

Cornelius Lester Gray
1924–2012

FAMILY HISTORY:

Cornelius Lester Gray was born in Troy, New York on May 26, 1924 to parents Cornelius and Irene (Coffey) Gray. Cornelius had one brother, William.

EDUCATION:

He graduated from Christian Brothers Academy, attended Siena College upon returning from WWII and enrolled in Georgetown University. Neil attended intense courses at over 12 schools.

HISTORY:

Neil enlisted into the US Army in Albany, New York on December 9, 1942. He was chosen for intelligence work in Ceylon and Burma. He trained in jungle navigation, weapons, explosives, radio code and evasions tactics. Sergeant Gray served in WWII as second in command of a secret mission and also acted as both security officer and medical officer on two of the main bases in the jungle. He returned from WWII and continued his education, but was recalled to active duty with the US Army for Korea in May of 1951. He was commissioned a second lieutenant and assigned to the US Army Counterintelligence Corps at Fort Holabird, Maryland. He continued to serve in classified intelligence assignments in the US, Far East and Europe. During the Vietnam War, Major Gray served as commanding officer assigned to the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment. Major Gray retired from the Army in 1968 after 26 years of dedicated service. For his brave and honorable service to his country, Major Cornelius L. Gray was awarded over 30 medals, commendations and ribbons. A few to mention are the Good Conduct Medal, Asiatic Pacific Theater Ribbon w/bronze Arrowhead, American Theater Ribbon, WWII Victory Ribbon, 3 Bronze Stars (one for each war), Korean Service Medal, Parachutist Badge, Meritorious Unit Commendation, Navy Unit Commendation, Vietnam Service Medal, Vietnam Campaign Medal, RVN Medal of Honor, Air Medal, Armed Forces Reserve Medal, National Defense Service Medal, and the United Nations Medal.

PERSONAL:

Neil married Cheryl (Beaudoin) Gray on September 30, 1951 in Troy, New York and from their union they had one daughter, Mary Jo.

WORK

After military retirement, he was employed with the Atomic Energy Commission's Knolls Atomic Power Laboratory as inspector of classified operations and later by General Dynamic's Electric Boat Division in the Navy's Nuclear Propulsion Program as Director of Personnel.

EXPERIENCE:**COMMUNITY**

He was a charter member of the North Albany American Legion Post, inducted into the prestigious Air Commando Hall of Fame in Fort Walton, Florida, inducted into the Grey Beret Hall of Fame in Hurlbut Field, Florida, Grand Marshall of the Memorial Day Parade in Albany, Grand Marshall of the Troy Veteran's Day Parade and Grand Marshall of the Menands Veteran's Day Parade. One of his most notable assignments was serving as John F. Kennedy's bodyguard in Europe during his Presidency.

ACTIVITIES/ORGANIZATIONS:

Neil had a great sense of humor, loved people and animal; especially training horses and his pet dog. He enjoyed golf, eating at church breakfasts, pictures of loved ones. He thoroughly enjoyed his Irish heritage and was honored by being "Mr. Limerick" in the North Albany Parade.

Sadly, Cornelius Lester Gray passed away on December 28, 2012 and was buried with military honors in St. Agnes Cemetery, Menands.