



Philip E Clark

April 24, 1943 - April 7, 2026

Philip Edwin Clark passed away peacefully on the morning of April 7, at the age of 82. He is survived by his wife of 56 years, Lorena Gay; his son, Damon; his daughter-in-law Courtney; three Grandsons; his brother Wayne; and five other siblings across the country.

Phil was one-of-a-kind: A Husband, Father, Grandfather, Tinkerer, Teacher, Airman, Accountant, Crafter, Quilter, Carpenter, Baker, Story-teller, and occasional Musician. He dedicated almost 20 years to building musical instruments: dulcimers, harps, guitars, a few hurdy-gurdies, and several instruments never before seen outside of science fiction. If it was wood and had strings, he could build it, drive a car over it, and keep playing it. Along with several of his brothers and friends, Phil built over 13,000 musical instruments in his Homestead basement and traveled to craft shows and festivals around the Eastern United States, selling his works to all ages and ranges of musical ability.

Phil was born in Denver, Colorado, to father, Merle and Mother, Jean, and spent his youth moving around the country for his father's career with the government. He graduated High School in Douglas Arizona, and received a bachelor's degree from the University of California Riverside after a four-year stint in the Air Force as a Russian translator, stationed in Japan.

In his later years, Phil's mobility issues prevented him from continuing his wood-working passion, so he turned to quilting and sewing to keep his hands busy. Over the past 25 years, Phil has made thousands of colorful quilts and clothing items for local donation and international missions through his church.

A memorial will be held at Whitehall Church of Christ next week, details to be posted. We welcome any thoughts and memories you would like to share on this obituary page; personal messages can be sent to rememberingphilip2026@gmail.com

Previous Events

Memorial Service

APR 18. 11:00 AM (ET)

Whitehall Church of Christ
215 Streets Run Road
Pittsburgh, PA 15236

Lunch will follow service

Tribute Wall



“ Phil has been one of those people who have become a face of the church to our family. When we think of our church family, we see Phil and his lovely wife. I have too many beautiful memories of Phil to mention here, but to try and summarize: Phil was an inspiration to me personally of how to never stop learning, growing, or doing. He never stopped doing things for others, improving his skills, and increasing his knowledge. I will always remember him for that, and try to follow in those steps. (I also have to say, selfishly, I will miss his birthday message to me this year, always calling me a “young lady” every year no matter how old I get. :)). I will miss you, Phil!! I will see you in eternity and I will thank you again for your steadfast example of life lived well. I hope Bob doesn't mind: I am sharing a pic from our church photos from 2023. Phil won the Chili that year! (I know none of you are surprised.). Pic credit: Bob Marlow, Whitehall Church of Christ



Jennifer Leigh - April 11 at 09:25 AM



Should say: Phil won the Chili *Cookoff*! 🌶️

Jennifer Leigh - April 11 at 09:27 AM

JD

“ I grew up at Whitehall CoC and when I was young he helped me learn how to play the Dulcimer. Throughout my childhood, he frequently made one of my favorite soups for "Souper Wednesdays" that had some kind of liver in it, which disgusted some people but I loved it. He also made quilts for when I went off to college as well as when my wife went off to college. We both miss him and loved him very much. See you later, Phil, I'm sure you'll be singing in heaven and making quilts for all the angels.

Joshua Dillinger - April 09 at 08:19 AM

JD

“ When I moved to Pittsburgh in 1997 he came to church with his wonderful wife and I met him for the first time. I told him that I would like to stop over and talk with him. Several weeks went by and then he came back to church one Sunday. After I said hello he said to me, I thought you were going to come to my house and talk. What he help me to understand was action is more important than words. Not only did I go to his house soon after that we became very close friends. He will be greatly missed. His love for Jesus and is willingness to be a giver to many will be missed in this lifetime.

Jeffrey Dillinger - April 08 at 04:47 PM

“Phil was one of those rare people who didn’t just pass through your life—he shaped it.

I met him over 30 years ago at Rockey Mt. Enterprise, walking into what I thought would be a nerve-wracking job interview. Instead, it turned into something I’ve never forgotten. Phil looked at me, saw that I had just earned my Eagle Scout, and without hesitation said he knew I’d be hardworking and dependable. Just like that, I was hired on the spot. That was Phil—he had a way of seeing the good in people before they even had the chance to prove it.

I became his apprentice luthier, and for years we worked side by side. Those weren’t just workdays—they were lessons in patience, craftsmanship, and pride. Phil had a quiet mastery about him. He could take a piece of wood and turn it into something meaningful, and along the way, he passed down every trick he knew. Not just how to build instruments, but how to approach the work with care and intention.

Of course, not all the lessons were graceful. One day, I managed to cut myself using a pocket knife while working on a piece of wood. Before I knew it, Phil had me scooped up and carried upstairs to the couch like I weighed nothing. After that, it became a running joke between him, Wayne, and me—how I’d better not cut my finger again or I might pass out. That Christmas, Phil leaned right into the joke and gave me a hand-carved pocket knife... made entirely out of wood. Safe, harmless, and completely perfect. I still have it to this day, and it means more to me than he probably ever realized.

Phil didn’t just teach—he encouraged. He gave me the freedom to branch out and design my own instrument, something between a dulcimer and a music stick. He believed in letting people try, fail, and figure things out. I was also there when he created the pocket dulcimer, watching him work through multiple prototypes until it was just right. Being part of that process was something special.

Years later, after I'd moved on and was working for an ambulance service, I came across some old, beat-up wooden spine boards. I reached out to Phil, and without a second thought, he took them in, cleaned them up, sanded them, and refinished them—refusing any payment. That was just who he was. If he could help, he did.

Life got busy, and like it does, time put some distance between us. We kept in touch here and there on Facebook, but it wasn't until COVID hit that we really reconnected. During that time, while I was still working in EMS, Phil reached out again—this time offering help in a different way. He hand-sewed and donated 100 masks to our ambulance service. One hundred. Every single one made by hand, just to make sure we were protected. That kind of generosity sticks with you.

A few months ago, I stopped by to drop off some fabric I didn't need anymore. Like always, one conversation turned into another, and before we knew it, over an hour had passed. We laughed, told old stories, and picked up right where we left off. And somehow—like only Phil could—he talked me into helping him move a sewing machine before I left. Of course I did. You didn't say no to Phil... and honestly, you didn't want to.

Phil wasn't just a friend. He was a mentor, a teacher, and one of the kindest, most genuine people I've ever known. The lessons he taught me, the memories we shared, and that wooden pocket knife sitting in my home—they're all reminders of the kind of man he was.

You're going to be missed, buddy.

Ray Hyland



Ray Hyland - April 08 at 04:33 PM

DA

“ 4 files added to the album Phil



Damon - April 08 at 03:13 PM

GF

Phil was the most talented and most kind. He made hundreds of quilts and dresses and men's shirts for families of the Braddock Freestore 15104 over the years. He was so beloved.

Gisele Fetterman - April 08 at 05:44 PM

KL

*Phil was the most productive Quilter that I have ever met
Even when he was hurting, he always had a smile for everyone.*

Karen Luce - April 08 at 06:46 PM