



**Owen Willis Brainard**, 95, of Elwood, Nebraska passed away on Thursday, December 31, 2020 at the Elwood Care Home. He was born on April 7, 1925, in Lincoln, Nebraska to Willis and Florence Brainard. He grew up in Lincoln and was an active Boy Scout, earning his Eagle Scout Award. He enjoyed spending summers on the family ranch outside of Anselmo, Nebraska. He graduated from Lincoln Northwest High School in 1943 where he lettered in football, basketball, and track.

At the young age of 17, he qualified for the select naval engineering and flight training program. After high school graduation, Owen was called to active duty and he earned his Naval Aviator Wings and flew F4U Corsair fighter planes off aircraft carriers in the Pacific.

In 1946, he transferred to the Marine Reserves in Lincoln. He attended the University of Nebraska at Lincoln where lettered in hurdles, and he earned a Bachelor of Science degree and a Master's degree in Agronomy and Range Management. He met his future bride, Marian, in Chemistry class while at the University.

Owen returned to Marine active duty during the Korean Crisis. He flew helicopters evacuating men to forward aid stations, hospital ships and MASH units, and he also transported supplies and personnel. In one of his final flights, Owen flew Generals to the peace negotiations. He completed his military service as a Captain. During his service, he earned 2 Distinguished Flying Crosses and an Air Medal Award.

In 1953, he moved to Elwood where he managed the Soil Conservation Service. On June 30, 1956 he married his college sweetheart, Marian McElhaney. Owen and Marian bought some land and cattle and managed a small farm while raising 2 children, Jane Alice and Donald Andrew. Owen was a 60 plus year member of the Mason's Lodge, and he was active in the Shriners, American Legion, Lions Club, and Chamber of Commerce. He was a devout United Methodist Church Member (serving as trustee) and was an Elwood Boy Scout Master. Upon his retirement in 1980, he continued to expand their farming operation. You could always find Owen and Marian checking cows, attending a community event, or proudly supporting a grandchild's activity.

Owen was preceded in death by his wife of 60 years, his parents, his sister Marian Joy (Dale), brother Warren "Hap" (Polly), and sister Lois (David). He is survived by daughter Jane (Ron) Jack of Eustis, Nebraska; son Donald (Ginger) of Ottawa, Illinois; grandchildren Michael Jack, Michelle Jack Watkins (Kenneth), Adam and Karis Brainard; and great grandson Jack Watkins.

Funeral services will be Saturday, January 2, 2021 at Elwood United Methodist Church, with Pastor Soonil Park officiating. Interment will follow at Elwood Cemetery. Elwood Funeral Home is in charge of the arrangements. Condolences and personal reflections may be left at [elwoodfuneralhome.com](http://elwoodfuneralhome.com). Service will be livestreamed on "Elwood Funeral Home" Facebook page.