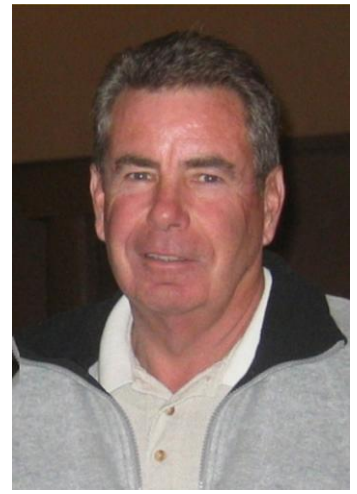


## Spotlight on Mike Rawlings

On January 24, 2010 our fellow classmate and friend, Mike Rawlings, passed away after a long and courageous battle with cancer. While he was undergoing treatment I asked him to write his bio for our newsletter. I thought it might be good if he could focus on something other than what he was going through. He didn't get the chance to finish it. Here, in Mike's own words, is the story of his life after Azusa High School.

### Education, Military Service and Work

At graduation I was working part-time at my father's gas station in Duarte. In the fall I started my first semester at Citrus College. It turned out that I wasn't ready for college. I didn't start my second semester until several years later. I continued working at the gas station until September of '62 when I decided to get something done with my life. I don't know how smart it was, but what I did was to join the Army.



*Mike Rawlings*

I chose aviation as a military vocation and after basic training I was told I had missed my basic aviation maintenance school because my basic lasted longer than scheduled. I was assigned to the first "Chinook" helicopter company in Fort Benning Georgia. Unfortunately the Army had not yet received its first Chinook. It would be months before I received my mechanical training and became a crew chief on one of the brand new Chinooks. Over the next couple of years the unit grew into the 11<sup>th</sup> Air Assault Division which had hundreds of helicopters of all types. As a crew chief my duties were to perform 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> echelon maintenance and oversee the passengers and loads when flying. My last flight in the Chinook was in August of '65 just before the division was renamed the 1<sup>st</sup> Air Cav., and shipped out to Vietnam. I remember the XO calling me into his office and advising me that I would have to extend my enlistment if I wanted to go to Vietnam with the rest of the company. I thought about it for a few seconds, very few, and quickly declined.

After separation from the Army I started working at a rock and sand company in Upland. I soon found out that rock and sand wasn't for me either. I then enrolled in Citrus College again, with electronics as my major. I made ends meet with part-time jobs and moving back home with my parents. Two years later I was an electronics technician working on a hand grenade fuse testing machine in a small company in Monrovia. You guessed it—six months later I decided that electronics wasn't for me. One day while working, I saw a CHP officer make a traffic stop right outside my window. It was a beautiful November morning and I wished I could be outside. That very day, Friday, I went to the Department of Employment on my lunch break and asked if they had any information on careers in law enforcement. They directed me to a flyer for "Sheriff's Department" testing on Saturday mornings.



*Mike – LA Co. Deputy Sheriff*

The next morning I was at the Hall of Administration taking the test. Less than three months later I received a phone call asking when I was ready to start. A month later I was in uniform working as an untrained bailiff in a courtroom in downtown Los Angeles. Everything was cool until I had to start the Sheriff's Academy. I've got to tell you that the academy was no fun. Basic training in the Army was easier. Twenty-six weeks of hell, and I knew right away that this wasn't for me. I had to get through it though, because I couldn't admit that I couldn't do it. I got through it all right, but just about the time I applied for the Sheriff's Department I met Patricia Hills whom would become my bride about a

week after graduating from the academy. Oops! Now I had to think about making a living for a family, not just myself. Leaving the Sheriff's Department would have to wait. I'd have to find something else I could do and make the same money. This is where they tricked me up. The county started giving Sheriff's deputies pretty good raises, making it all the more difficult to leave. I finally got my chance 29 years later. As a retiree I couldn't make the same money as I did working, but after 29 years of service at age 55 the pension paid good enough to retire.

### Personal Life

In the fall of 1968 I met and fell in love with Pat, my first wife. She's still my wife and I call her my first wife to keep her on her best behavior. When I met her she was working at the Monrovia Telephone Company and was a coworker of our editor, Cheryl Dillard.

