



Dennis K. Klute

March 28, 1933 – January 4, 2024

Dennis Kay Klute, 90, passed away on Thursday, January 4, 2024 in his residence surrounded by his family.

Dennis was born on March 28, 1933 in Boone, Iowa to August and Madge (Moberly) Klute. On October 16, 1954 in Boone, IA, he married Marilyn “Mary Jo” Joan Olson. She preceded him in death as did his sister Donna Pfliegier and brother Duane Klute.

On July 14, 1978, in Ames, Iowa he married Jean (nee Suhr) Highbarger who survives along with three sons Kevin (Brandy) Klute of Port Byron, IL, Matthew (Hélène) Highbarger of Granger, IN and Joseph (Jennifer) Highbarger of Springfield, MO and his grandson Samuel.

Dennis was a graduate of Boone High School and received his Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering from Iowa State University.

His dedicated career of civil service began with three years with the Wisconsin Highway Department before moving to Hawaii and Midway Island where he worked for the Bureau of Yards and Docks as a construction management engineer for nine years.

While in Hawaii, his first wife developed a severe mental illness and Dennis moved his young family to Iowa where the support of extended family enabled him to join the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) in Ames while working tirelessly to help support Mary Jo through her battle with schizophrenia.

Dennis and a heroic group of ten people representing seven family members met on June 23, 1968 for the purpose of establishing an Iowa chapter of the American Schizophrenia Foundation. At the time the label of “schizophrenia” was synonymous with “hopeless” yet the

group worked to be an instrument for family support, education, change, and hope. It worked to improve psychiatry techniques, therapies, patient treatment, legislation, and elimination of stigmas associated with the illness.

Dennis was the organization's first president. It later became the Iowa Schizophrenia Association and ultimately the Iowa Alliance for the Mentally Ill recognizing its inclusive expansion to advocate for many different forms of mental illness. The organization continues to thrive today as the Iowa affiliate of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI).

Dennis' commitment to his faith led to participation in support groups for widowed and divorced Catholics where he ultimately met Jean. They married in 1978, blended families, and continued to serve as a positive force for family life with substantial service to the Catholic community.

He also followed his passion for aviation. He built and piloted several radio-controlled planes, earned his own pilot's license, and then joined with a diverse group of enthusiasts who successfully built and then flew their own plane.

In 1994, just weeks before his scheduled retirement after a distinguished 37-year career with FHWA, Jean suffered a debilitating cerebral hemorrhage. Dennis again rose to the occasion providing tireless care and advocacy for Jean for all of his remaining years. No stone went unturned in support of her recovery and exploring adaptive possibilities. Undeterred, they continued to enjoy much travel and many adventures despite the circumstances.

An often quiet and introspective man, Dennis was a persistent force for action and service and his fortitude, obedience, persistence, and humility were constant.

In his last year, as his own health was beginning to falter, he continued his selfless sacrifice, graciously moving with his wife from his long-time community in Iowa to Indiana to be closer to extended family and make certain his wife would continue to receive the care and assistance he had faithfully provided.

In his relatively short time in residence at Tanglewood Trace, he made a significant impact on the community through his display of devotion and love in his advocacy and care for Jean.

He passed peacefully at home as he desired surrounded by family who remain grateful for the excellent care received by his adopted extended family of care professionals at Tanglewood Trace and the timely support of Heart to Heart Hospice.

St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Church located at 2210 Lincoln Way in Ames, Iowa, will host the Catholic funeral rites. Friday, 1/19/24, includes Visitation starting at 4:00pm followed immediately by the 5:00pm Vigil. On Saturday, 1/20/24, the Funeral begins at 10:30am. Immediately after, Committal of the cremains will occur at the parish's columbarium. An onsite luncheon will follow. Zahoran Funeral Home has been entrusted with arrangements.

The family requests that any memorial contributions be directed to NAMI-Iowa which can be found at <https://namiiowa.org/>.

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