

**08-19-1978 White Sands NM – Marvin R Owen – LEO Rescue Attempt****Private First Class Marvin Robert "Bobby" Owen**

<https://www.odmp.org/officer/15621-private-first-class-marvin-robert-bobby-owen>

*United States Army Military Police Corps, U.S. Government*

**End of Watch Saturday, August 19, 1978**

**MARVIN ROBERT "BOBBY" OWEN**

Private First Class Marvin Owen was killed during a flood while attempting to rescue a family on an access road to the White Sands Missile Range, New Mexico. The family was stranded on a bridge and as PFC Owen attempted to rescue them they were struck by a 12-foot high wall of water, which washed them off of the bridge.



Owen was posthumously awarded the Soldiers Medal of Valor, and the road was later renamed Owen Road.

PFC Owen had served with the United States Army Military Police Corps for two years.

**BIO**

**Age** 19

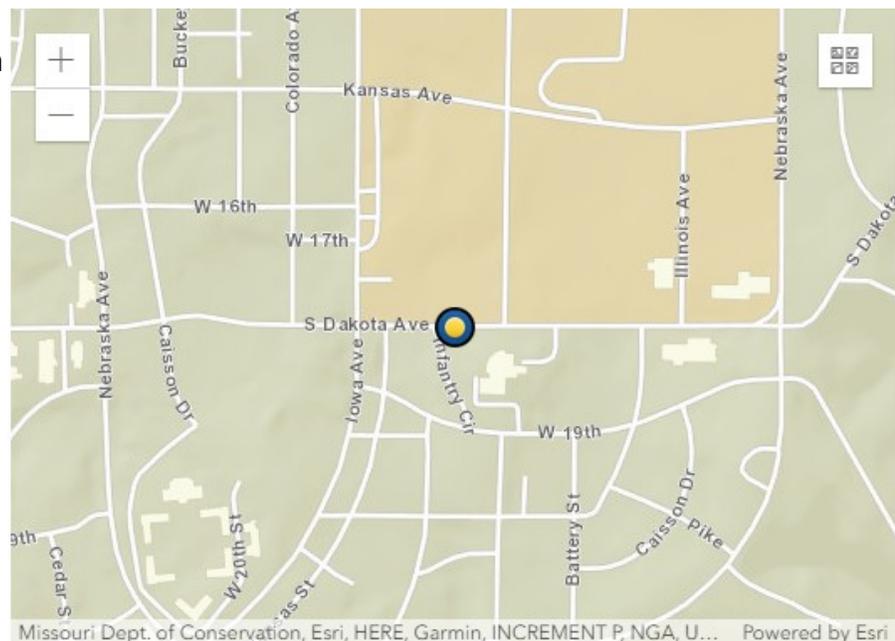
**Tour** 2 years

**Badge** Not available  
Military Veteran

**INCIDENT DETAILS**

**Cause** Weather/Natural disaster

**Location** New Mexico



**PFC MARVIN R. OWEN**

<http://www.honoredmps.org/owen-marvin.html>

**259th Military Police Company  
February 12, 1957 - August 19, 1978  
From Marrero, Louisiana**

**Killed in the line of duty August 19, 1978 - White Sands, New Mexico**

**"Beware of Flash Floods - 5 Killed in 1978"**

<http://www.wsmr.army.mil/pao/whatsUp/wu136.htm>

With the monsoon rains firing up again during the past week (July 20-26, 1997), people associated with White Sands Missile Range are reminded of an August night in 1978 when five people died in a huge flash flood. The lesson learned was to beware of the power of flowing water.

On Saturday, Aug. 19, 1978, a huge thunderstorm cell formed over and around the Organ Mtns. Over a period of four to five hours this storm dumped a record 10 inches of rain on the area.

Water flowing off the slopes of the Organ Mtns. flooded all the drainages on the east side. On the access road from U.S. Highway 70 to the main post water quickly rose to flood the bridge in the arroyo bottom just north of the main gate.

Air Force Capt. James Maret, Jr., his wife Gale, and their two young children were returning to the post during the storm. When they tried to drive over the bridge their car stalled.

Seeing that their car was beginning to float away, Private First Class Marvin Owen, a military policeman, drove his pickup truck onto the bridge to assist. Just as he got there a wall of water, described as being about 10 feet high, washed over the bridge and swept both vehicles down the arroyo.

All five people were killed in the flood. Owen's vehicle was found nearly two miles down the arroyo.

In ceremonies held in 1979, the access road was renamed "Owen Road" and a memorial plaque was erected on the bridge where the tragedy occurred. In addition, Owen was posthumously awarded the Soldiers Medal, the military's highest award for valor in peacetime.

**PFC Marvin Robert Owen**

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/79936450/marvin-robert-owen>

<b>BIRTH</b>	12 Feb 1957 Jacksonville, Duval County, Florida, USA
<b>DEATH</b>	20 Aug 1978 (aged 21) White Sands, Doña Ana County, New Mexico, USA
<b>BURIAL</b>	<u>Westlawn Memorial Park and Mausoleum</u> Gretna, Jefferson Parish, Louisiana, USA
<b>PLOT</b>	A-049-003
<b>MEMORIAL ID</b>	79936450 · <a href="#">View Source</a>

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