



## Owen Watkins Jr.

June 25, 1918 - February 13, 2018

Owen Milton Watkins Jr. was born in Houston, Texas on June 25, 1918, to Owen Milton and Edna Amanda Hayth Watkins, and died peacefully on February 13, 2018, just four months before his 100th birthday.

Owen was raised in Houston during the Depression, helped support his family by buying, repairing, painting and reselling old bicycles and delivering The Houston Post; and he hitch-hiked to College Station to enroll at Texas A&M following his graduation from San Jacinto High School in May 1935.

He worked his way through A&M grading papers for the Chairman of the English Department and working in the Mess Hall, and received his Bachelor of Petroleum Engineering and a Commission as a Second Lieutenant in the United States Army in May 1940.

After graduation from A&M, jobs were still scarce; so when Brown & Root asked him if he could build a bridge in Corpus Christi, starting immediately, he said, "yes," drove to Corpus with little more than the clothes on his back, got a room at the YMCA, and worked on the construction of the new Naval Air Station in Corpus until he was called to active duty in April 1941.

Owen's mother had told him that, "when you go to a new town, you'll find the prettiest, sweetest, nicest girls at church." He believed her, so he walked into

Epworth League at First Methodist Church in Corpus Christi, and the first girl he saw, standing up by the piano giving the devotional, was Margaret McFarland, whom he married on October 7, 1942. They were married for more than 73 years, until her death on December 8, 2015.

Owen served in the 69th Coast Artillery Corps. He was subsequently transferred to an anti-aircraft unit, and then assigned to command the Headquarters Battery 485th AW Battalion in the South Pacific, following the attack on Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1942. After the war, he transferred to the Corps of Engineers (Army Reserve) and was honorably discharged with the rank of Major in 1953.

Following his release from active duty in the spring of 1945, Owen began his career as a petroleum engineer and worked in Texas and South Louisiana until his retirement from Amoco in 1983.

Owen and Margaret have two children: Patricia Watkins Christensen (Steve) of Salt Lake City, and James Owen Watkins (Greta Gregory) of Tomball; they lived in Bishop, Corpus Christi, Houston, Grand Chenier, Louisiana, and Dickinson, Texas, before moving to Tyler in 1966.

In Tyler, Owen and Margaret were members of Marvin United Methodist Church and its Chapel Class for 52 years. Owen served on the Administrative Board, taught Sunday School, ushered, was a youth leader, served as an ESL and math tutor, and worked in numerous capacities through the Church's mission outreach program, including spending summer vacations volunteering during "mission week."

He was a man of deep faith. When asked when he became a Christian, Owen said: "I can't remember when I wasn't a Christian. I think I just came that way." He simply embodied love, joy and gratitude in his life: love of God, love of

neighbor, love of family, love of life, love of creation, love of service, love of Texas A&M University and love of golf. He was grateful for all that God had given him every day.

It has been said that “nothing is so strong as real gentleness; and nothing is as gentle as real strength.” Owen was a man of real gentleness and great strength.

He was preceded in death by his parents; one brother, Edmund Samuel Watkins (Bobby) of Westerville, Ohio; and his beloved wife, Margaret.

He is survived by his two children, five devoted grandchildren: Jennifer Blackmon (Keith), James Watkins (Amy), Amanda Conger (Sam), Geoffrey Christensen and Jeremy Christensen (KY), nine adoring great-grandchildren: Robert, Paige, Bryan and Molly Blackmon, Owen Watkins, and Cadence, Wyatt, Carleigh and Waylon Conger; and two special extended family members: Tom Gregory and Shirley Head.

The family expresses its profound gratitude to Owen's loving caregivers: Lois Hailey, Tameka Johnigan and Calvinetta Ford; to Andrew Otte and the staff of the Hamptons; and to Heart-to-Heart Hospice. He was truly loved and cared for by a village.

A celebration of Owen's life will be held Saturday, February 17, 2018, at 2:00 p.m., in the Chapel at Marvin United Methodist Church, preceded by visitation in the Church Parlor beginning at 1:00 p.m. Graveside services will follow the funeral at Cathedral of the Pines Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, memorial gifts may be made to Marvin Missions, 300 W. Erwin, Tyler, Texas 75702.



# Cemetery Details

## **Cathedral in the Pines Cemetery**

7825 South Broadway Avenue  
Tyler, TX 75703

# Tribute Wall



“ *Loretta Martinez lit a candle in memory of Owen Watkins Jr.* ”



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Loretta martinez - April 17, 2018 at 01:04 PM



“ *Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Owen Watkins Jr..* ”



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February 16, 2018 at 08:32 AM