

**406705 WO BRYAN ANDREW ("JOE") WATSON**

**W.O.A.G.**

**ENLISTED 3<sup>RD</sup> MARCH 1941**

**DISCHARGED 11<sup>th</sup> MAY 1945**

Joe Watson was born in Perth. He was christened Bryan Andrew, but when his mother first saw him, she said he looked 'Just like a little joey' - he was known as Joe for the rest of his life. Joe married Phyllis Gray (Phyl) on 4 November 1940 and they had five children:

Bryan Phillip (Zoom), born 1945, KIA South Vietnam 1966

Lorraine Anne (Annie), born 1946

Cynthia (Cynthia!), born 1947

Carolyn Faye (Sue) born 1949

Sandra (Sandra!!) born 1951, died 2012

My family connection with Joe, I am married to Joe's third daughter Sue. As you may notice, the family have a knack for not using birth names!

Joe joined the RAAF in 1941, and after completing his basic training with 12 Course, he completed his training with 70 OTU in Kenya. He joined 84 squadron RAF, and was then posted to 458 Squadron on 5 March 1943, where he served in Wellington Bombers.

During his service, Joe's aircraft was shot down over the Mediterranean Sea, and he and a colleague were adrift in a dinghy for several days. During that time, Joe's colleague sadly died, and Joe buried him at sea. He lived on just a few sips of water per day, until rescued by a US aircraft after seven days.

The family have a newspaper article covering Joe's crash and subsequent rescue.

After his discharge, Joe and Phyl owned a number of deli/grocer shops in and around the Perth metro area, and for the last 10 years before his retirement, he worked for the Water Corporation in Perth.

In retirement, Joe and Phyl enjoyed travelling around Western Australia in their caravan, until Phyl developed dementia, and Joe effectively became her full-time carer for the last five years of her life.

Joe died in 2005, in the presence of his three surviving daughters, and will always be remembered as a brave but modest man, who, like many others, spoke very little of his wartime experiences.



Headquarters,  
Mediterranean Air Command.

25th August, 1943.

Dear Sir,

Many thanks for your note with the report about Sergeant Watson. It was an outstanding example of sheer level headed determination and if you have a chance I would be glad if you would tell him how deeply I admire the example he set.

Yours

Air Vice-Marshal Sir Hugh P. Lloyd,  
K.B.E., C.B., M.C., D.F.C.,  
Air Officer Commanding,  
Northwest African Coastal Air Force

## W.A. MAN'S ORDEAL. SEVEN DAYS IN DINGHY.

### Air Vice-Marshal's Tribute.

MELBOURNE, Sept 24.—"This is the story of a brave man. Although in dire distress he never lost his head. He never gave up hope. He never lost faith in eventual rescue. His faith and courage are an example to all." So wrote Air Vice-Marshal Sir Hugh Lloyd, Air Officer Commanding the North-West African Coastal Air Force, of Sgt B. A. Watson, a young West Australian wireless air-gunner from Norseman, who was the survivor from a Wellington belonging to a RAAF torpedo squadron which crashed into the Mediterranean while on a patrol search for enemy shipping last month.

Watson spent over seven days in a dinghy before he was rescued. When his aircraft crashed he had no time to open the hatch and thinks he must have been flung through it, but only remembers struggling under the water. When he came to the surface in pitch darkness he saw no aircraft. His dinghy floated 20 yards away and after half an hour's struggle, bruised and unable to use his arms, he succeeded in getting into it.

Watson rationed himself to a quarter of a pint of water each day and sipped it at dawn and sunset. He could see the coast about 20 miles away, but could make no progress by paddling. During the next seven days and nights he endured both heat and cold. Sometimes it rained and once he was caught in a storm with rough seas running.

One night an aircraft appeared and circled down, being identified as a twin-engined flying boat, but the sea was too rough for it to land. On the next day two aircraft believed to be enemy machines exchanged signals with the dinghy and made off, probably to pick up the crew of a German flying boat which had crashed. At noon on the eighth day just after Watson had bathed a friendly flying boat circled over the spot, alighted and picked him up.