



Clifton Alva Williams, Jr.

December 18, 1950 - May 1, 2026

Sensei Clifton Alva Williams, Jr., known to many as "Sensei Clif," passed away on May 1, 2026, at the age of 75. A man of uncommon discipline, deep curiosity, and quiet strength, Clif built a life defined by service - to his country, to his family, and to the communities he touched. Born on December 18, 1950, in Tampa, Florida, he carried that city's spirit with him across a lifetime of extraordinary chapters.

Early Life & Formation

Clifton was born to Clifton A. Williams, Sr., a dedicated member of the United States Air Force, and Arlene "Cherry" Williams, a driven and accomplished Tampa businesswoman whose entrepreneurial spirit left a lasting mark on her son. From his earliest years, Clif was shaped by a household that valued both duty and ambition.

At age six, Clif began studying martial arts - a discipline that would define much of his inner life. Between the ages of eight and ten, he lived with his Sensei in Miami, a formative immersion that planted in him a lifelong commitment to mastery, patience, and the code of the martial artist. He went on to attend the Army-Navy Academy in Carlsbad, California, where military structure and academic rigor further honed the young man he was becoming.

Military Service

Clifton volunteered to serve in the United States Marine Corps, enlisting in January 1969 out of Jacksonville, Florida. He served honorably as a Sergeant (E-5) and was stationed at Camp Pendleton, California. During his service, he

drew on his martial arts expertise to serve as a troop handler, providing classroom and field instruction in hand-to-hand combat to fellow Marines. He was awarded the National Defense Service Medal and the Rifle Marksman Badge, and earned the Good Conduct Medal. He received an Honorable Discharge in January 1971. His country asked, and Clifton answered - without hesitation.

A Life in Martial Arts

What began at age six became a lifelong pursuit of excellence. Clifton rose to hold black belt ranks across multiple disciplines, including Open Hand Karate and Judo, Hapkido, and Hi Han Jai - a comprehensive style incorporating striking, kicking, throwing, locking, and weapons defense, which he studied under Master Jon M. Jee. He earned his 1st Dan, 2nd Dan, and 3rd Dan ranks, and spent years serving on U.S. Martial Arts Demonstration Teams. He was also a member of the International Association for Martial Artists.

His study extended beyond technique into the philosophical traditions that surround the martial arts - Zen, Zazen, Tai Chi Chuan, Tigers Leap Kung-Fu, and KenPo. For Clifton, the martial arts were never merely physical; they were a way of understanding and moving through the world. Clifton was also a devoted Aikidoka, known among peers and students for a flowing, innovative style that set him apart. For twenty years he owned and operated Leaping Tigers Aikido Dojo in Fort Myers, Florida - a place where he passed on not just technique, but a philosophy of movement, discipline, and self-mastery to a generation of students.

A Heart for Healing

Clifton brought the same intensity he gave to everything - his joy, his love, his conviction - to the work of healing others. He earned a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration and Accounting and became a licensed practicing marriage and family counselor, devoting eight years to the mental health field. He supervised as many as twelve staff workers and served as director of a home parent facility for traumatized youth. Those who worked with him described him as "an excellent administrator, sensitive and aware of needs,"

with a natural gift for communication, teaching, and the kind of presence that made people feel genuinely seen.

Among his proudest contributions was his work helping to create the equine therapy program at Last Chance Ranch, a program serving violent juvenile offenders. Clifton believed that young men who had learned to shut themselves off from feeling could be reached through horses - animals that respond not to force, but to calm, to trust, and to authenticity. He helped teach young men with felony records how to be still, how to connect, and through that connection, how to begin caring for themselves. It was the work of a man who knew what it meant to hold great force and choose gentleness.

That work never stopped. In his later years, Clifton and his wife Jacqueline continued their equine therapy work together on their home farm, Heavenly Acres, in Moreland, Georgia - a place where horses and healing remained intertwined right up until his passing. It was a fitting final chapter for a man whose whole life was spent creating spaces where people could find their way back to themselves.

