



James Lee Owens

March 28, 1925 - March 18, 2017

James Lee "J.L." Owens, 91, died peacefully in Tulsa, OK, on March 18, 2017. He was born on March 28, 1925, at Berry Branch, Madison Co., AR, the son of Lem and Jessie Montgomery Owens.

J.L. attended grammar school at the historic Old Alabam Community School and subsequently attended the Arkansas State Vocational School in Huntsville until the end of his junior year in 1943 when he was drafted into the U.S. Army. In August 1943, J.L. began Basic Training at Camp Gruber, OK, and upon completion in January 1944 was transferred to Company C, 315th Infantry Regiment, of the 79th Infantry Division at Camp Phillips, KS for advanced combat training. J.L. was deployed to the United Kingdom in April 1944 and began training for the invasion of Nazi Europe. On D-Day plus 8, or June 14, 1944, PFC J.L. Owens waded ashore at Utah Beach in Normandy, France with his Browning Automatic Rifle and immediately went into combat in the Norman Hedgerow Country with his fellow 79th G.I.s. During the next 106 days J.L. participated in the 79th's liberation of the port of Cherbourg, the "Breakout" from Normandy, the liberation of Paris, Patton's rapid advance through northern France, and the 79th's southern advance into France's Lorraine Region. During heavy fighting in Foret De Parroy in Lorraine on October 12, 1944, J.L. suffered a concussion from the blast of a mortar round but returned to duty within days. On October 21, 1944, J.L. was wounded by mortar shrapnel near the village of Embermenil and evacuated to Naples, Italy for medical treatment. Upon release, J.L. was transferred to the 10th Mountain

Division in northern Italy for the remainder of the war. PFC Owens served in the Normandy, Northern France, and Rhineland Campaigns and received the Purple Heart Medal, the Bronze Star Medal, the European-African-Middle Eastern Medal with 3 bronze stars, the Good Conduct Medal, the World War II Victory Medal, and the French Fourragere aux couleurs de la Croix de Guerre decoration. Due to his combat experience, J.L. also earned the Combat Infantryman's Badge. Following the end of WWII, J.L. was discharged on December 3, 1945 and immediately returned to Huntsville where he married his high school sweetheart, Mary Elaine Marshall, on January 2, 1946. Shortly after their marriage J.L. and Elaine moved to Greenville, IL, where J.L. and Elaine opened a beauty shop business. However, they returned to the Ozarks prior to the birth of their first child, Judy, on October 26, 1947. Thereafter, J.L. and his father were associated in the Owens General Store at Alabam until he began his 37 year career with the Arkansas Highway Department (AHD) in 1949. J.L. and Elaine anchored their family in Harrison, AR, after the birth of their son, Lionell, on October 7, 1953, while J.L. traveled throughout the state with AHD. Subsequently, J.L. rejoined the family when he was assigned to AHD's District 9 Field Office in Harrison. In addition to his job with AHD, J.L. and Elaine opened and ran "Elaine's Beauty Shop" at their Harrison home on North Robinson and subsequently on Cherry Street. In 1969, J.L. and Elaine purchased a farm near the Boone County community of Olvey where they raised cattle and Elaine continued her beauty shop. After rising to and holding the position of the AHD District 9 Materials Laboratory Supervisor for many years, J.L. retired in 1986. In 1992, J.L. and Elaine moved to Owasso, OK, where they could be close to their daughter and son in law, Judy and Larry Watts, who have lovingly cared for them since. J.L. and Elaine were members of the Northside Church of Christ in Harrison, where J.L. served as a Deacon and as an Elder. They subsequently were members of the Bellefonte Church of Christ, where J.L. also served as an Elder, and the Owasso, OK, Church of Christ. Throughout his life J.L. was a man of religious faith and was devoted to Elaine and his family. J.L. and

Elaine were married just short of 61 years when Elaine died in 2006.

J.L. was predeceased by his sister Jean Owens Thompson and his wife, Mary Elaine Owens. He is survived by his two children, Judy Owens Watts (Larry) of Owasso, OK; Lt. Colonel (ret) Lionell Owens (Lila) of San Antonio, TX; his sister, Mary Jo Owens Fletcher (Gerald) of Cassville, MO; his nieces, Jo Ellen Todd and Alta Jean Easley; his 7 grandchildren (Shauna Watts Eischen ((Dave)); Jason Watts ((Nicole)); Garrett, West ((Shanna)), Ford ((Jackie)), Thomas ((Holly)) and Lacy Owens), and 7 great-grandchildren (Anna & Ella Eischen; Jackson & Addi Watts; and Charlotte, Alice & Cameron Owens). Also surviving is J.L.'s loving companion, Barbara Ramsay, of Owasso, OK, and her family.

A Memorial Service will be held on April 3, 2017, at 1:00 PM at Brashears Funeral Home, Huntsville, AR. Interment - Marshall Cemetery, Forum, AR. In lieu of flowers, the family requests expressions of sympathy be made through a memorial donation to:

Hope Harbor Children's Home

15025 E. 380 Rd.

P.O. Box 1047

Claremore, OK 74018

918-343-0003

www.hopeharborinc.org

Tribute Wall

LS

“ I am so sorry for your loss. In the bible we find hope and comfort. Is. 25:8 "God will swallow up death forever and will wipe tears from all faces."

Lilly Spaeth - April 10, 2017 at 12:00 AM

CR

“ You are in our thoughts and prayers

Charlinda Reeves - April 03, 2017 at 12:00 AM

LB

“ Sorry for your loss.

Lawrance and Joetta Bowen - April 03, 2017 at 12:00 AM

BU

“ Keeping your family in our thoughts and prayers.

Beverly and Richard Unwer - April 02, 2017 at 12:00 AM

GC

“ Condolences to the family and farewell to a friend and fellow employ of AHD. May all be blessed.

George Cavaness - March 29, 2017 at 12:00 AM

MS

“ You all are in my thoughts and prayers during this time of your loss.

Margaret (Mrs. Austin) Smith - March 28, 2017 at 12:00 AM