Badge; Purple Heart; Bronze Star Medal for Valor; Bronze Star Medal for Service; Meritorious Service Medal; Air Medal; Commendation Medal; and numerous other medals and ribbons. Paul acquired the rank of Chief Warrant Officer 3 and spent his last 15 years of service in Military Intelligence. After retiring from the military, Paul and his family moved to Duncan, OK. He then attended USAO in Chickasha where he graduated Cum Laude in 1976 with a degree in Psychology. He later attended the University of Oklahoma graduate school, majoring in Psychometry. In 1982, Paul went to work at Ft. Sill as a civilian and was an intelligence specialist. He retired from his civilian position in November 1991.

Paul married Helen Lee McGary on September 2, 1960 in Windsheim, Germany. They were blessed in this union with three sons and one daughter.

Paul and Lee were married 58 years.

Paul was preceded in death by his parents, William and Elloda Cornelius, Marlow, OK; five brothers, Arvin Cornelius, Huntington Beach, CA; L.D. (Bud) Cornelius, Parker, AZ; Wayne Cornelius, Marlow, OK; Manuel Cornelius, OKC, OK; and John Cornelius, Duncan, OK; one sister, Wilma Cornelius and one son Mark Andrew Cornelius.

Paul is survived by his wife, Helen Lee McGary Cornelius of the home; a son John Christopher, OKC, OK; a son Matthew Kelly, Vian, OK; and a daughter, Katherine Lee (Kitty) Cornelius, Mustang, OK; five grandchildren, 7 great grandchildren and a number of nieces, nephews and other relatives.

A graveside memorial service will be held at Ft. Gibson National Cemetery, Ft. Gibson, OK with full military honors on Wednesday, February 27, 2019 at 1:00 pm.

Cemetery Details

Fort Gibson National Cemetery

1423 National Cemetery Rd.
Fort Gibson, OK

Previous Events

Graveside Service

FEB 27. 1:00 PM (CT)

Fort Gibson National Cemetery
1423 National Cemetery Rd.
Fort Gibson, OK

Tribute Wall



“ I was recently reading letters I sent home from Vietnam and came across this one dated 26 January 1969: "My team chief and friend, Mr. Cornelius, was wounded 2 days ago while on an operation." It goes on to describe how a mortar round landed near him and caused terrible injuries. He was the head of the Liaison Team of the 25th Military Intelligence Detachment and I thought the world of him. I'm sorry to hear of his passing, but it sounds like he recovered from his wounds and lived a good life afterward.

Karl Michel - July 29, 2025 at 07:14 AM



“ J Paul Cornelius

October 23, 2023 at 09:38 AM

JC

“ JC

John Cornelius

a few seconds ago

Dear Dad,

It's been a year this Saturday since you left us. Not a single day has gone by that I haven't spent some time thinking of you and the hole that you're passing has left in our world. The holidays seemed so empty without you here. I couldn't wait for them to be over honestly. Mom is relatively healthy but she seems to be slipping further and further away as her dementia progresses. Kelly is still doing a great job taking care of her along with Kitty who spells him from time to time and offers her some much needed girl time I think. Connor and his family are doing very well. His babies are getting big and they becoming the sweetest most precious little humans ever. I just wish you were here to spoil them with me. Katie-Bug is doing well too! I plan on paying you a visit Saturday to have a chat, bring you some flowers and sit with you for a spell. I hope the weather is nice enough that I can stay a little longer this time.

I love you pops, I'll be seeing you soon!

Christopher

John Chris Cornelius - February 21, 2020 at 12:29 AM

JC

“ 2 files added to the tribute wall



John Chris Cornelius - February 21, 2020 at 12:26 AM

JS

“ Dear Dad,

It's been a month today since you left us. It's still hard to believe that I will never again be able to call you up on the phone and hear you say " What's up fella"? I still find myself thinking it's possible from time to time and then the cold reality of your departure from this earth comes back into focus and I find myself full of regret for having missed the opportunity to call you more often.

