

**William ‘Bill’ Donald Watson** (Kate Harvey, Bill’s daughter).

A follow-up from The Scheyvillian 3 of 2019.

Bill Watson was born in Adelaide on 12 April 1947 the youngest child of Don and Joy Watson. He described his early years with siblings Penny and Dennis as “simple, blessed, full of freedom, adventure and mischief”. He was fond of keeping birds and the odd baby brown snake. His father worked for S.A. Railways and after 10 moves, with 10 schools, in as many years Bill was sent to Scotch College, Adelaide to board at age 11. After school he went to Roseworthy Agricultural College and pursued his love of the land and wine gaining his Diploma of Agriculture in 1968. Both at Scotch and Roseworthy, sport was a major focus and included rowing, Australian Rules football and water polo. He then worked for S. Wyn and Sons as an oenologist and having been conscripted he went to OTU Scheyville in May 1969.

At his Celebration of Life at the Commonwealth Club, Canberra on 4th December 2019, 2/69 classmate David Jervis said “at OTU Bill was totally committed, physically and mentally strong, cool under pressure, determined, unselfish, empathetic and loyal. More than once he literally dragged me over the top of the 12’ wall on the obstacle course. Of course, he was still mischievous”.



Above: Jenny and Bill Watson

In his senior term he was a Company Quartermaster Sergeant with the rank of Colour Sergeant and on 3 October 1969 graduated 7th in his class being allocated to the Infantry Corps and posted to 3rd Training Battalion, Singleton. Soon after, Bill, the dashing Army officer with a smile that lit up his face, met Jennie, a beautiful young school teacher, and on 29 August 1970 after a whirlwind and highly motivated courtship, they were married in a military ceremony in Sydney - the start of a formidable, loving, 49 year partnership.

After his discharge from the Army in 1971 Bill moved to Armidale with Jennie where he completed his Bachelor of Agricultural Economics at UNE and then he went to the University of California for further studies before permanently settling in Canberra in 1979 where he worked as an Agricultural Economist and Environmental Consultant. Along the way his children Ben and Kate were born and 5 grandchildren followed - Noah, Lily, Ethan, Will and Alex. Bill adored them and they adored him - he was also like a second father to his son-in-law Travis. He was a teacher and mentor to them all.

Bill loved travelling, adventuring in nature, caring for the environment, working on the land especially on his Greenfield farm with his son Ben, hiking, kayaking, fishing, mountain biking, cycling and sailing. One of his greatest joys was sharing his adventures with his many friends, telling stories and being part of a team. A man of action, there was nothing he couldn’t do or, at least, was sure he could do and give it a try.

Bill had a close relationship with his grandfather Lieutenant Colonel Stanley Watson CBE, DSO, MC, ED, which led to a passionate interest in the Gallipoli campaign. In 1915 the then Lieutenant Stanley Watson, an engineer, supervised the construction of a jetty at ANZAC Cove using a defused Turkish shell as a pile driver. The jetty was completed on 18 June 1915 and named Watson’s Pier - it played a big part in the evacuation of ANZAC troops. Bill and Jennie went to the Gallipoli Peninsula in 2005 to attend the 90th year commemoration of Watson’s Pier and traditional Waterloo dinner. In 2015 they attended the 100th year commemoration when Bill dived into the sea to view the remnants of the pier on the ocean

floor afterwards proudly announcing “not many people have walked on the pier since WW1”.

In Canberra Bill was involved with the Strolling Bones (who walked, cycled and kayaked the world), Rotary, the Peloton Lake Bike Riders and the OTU Association - always one to embrace new technology he created the 2/69 Google group and assisted in organising 2/69 reunions. All these groups plus Scotch and Roseworthy Colleges were represented by speakers at his Celebration of Life which was attended by about 350 people - 14 members of 2/69 plus 8 of their wives travelled from all over Australia to be there. Wal Hall (2/68), representing OTU, presented Bill’s Army Service Record and the Australian flag to Jennie. OTU meant a lot to Bill and his family were brought up on his Army stories.

An eternal optimist and positive thinker Bill took on and beat serious bowel cancer 12 years ago and more recently fought Parkinson’s disease which he viewed as a bit of a nuisance and not something that would slow him down - he and Jennie travelled extensively last year including a 300 kilometre walk along the Camino da Costa. Bill was killed in a motor vehicle accident on 15 November 2019 returning from a mountain bike riding trip at Mount Kosciusko. He will always be in our hearts.