**Note: After Mike passed his brother continued writing bio where Mike left off. The following words were written by his brother:**

*After their wedding, Pat and Mike settled in their apartment in Arcadia. Mike continued in his career as a deputy sheriff and soon they welcomed their first son, Steve in 1970. Shortly after Steve was born, Mike and Pat bought a home in Covina, which is still their home. The Rawlings family soon was blessed with the birth of a second son, Larry in 1972 and in 1975 a third son, David, joined the family. Pat soon learned what it was to live with a house of “men. Even Buck, the family dog was a boy. They tried to tell Pat that Buck was a girl so she wouldn’t feel alone—but she figured out the truth.*

*Family time was very important to Mike. He made sure that his “off time” from the sheriff department was spent with Pat and the Boys.*



*Mike and Pat Rawlings*



*Mike and his three sons*

*They took family vacations every year and spent many times camping, boating, and enjoying being together. Mike was such a proud “dad” as the boys grew and started their own careers and families. Mike welcomed his new daughters into the Rawlings Family as each of his sons brought home their bride-to-be. And when the grandchildren started arriving, Mike was one of the proudest “grandpas” ever. His six grandchildren, Clint, Sydney, Isabella, Sabrina, Paul and Helena, brought such joy to him. He looked forward to when they could all be together, which was often. Vacations as a family were still very important and the Rawlings spent much time camping at San Clemente State Beach and Lake Tahoe.*



*Mike and Pat – Motor Home Camping*



*Mike and Pat Rawlings - Mexico*

*After Mike retired from the Sheriff’s Department, he and Pat began to travel in their motor home. They joined the West Covina Roamin’ Elks and then it was seldom that you could find them home. They loved being with their Elk friends.*

*Family and friends were a very important part of Mike’s life. He looked forward to spending time with friends from high school and the Sheriff’s Department. He always enjoyed time with his family and extended family. He wasn’t one to make a lot of changes in his life—29 years with the Sheriff’s Department, 39 years in the same home, and 40 years with the same “first” wife.*

*Mike was a very special man, a very loving man, a very loyal man. We are going to miss you, Mike, but you will not be forgotten. We love you!*

**Message from Pat, Mike's wife:**

Mike had been diagnosed with kidney cancer in October 2004. They removed his right kidney and thought we were good to go. One year later they found evidence that it had metastasized. We both chose to try to put it in the back of our heads and just keep having fun. And fun we had.

Mike was really sick from May 2009 until his passing. He fought hard to get all he could out of life. As sick as he was, we did make the Christmas campout in December with our friends, the traditional Family Thanksgiving campout at San Clemente and also the traditional family Christmas party. It seems like through the last eight months, God would give us a window here or there where we could still enjoy our family and friends.

Azusa Class of 1961 was very special to Mike. He loved all the get-togethers and reunions that you had. I have to admit, I enjoyed them just as much as he did. You have an extraordinary class.

I feel very blessed to have had such a wonderful husband. He was a fantastic father, grandfather, and best friend. We had many great times with our families, six grandchildren and very special friends.

One of the prayers at Mike's service was:

"I will lend you a father for some time while he is living. I have chosen you to be his family. I am not offering that he will stay with you forever. I am only lending him to you. Someday, I will call him home. Do not be sad or cry. Be compensated by the love and wonderful memories."

Mike passed away January 24, 2010 surrounded with the love of his family.

I want to thank the Class of '61 for all the wonderful cards, e-mails and prayers. Your support meant so much for Mike and me. I know so many of you attended his service. I apologize that I didn't get to give each of you a personal greeting, but I thank you for being there for me and my family.

Love and Thanks to All  
Pat

In Loving Memory

So I'll say goodnight Sweetheart,  
sleep will banish sorrow  
Goodnight Sweetheart, when we meet tomorrow

Good Night Sweetheart ~ Sleep tight.  
My Love Always, Pat

Michael Allen Rawlings  
1943 - 2010  
Wednesday February 3, 2010  
12:00 Noon  
West Covina Elks  
841 W Merced Ave. - West Covina, CA 91790-4902