I spoke to Connor about you at length the other afternoon. He was having a really tough time dealing with the fact that he wasn't able to be at your funeral. I reassured him as best that I could that you would have understood his reasons but it was of little solace to him. He is plagued by regret for having squandered the opportunity to spend more time with you when it was still possible. I hope you will watch over him and his family as he navigates his way through this crazy world? He's a good man and I firmly believe he will be a great dad because he was lucky enough to have you as a role model.

Dad I miss you and your generous spirit everyday. I look forward to the day that we will all be reunited with our patriarch, our dad and our papa. I love you and miss you dearly.

*Your son,
Christopher*

John Chris Cornelius (eldest son) - March 22, 2019 at 08:04 AM

MC

“ Today I packed up your clothes Dad. It literally took me all day. Not because you had that much, but because each time I pulled out a shirt, or a pair of pants or a dusty pair of shoes, it would remind me of the last time I saw you in them. You have left us all with so many wonderful memories and lessons that we can cherish in our journey forward.

Mom is doing well btw and although her dementia hasn't quite allowed her to understand that this is more than a temporary separation, I think she knows that something is different this time. She told me this morning that you came to her in her dreams last night and she was in a great mood all day.

I know it broke your heart that she seemed more distant this past year because of the dementia. I'm sure now you can see inside her heart and know that she has never loved anyone with more passion and loyalty. You guys will be together forever and always. Until we see each other again, know that I love you and I did my very best for you and mom over the past two years. Please say hi to all the brothers, Papa, Grandma and Mark.

We will all be joined again someday by the Grace of God.

Your son,
Kelly

Matthew Kelly Cornelius - March 01, 2019 at 08:51 PM



“ Dear Dad,

Yesterday we laid you to rest. The weather was gloomy, punctuated with bouts of precipitation, In a way I think the weather mirrored everyone's mood.

I think you would have been very pleased with the service. Your funeral procession was escorted all the way to the cemetery by several police cars. Almost every car and truck we passed pulled respectfully to shoulder until we had passed. The military honors were very grand and appropriately respectful. The sermon was short, well balanced, with just right the amount of anecdotal humility and religious references. Kelly did a wonderful job on your eulogy, you would have been quite proud of him. You would have been equally proud of Kitty as she tended to mom, kept her warm while gathering up all the remembrances that had been given to mom by the honor guard.

I believe you would have approved of the entire affair. In fact the only downside I can recall was that when it was all said and done we were required to leave you behind to be laid to rest.

To say you will be missed is the king of all understatement dad. You had such a great impact on all of us. You were our glue, our rock, our touchstone, our moral compass, but most importantly our dad!

We will be forever changed by your departure! I for one don't ever want to be completely okay with your loss.

*I love you dad!
Your son Christopher*

Chris Cornelius - February 28, 2019 at 01:33 PM



“ *Full Of Love Bouquet was purchased for the family of J Paul Cornelius.*



February 26, 2019 at 09:50 PM



“ *Michaelle Hartley-Gray purchased the Serenity W reath for the family of J Paul Cornelius.*



Michaelle Hartley-Gray - February 26, 2019 at 09:02 PM



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of J Paul Cornelius.*



February 26, 2019 at 07:21 PM



“ *America the Beautiful was purchased for the family of J Paul Cornelius.*



February 26, 2019 at 12:24 PM

Monica
Huffaker

“ *In 1978 I had just moved to the grade school Kitty attended. She asked me to come to her home for lunch. That evening she got in trouble because Mr Cornelius didn't want her bringing home boys at lunch. That boy was me!*

Monica Huffaker - February 25, 2019 at 05:41 PM

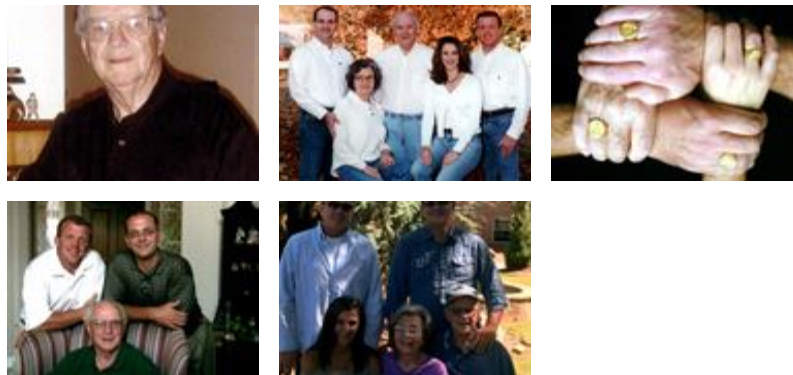
MC

I was literally in tears laughing at this one Moko! ;)