Beyond his formal roles, Clifton mentored thousands of men, women, and children in crisis over the course of his life - often stepping in as a surrogate father to those who had none, walking alongside them as they rebuilt themselves and changed the direction of their lives. He gave his time, his presence, and his belief in people freely and without condition. The full measure of his impact lives on in the lives of those he helped turn around.

Entrepreneur & Innovator

Later in life, Clifton reinvented himself again - as he always did. He founded Clif Williams & Associates Inc., a tech startup focused on software design, consultation, and firmware implementation that grew into a thriving enterprise. He also served as Board Member and Secretary-Treasurer of the Bay Area Association for Recreation and Human Development. Whatever the field, Clifton brought his full self: curious, determined, and unwilling to settle for what already existed when something better could be built.

Family

Above all else, Clifton was a father - by blood and by choice. He is survived by his wife of more than thirty years, Jacqueline P. Williams, with whom he built Heavenly Acres and shared the final, richest decades of his life. He is also survived by his four children: Clifton A. Williams III and his partner Laurie Nazareth; Cliffette A. Williams; Camille A. Williams; and Caitlin M. Stamey and her husband Justin Stamey. He leaves behind five grandchildren: Imani Rouse, Giani Cruickshank, Aaliyah Johnson, Hannah Duhs, and Sophia Stamey; and hundreds of nieces, nephews, great-nieces, and great-nephews who knew him as a constant, larger-than-life presence.

Among those he is survived by are his nephews Derrick Grace, Miguel Comacho, Roderick Grace, and Carey Grace - young men he took in and raised as his own, and with whom he shared a bond as deep and lasting as any he knew. They are a testament to the kind of father he was: one who never stopped at four.

He is also survived by his siblings - one of nine children of his mother Cherry: his eldest brother, Carr Brazelton of North Carolina; Veronica Robinson of Tampa, Florida; Sheila Harris of McDonough, Georgia; and Cheryl "Pippy" Wright of Tallahassee, Florida.

A Life Well Lived

Sensei Clifton Alva Williams, Jr. was intense in all things - his joy was full, his love was fierce, his hugs were the kind that pulled you in completely and made you feel held. He was a Marine, a martial artist, a dojo owner, a counselor, an innovator, a farmer, a healer, and a father to many more than four. He leaves behind not just the memory of who he was, but a living example of what is possible when a person refuses to be anything less than fully themselves.

"Live Long & Prosper." At the close of every class, Clifton would bring his hands together in prayer at his heart, bow his head, and offer his students a quiet Domo Arigato - thank you, from the depth of me, to the depth of you. It was how he moved through the world. Semper Fi.

HE IS SURVIVED BY

His wife, Jacqueline P. Williams

His children: Clifton A. Williams III (and Laurie Nazareth), Cliffette A. Williams, Camille A. Williams, and Caitlin M. Stamey (and Justin Stamey)

His grandchildren: Imani Rouse, Giani Cruickshank, Aaliyah Johnson, Hannah Duhs, and Sophia Stamey

His nephews, whom he raised: Derrick Grace, Miguel Comacho, Roderick Grace, and Carey Grace

His siblings: Carr Brazelton (NC), Veronica Robinson (Tampa, FL), Sheila Harris (McDonough, GA), and Cheryl "Pippy" Wright (Tallahassee, FL)

Hundreds of nieces, nephews, great-nieces, and great-nephews

Preceded in death by his mother, Arlene "Cherry" Williams; his father, Clifton A. Williams, Sr.;

his sisters, Mamie and Darthula; and his brothers, David and Sheldon.

Condolences may be expressed online at www.mckoon.com.

McKoon Funeral Home & Crematory (770) 253-4580

Cemetery Details

McKoon Funeral Home & Crematory

38 Jackson Street
Newnan, GA 30263
care@mckoon.com
<http://www.mckoon.com>