



James Lee Watson, Jr., affectionately known as Jimmy or Watson, lived a full life where he lived and loved out loud. He was born on July 24, 1950, in Philadelphia to loving parents, James Lee Watson, Sr. (better known as “Jack”) and Viola Althea Trader. He was the eldest of their two children.

James was educated in Philadelphia, having attended John Barry Elementary School, Shoemaker Middle School, Overbrook High School, and Philadelphia Community College. He played youth football and was proud to have been part of a team honored by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. As James grew up, he developed a passion for physical fitness and enjoyed roller-skating and bike-riding. He was known to walk absolutely anywhere and everywhere—no matter the distance. One of the proudest walks of his life was when he marched with Dr. King himself.

In 1981, James enlisted in the U.S. Army and, after basic training, was stationed in Germany for several years. He later served at Fort Hood in Killeen, Texas. Upon receiving an honorable discharge, he returned to Philadelphia, where he worked for Gagliano’s Meat Company, the Philadelphia Sanitation Department, and the City of Philadelphia. He ultimately retired as a Crossing Guard for the City—a role that suited his warm, outgoing personality perfectly.

James was a people person in every sense. He gave off great energy to everyone he encountered. Interacting with him was like stepping into a bright and sunny day—full of warmth, joy, and the occasional silly remark that could instantly lift your spirits. His magnetic personality made people feel seen, valued, and appreciated. You could always count on him to remember your birthday—and to remind everyone else to call you, too!

James loved to travel and made friends wherever he went. He often visited Las Vegas and Arizona to see his cousins and enjoyed trips to Hawaii, Jamaica, and even a cruise through Spain and Italy. Life with James was always exciting, whether he was exploring a new city, telling stories, or turning an ordinary day into something special with his humor and charm.

He loved Philadelphia—its people, its energy, and its sports. He loved concerts at the Dell, and rooted passionately for—and sometimes, against—the Eagles & Phillies. You could always count on him to “put you down for the usual bet.”

James was especially proud of his children and grandchildren. He loved spending time with them, taking pictures, and cheering them on in sports and in life. He loved the Lord deeply, greeting others with a heartfelt “God bless you!” He found purpose and fellowship at Christian Stronghold Baptist Church, where he served faithfully as an usher and participated in the men’s ministry.

Carefree at heart, James rarely—if ever—seemed to have a bad day. His sense of humor and words of encouragement could brighten even the darkest days. He had a magnetic and charismatic force that drew people in. James enjoyed great conversations, good debates, and telling jokes. And he LOVED music!

His taste was wonderfully eclectic—R&B, Rock & Roll, Gospel, Country, even a bit of hip-hop. He played both keyboard and guitar by ear, performing in several bands over the years. He never left home without his Bluetooth speaker—always ready to share his favorite songs and enlighten others about the music that moved him.

On Wednesday, October 8, 2025, James was called home to be with the Lord. James is preceded in death by his parents, Jack and Viola, his son Rasul Watson, and his nephew Saladine Watson. He is survived by his children: Jamila Watson, Rahsecna Scott (Mark), Evans Watson, Vilesha Parks, Lenelle Watkins (Bryant), James Watson, and his bonus son Andre Watson (Katina); his grandchildren: Jamile, Jamir, Aujanae, Ahmad, Mayah, Makayla, Nina, Mason, Derell, Dewhan, Deshawn, Dinah, Dynola, Swayze, Bizzy, and Sully; his great-grandchildren: Jaxon, Milani, Julius, Melling, Joah, and Kalijah; his sister Rachelle Watson; his favorite aunt Doris Watson; his special friend and confidant Gladys Fitzgerald-Watson; his closest cousins Jean Kamara, Aaron Watson (Carmella) and John Wade; and a host of other family, Army buddies, and lifelong friends.