

Barstow High grad General Owens Jr. dies at 76

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BARSTOW — A 1958 Barstow High School graduate who survived a plane crash that killed half of his football team in Ohio in 1960 will be laid to rest in Central California on Saturday morning.

General Owens Jr. died in his Los Baños home on April 10 at the age of 76, according to his younger brother Felton Owens.

General Owens Jr. was born in Shreveport, Louisiana. His parents moved to California along with their children and all nine graduated from Barstow High School.

According to his brother, General Owens Jr. played four years of varsity football as a fullback at Barstow High School. Upon graduation, he had multiple scholarship offers and decided to go play at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo.

On Oct. 29, 1960, the Mustangs traveled to play Bowling Green and lost 50-6. As the team headed home, their twin-engine C-46 charter climbed roughly 100 feet. That's when it ran into trouble. The left engine failed and then the right engine failed, according to various online reports.

Owens Jr. was among the 26 survivors. According to online reports, 22 people died, including 16 of his teammates, the team manager, an alumni booster, both pilots and two other passengers. According to online reports, investigators determined the plane was 2,000 pounds overweight, and with zero visibility, it should never have taken off.

Felton Owens remembers that day vividly here in Barstow. He was in junior high school and remembers a group of children had told him that his brother was in a plane crash. That day the entire neighborhood gathered around a radio as the names of survivors were broadcast.

“Because the fog was so thick that night, there was a lot of issues trying to identify all the survivors,” Felton Owens said. “They would read off a few names and then we would have to wait for more names to be read off later. Sometime around 2 a.m. they finally read off my brother’s name and everybody was so relieved. The whole neighborhood was so scared that day.”

General Owens Jr. recovered from injuries, came back home to Barstow and later went on to earn a bachelor's degree from Fresno State University. He then received a master's degree and teaching credential from San Jose State University.

He then spent 30 years teaching with the Evergreen School District in San Jose.

General Owens Jr. leaves behind his wife Judy, two daughters, three stepchildren and an adoptive son, along with countless grandchildren, nieces and nephews.

“People described my brother as always being very bubbly,” Felton Owens said. “People always talk about how he really enjoyed life and always had a smile on his face. He was a very positive person and people have nothing but positive things to say about General. He was a very patient person. So patient that he even taught kindergarten for a while. Talk about patience.”

General Owens Jr.'s funeral will be held at 10:30 a.m. Saturday at the United Methodist Church, 1031 Iowa Ave., Los Baños.