



James E. Watson

February 18, 1941 - September 4, 2024

James E. Watson, age 83 of Highland, IL, peacefully passed away on Wednesday, September 4, 2024 at his home surrounded by his loving family

He was born February 18, 1941 in Marked Tree, AR to the late Robert E. Watson and Annie Howell Watson.

He resided in Highland, IL for 40 years with his wife Sidney Ridgway Watson. They were married 57 years and raised four children together.

He graduated from Marked Tree High School and Parks College St. Louis University's Aviation Program. Jim was an accomplished pilot. During his professional aviation career, he flew over 32 years starting off flying Fairchild FH's and moving onto DC 9's and MD 80's for Ozark Airlines, Trans World Airlines, and American Airlines. During his time off, he was still flying, piloting his own plane, a T-34 Mentor, in local airshows and giving rides to family and friends. Jim was an avid story teller and would entertain all whether it was with one of his amazing flight adventures or with a recounting of his dancing days winning contests doing the twist in the 1960's. He loved music and introduced his children to the sounds of Elvis and Tina Turner. He also enjoyed traveling with his family. Having spent so much time in the air as a pilot, he especially loved a road trip or a cruise as a welcome change of pace. Alaska and Colorado were his favorite places to visit with his family.

He was preceded in death by his parents and his siblings Joyce Watson Gregson, Jerry L. Watson and Marie Watson Lovelace.

He is survived by his wife Sidney Ridgway Watson of Highland, IL; his sons Tim (Timanye) Watson of Highland, IL and Ryan (Shalyn) Watson of Naples, FL; his daughters Caroline (Justin) Simons of Orlando, FL and Melanie (Andrew) Holthaus of Troy, IL; his brother Michael D. Watson and Karen of Hogansville, GA, and sister Jerita Watson Tilley and Windell of Marked Tree, AR; his sister-in-law Shirley Watson; brother-in-law John E. Gregson; as well as 13 grandchildren, numerous nieces, nephews, great nieces, and great nephews, cousins and many friends.

The family is having a private visitation and funeral service.

In lieu of flowers please make a donation in his honor to the Metro East Humane Society in Highland.

Cemetery Details

Highland City Cemetery

12301 Koepfli Lane
Highland, IL 62249

Tribute Wall

BE

“ I just learned of Jim's passing. I flew many trips with him at Ozark. He was a great pilot and I have great memories of our flights together. He will be missed by all who knew him.

Barry Elam

Barry Elam - July 07, 2025 at 10:21 PM



“ Blue Caribbean Bouquet was purchased for the family of James E. Watson.



September 10, 2024 at 04:50 PM



“ Celestial Love was purchased for the family of James E. Watson.



September 09, 2024 at 08:20 AM

SF

“ Sending love from your Golden Oak Family planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of James E. Watson.

Sending love from your Golden Oak Family - September 09, 2024 at 08:20 AM

JR

“ Jason R. planted a grove of 50 [Memorial Trees](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of James E. Watson.

Jason R. - September 09, 2024 at 08:11 AM

JH

“ He and his family lived about a mile from where I grew up ,I went to school and rode same bus as them his sister Joyce was my age and we were in same grade ,they were a nice family , my maiden name was joyce. hicks, sorry for your loss

joyce Hicks - September 06, 2024 at 09:17 PM

MW

“ My brother sure changed my life when he taught me to fly... became my livelihood and passion...fly west my brother 🙏❤️✍️🇺🇸

Michael Watson - September 06, 2024 at 07:52 PM