

John P. Owens

J.P. Owens died Nov. 29, 1994 after a nine-month battle with stomach cancer. He was 41. His passing strikes us all with a sense of loss and grief. Although we cannot replace the loss of our friend, with time the grief will fade, leaving in its place warm memories of this gentle man. An Air Force brat, J.P. was born July 31, 1953 to David and Jemima Owens. He graduated from Bellville East High School near Scott Air Force Base, Ill. At the Academy he was a member of 29th Squadron as a doolie and 11th Squadron as an upperclassman. He majored in management and was known for his wit and friendliness. He was a life member of the Association of Graduates.

Following graduation, J.P. attended pilot training at Columbus AFB, Miss. He quickly earned a reputation as an excellent pilot which would remain with him throughout his career. His excellence was recognized, I hesitate to say rewarded, by his selection as a FAIP. Although this was not his dream assignment, it was during this tour of duty that he met and married his dream girl, his beloved Miss Becky.

In 1980 he strapped on an F-4 for the first time and started a successful career as a fighter pilot, culminating as an A-b squadron ops boss at Eielson AFB, Alaska. Along the way, he took time out to water some Army eyes as a student and instructor at the U.S. Army Command & General Staff College, Ft. Leavenworth, Kan. He was making a real impact on the future of Air Force thought and airpower doctrine at CADRE/ARI, Maxwell AFB, Ala. when his cancer was diagnosed. His years of service and solid contribution to the Air Force were cut short by his medical retirement June 21, 1994.

Although he loved the Air Force and served it as few ever have, J.P.'s priority and his enduring legacy was his family. He spent his final months as he spent his entire marriage, putting Becky, Jennifer and David before himself. These three precious people are the physical proof of the quality of the man we have lost. They visibly reflect the love and devotion he poured onto them.

J.P. maintained a deep faith in Jesus Christ until his final breath. II Timothy 4:7 was his favorite verse and it describes his life: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." J.P. was laid to rest in Prattville, Ala. Dec. 3, 1994. Becky requests that memorials be sent to: The Zachary & Elizabeth Fisher House, Keesler AFB, 310 Fisher Street, Suite 301, Biloxi, Miss. 39534.

J.P., you touched our lives with humor and with song; with courage, devotion and love you marked your way. My beloved friend, you will be sorely missed. (Billy Stephan, '75)