Matthew Kelly Cornelius - March 01, 2019 at 08:30 PM



“ *80 files added to the album Life Tributes*



Cornerstone Funeral Home and Crematory - February 25, 2019 at 04:08 PM



“ *Sweet Tenderness was purchased for the family of J Paul Cornelius.*



February 25, 2019 at 10:35 AM



“ *Strength & Solace Spray was purchased for the family of J Paul Cornelius.*



February 25, 2019 at 09:02 AM



“ *Sacred Duty Spray was purchased for the family of J Paul Cornelius.*



February 25, 2019 at 08:49 AM



“ *If there was ever finer man I've yet to meet him. My father taught me many wonderful things during my lifetime. My father was a mans man no doubt about it but he had a soft side too. Especially when came to his wife and children. He was the most patriotic person I could ever hope to meet. He did his duty to his country in two separate theaters of war but I never heard him boast once about it. He was a wonderful provider for family. He taught his children by example that character is what you do when nobody is watching. Despite having normal size feet he has left us all with huge shoes to fill. I will miss him all the rest of the days of my life. I love you dad I hope I can be half the man you were!*

Chris Cornelius - February 23, 2019 at 10:52 PM

CC

Dad it's been 4 days since you left us and I wanted say what a complete honor it was to be allowed to accompany you down the halls of the VA Hospital during your honor walk. I have to say that it was one of the saddest yet at the same time proudest moments of my entire life. Seeing all the staff and their patients lining the halls at attention, some saluting others with their hands placed respectfully over their hearts as we passed by. I got the sense that each and everyone of them understood the gravity of our loss at that very moment. I remember distinctly how proud it made me feel every time we used drive on to any military post to see the soldiers at the gate snap to and salute as our car would pass the guard house because they would see your officers sticker on our bumper. Somehow it made me feel more important because I was your son. Now that I'm older I have come to realize that even though those days of spiffy salutes and officers bumper stickers are long behind us I still have always felt more important when I was anywhere with you because you always carried yourself with so much honor and dignity and I knew people could sense that about you. I'm not sure how I will manage my life from here on without you dad but I promise to always strive to be that person for my children that you were for yours.

Chris Cornelius - February 26, 2019 at 04:19 PM

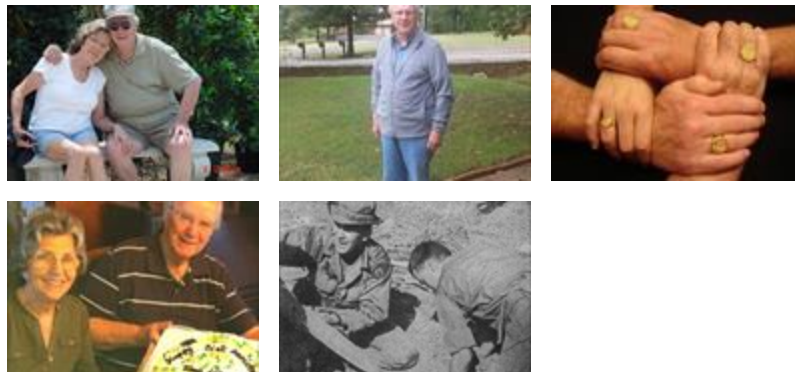
KC

I was in line at Walgreens drive thru picking up a script for mom in dad's car and a gentleman next to me asked me about dad when he saw his CWO tag. He told me to tell dad thank you for his service. He always made me proud even when he wasn't along for the ride.

Kitty Cornelius - February 26, 2019 at 08:51 PM

CC

“ 22 files added to the tribute wall



Chris Cornelius - February 23, 2019 at 10:25 PM



“ Basket Full of Wishes was purchased for the family of J Paul Cornelius.



February 23, 2019 at 06:15 PM



“ Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of J Paul Cornelius.



February 22, 2019 at 11:41 PM