



## Billy Lee Owen

November 20, 1928 - March 12, 2016

Bill passed away Saturday, March 12, 2016 in Tyler, Texas. He was born November 20, 1928 in Cisco, Texas to William Alvin Owen and Thelma Shipley Owen. His father was a rig builder foreman for the old Humble Oil Company, which is now Exxon. They moved around a few times but stayed in Tomball, Texas from 1932 to 1941. Bill started school and went through the sixth grade there. They moved to Hawkins in 1941 when the Hawkins oil field was discovered. Bill finished high school at Hawkins where he was an all-round athlete. He played on the Hawk football team in 1944 and 1945 and the teams were districts champs both years. These were the first district championships won by Hawkins as they were only the third and fourth years for Hawkins to field a team. He was a team captain in 1945 when they also won the bi-district championship, which was as far as they were allowed to advance in those days. He also was a starter in basketball and set three district records in track and field. The high school did not have a baseball team so Bill pitched for the Humble Oil men's team and they played all around east Texas.

After high school, Bill attended Kilgore, Jr. College where he was a member of the track team. He did not play football there because, as he said, these guys were returning veterans from war and were men, not a 17 year old kid like me. Bill then attended North Texas State until the Korean War broke out. He then went into the U. S. Army and served until 1953. Bill was trained as a Survey Party Chief and as a Forward Observer to direct artillery fire. While at Ft. Sill,

Oklahoma, he was in the 187th Field Artillery Observation Battalion. His team won the Ft. Sill fast pitch softball championship and finished second in the Fourth Army tournament. Bill was one of the pitchers for the team and played in the outfield when he wasn't pitching.

When Bill got out of the Army in 1953, he attended Baylor University where he met his future wife, Jean Duke. Bill majored in geology and when he graduated in 1955 went to work for Texaco. Shortly after he received his first paycheck he and Jean married on November 26, 1955. While with Texaco they lived in Kennedy, Texas, Grand Junction, Colorado and Albuquerque, New Mexico. He then worked for Sinclair Oil and Gas in Amarillo. After that, he worked for Lone Star Steel Company and lived in Longview, Texas. In 1974 he accepted a job with Phillips Petroleum and moved to Tyler. He retired in 1987. During his working career he prospected for uranium, oil and gas, iron ore and coal and lignite and really enjoyed his work, but laughingly said he enjoyed retirement even more.

Bill enjoyed his two sons while they were growing up. He and Jean and the boys spent many days taking their boat to Cross Lake in Shreveport, Louisiana and catching those channel catfish. He also enjoyed coaching their baseball and basketball teams when they were youngsters. When they started playing varsity sports he and Jean saw every game.

Bill wasn't much of a joiner but did so when he thought he could help. He was a director of the Gregg County Council for Retarded Children and also helped with the Cub Scouts while living in Longview.

Bill was preceded in death by his parents and a daughter, Cathy Lea Owen. He also lost both of his older brothers. Burl M. Owen during WWII was a ball turret gunner on a B-17 flying missions from England against Germany. His crew was shot down on June 25, 1943 when Burl was only 20 years old. His other brother, Murl, died in 2015 at the age of 89.

Bill is survived by his loving wife, Jean; two sons, Burl Duke Owen and William Alvin Owen; and four grandchildren, Benjamin Owen, Natalie Owen, Megan Owen and Seth Owen. He also has three sisters-in-law, Barbara

Owen, Ruth Smith and Margaret Cotton; three nieces and four nephews. He has been a member of Tyler First Baptist Church since 1974.

Friends and family are invited to a memorial gathering in memory of Bill L.

Owen at the family home on Sunday, March 20, 2016 from 2:00 to 4:00 PM.

# Tribute Wall



“ *my prayers are with The Owen family* ”

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**Mark Deteau** - March 14, 2016 at 11:41 PM