

Vincent "Vince" Frank Watje was born on August 19, 1949, in Lake Park, Iowa, the second of four sons of Edward and Prudence Watje. He grew up on their farm outside Round Lake, Minnesota (near the Iowa border) and graduated from Round Lake High School in 1967. Following high school, he attended and obtained a degree from Jackson Vo-Tech. He then enlisted in the Minnesota National Guard and served for 6 years.

Vince was united in Matrimony with Suzanne (Hinton) on November 24th, 1972, in Worthington, MN. They moved to Willmar about 6 months later when an opportunity to build a new territory out of the Welders Supply store in Willmar became available.

He was employed at Welders Supply (now known as Matheson) for over 55 years as a Driver Salesman and Territory Manager. During his career Vince built a territory from Willmar to Wahpeton, ND and then as far as beyond Fargo, ND which led to the opening of two more company stores. He also won too many sales and performance awards to list. The main theme we have heard from all his coworkers and customers is that Vince didn't actually have coworkers and customers, he just had lots of good friends. Some of those friends were with Dad for his entire 55 years in the territory.

In 1972, Vince and Suzanne bought their first purebred Charolais breeding stock. They were very passionate about the cattle and eventually named the business JDJ Charolais after their three sons Jed, Dan, and Jay. They continue to operate the herd today as Watje Livestock in partnership with son Jay. Vince was a member of the American International Charolais Association and the American Angus Association. He was also a past President of the Minnesota Charolais Association. Vince was a member of the Church of St. Mary and the American Legion.

The family would like to extend a heartfelt Thank You to his medical team at Mayo Clinic in Rochester. Particularly Doctors Leventakos, Lee, Peikert, Stokken, Bechtum, and Clain along with their entire teams. They also became very good friends of Vince.

He is survived by his loving wife, Suzanne; three sons, Jed Watje of Milsap, TX., Daniel Watje of Chaska, MN, and Jay Watje of Spicer, MN; three grandchildren, Belle Watje of Granbury, TX, Claire Watje and Sloane Watje of Chaska, MN. Also surviving is one brother, Galen (and Teresa) Watje of Bloomington, MN, and a sister-in-law, Beverly Watje of Brewster, MN; besides brothers and sisters in-law, relatives, and many friends.

He was preceded in death by his parents; and two brothers, Burton and Val, and two brothers-in-law, Stanley Gunning and Mark Hinton.

Blessed be the memory of Vincent Frank Watje.

Celebrating the Life of



Vince Watje

1949 — 2026

THE EPITAPH

*That ol' man could sure set a post. Three foot down
in the hardest ground, grunt and thud, chink and chime.
Bedrock trembled beneath his bar. Each new whack
broke the back of granite old as time.*

*Be easier to move it. The hole, that is.
But that wasn't his way of settin' a post.
His ran like a soldier's backbone, straight as a die
to the naked eye. Perfect...not just close.*

*He'd scoop the dirt into it in a careful way.
Like sculptor's clay he'd add an inch or two.
"Each one counts," he'd say to me, then tamp that thing
till the bar would ring and the earth was black and blue.*

*He set cedar and steel but what he liked most
was an eight-foot post, the butt of a telephone pole.
Called it "plantin' a deadman,"...for bob wire fence
to stretch against. Made a hell'uva hole!*

*Big enough to bury a dog. Speakin' of which,
Last week he pitched straight over facedown and died.
Not building' fence like you might think but on his knees
tendin' trees that grew on the windbreak side.*

*For twenty years we neighborhood well, which just makes sense,
Our common fence was always strong and tight.
But, Lord, he did things the hared way! Flat wore me out!
But I don't doubt he tried to do 'em right!*

*They struggled for an epitaph to consecrate,
In words ornate, the place they'd lay his head.
The didn't ask me. I weren't no kin to the lad
But if they had, this is what I'd said,*

*"He could sure set a post." One man's stand
In the shifting sand of the world as it is today.
That offered hope. An Anchor, dug in deep,
That helped to keep us all from driftin' away.*

-Baxter Black

In Loving Memory Of

Vince Watje

August 19, 1949
Lake Park, Iowa

February 14, 2026
Willmar, Minnesota

Mass of Christian Burial

Thursday, February 26, 2026 - 11:00 a.m.
Church of St. Mary

Celebrant

Fr. Ron Huberty
Deacon Dave Norman

Music

Pianist: Terry Brunson
Vocalist: Belle Watje
St. Mary's Resurrection Choir

Opening Song: "All Are Welcome"
Psalm Responsorial: "Shepherd Me O God"
Gospel Acclamation: "Praise And Honor"
Preparation of Gifts: "City Of God"
Communion: "Here I Am Lord"
Post Communion: "Lead Me Home" - Belle Watje
Song of Farewell: "The Old Hundredth"
Closing Song: "When I Get Where I'm Going" - Brad Paisley (cd)

Honorary Casketbearers

Rick Sitte Jon Stenzel Tim Barth
Leon Gehrke Karen Gilgenbach

Active Casketbearers

Gregg Hoffman Mike Kreft Lisa Adkins
Chris Hess Brandon Reep Jay Magnuson

Military Honor Guard

Austin F. Hanscom American Legion Post #167
Willmar, Minnesota

Interment

St. John's Lutheran Cemetery
Pennock, Minnesota