



James R. Watkins

November 9, 1923 - July 2, 2017

Lt. Col. James R. Watkins, 93, United States Air Force (Retired), passed away July 2, 2017. He was born November 9, 1923 in Burlington, Kansas, the son of the late Jestie and Harry Watkins. He married Sylvia (Brown) Watkins on November 11, 1950. Sylvia passed away on October 2, 2013 after 63 years of marriage.

As a child James traveled with his father, a well known Vaudeville contortionist and humorist. They had a special carrying case for James while touring. His family finally settled in New York City where at the age of 17 he enlisted in the Regular Army. After training and the break-out of WW II, James was sent overseas where he spent 3 months in North Africa, France & Italy. He returned to the USA as a Master Sergeant and re-enlisted. He was selected to attend Air Force Officer Candidate School, graduating as a 2nd Lt. on February 1, 1947. James held many staff command positions. After returning from 13 months in Korea, he was assigned to the Pentagon as Executive Officer to the Director of Development. After completing 4-1/2 years in the Pentagon, he transferred to Keflick Air Base in Iceland as Commanding Officer of all Support units which included: Communication; Air Police; Base Housing; Food Services; U.S. Band; Base Hotel & Restaurant for civilians passing through Iceland on their way to Europe. He was transferred to St. Louis, then transferred to Scott A.F.B., IL. In 1968 he was transferred to Karat, Thailand as Director of Personnel of the 38th Tactical Fighter Wing. Upon his return from Thailand, he was assigned to Edwards AFB as Director of Personnel

where he retired April 1, 1975.

James earned the following medals/awards during his military service of 34 years: Good Conduct Medal, World War II Victory Medal, American Defense Service Medal, European-African Middle Eastern Campaign Medal, American Campaign Medal, United Nations Service Medal, Korean Service Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Presidential Unit Citation, Distinguished Unit Citation, Armed Forces Reserve Medal, Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal, Air Force Longevity Service Award, Vietnam Service Medal, Air Force Outstanding Unit Award, Legion of Merit.

Visitation will be Friday, July 7, 2017 from 8:30 a.m. until 9:30 a.m. at Shirley Brothers Washington Memorial Chapel, 9606 E. Washington St.

James is survived by brother, Alan Watkins; daughter, Kellie (Tim) Thompson; daughter-in-law, Marion Watkins; grandsons, Chris Thompson, Mark Watkins, Jim Watkins; nieces and great-grandchildren. He was preceded in death by wife, Sylvia; brothers, Don Watkins and Harry Watkins; and son, James "Jimbo" Watkins.

Lt. Colonel Watkins will be buried with full military honors next to his wife at the Marion National Cemetery in Marion, Indiana.

Cemetery Details

Marion National Cemetery

1700 East 38th Street
Marion, IN 46953
(765) 674-0284

Previous Events

Visitation

JUL 7. 8:30 AM - 9:30 AM (ET)

Shirley Brothers Washington Memorial Chapel
9606 E. Washington Street
Indianapolis, IN 46229
(317) 897-9606
<https://shirleybrothers.com/>

Tribute Wall



“ *Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of James R. Watkins.*



July 07, 2017 at 09:20 AM



“ *1 file added to the album Memories Album*



Shirley Brothers Mortuaries & Crematory - July 07, 2017 at 08:10 AM



“ *Mary Crockett lit a candle in memory of James R. Watkins*



Mary Crockett - July 06, 2017 at 05:00 PM



*Our Sympathy for the loss of Uncle Jim goes out to Kellie and the family. Prayers for all with much love.
Mary & Aunt Ruth*

Mary Crockett - July 06, 2017 at 05:05 PM