

William (Bill) Grayden was born in Perth, August 5th 1920 and was educated in Victoria (including a period on Phillip Island), England, and Perth Technical College where he trained as a mechanical engineer.

He enlisted in the AIF in 1940 in Perth and was commissioned as an officer later that year.

As a Lieutenant with the 2/16 Battalion he served in Syria and the Middle-East in 1941.

In 1942, the 2/16th Battalion, as part of the 21st brigade, was rushed to New Guinea to oppose a Japanese offensive on the Kokoda Track (the veterans all refer to it as "Track" but the official title is "Trail"). At the time Bill was a platoon commander in charge of 15 Platoon, C Company.

Bill was involved with actions at Brigade Hill near the village of Efogi where he led his platoon in a "bayonet attack" to clear the track of entrenched Japanese soldiers to allow wounded colleagues to be evacuated. The brigade suffered heavy casualties.

Bill was wounded by an artillery explosion which killed several of his fellow soldiers at Ioribaiwa just as the 2/16th Battalion was to be relieved by fresh troops on 16 September 1942.

After rest and reinforcement in Australia the 2/16th was sent back to New Guinea to take part in the Gona-Buna and Ramu-Markham Valley Campaigns.

He later served in the combined services amphibians assault at Balikpapan, Borneo and later still in the occupation of the Celebes. Bill was confirmed in the rank of Captain prior to his discharge in 1946.

In 1947 he won the seat of Middle Swan in the WA Parliament, resigning in 1949 before winning the seat of Swan in the 1949 Federal election to become the MHR for Swan in Robert Menzies government. We believe he is the last surviving member of that parliament.

In 1953 he organised a search in the Central Desert for remains of the 1848 Leichhardt expedition. Instead he discovered the plight of Aboriginal people in the area. In 1956 he chaired a Select Committee to investigate the conditions facing the Aborigines. The subsequent report along with a 16mm film he shot was instrumental in the successful 1967 Referendum on Aboriginal citizenship.

In 1956 he ran for the State Parliament winning the seat of South Perth and held that seat until his retirement in 1993 after 43 years in the State and Federal parliaments. He is recognised by the WA Parliament as the longest serving WA parliamentarian. At various times he held various ministerial portfolios.

In 1959 he was a founding member of the South Perth Senior Citizens' Centre and served on the board of management for 50 years including as President from 1968

until 2012. He was also a founding member of the board of the Manning Senior Citizens' Centre serving 25 years on that Board.

Bill was recognised for his lifetime of service to the community with the award of a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in 1994 and was awarded Honorary Freeman of the City of South Perth.

Bill married his wife Betsy in 1949 and together they had ten children. Sadly, Betsy passed away suddenly in 2006 but Bill has a very large extended family that continues to expand.

He is the author of *Adam and Atoms* (1953), *A Nomad Was Our Guide* (2000) and *Kokoda Lieutenant* (2015)

Bill Grayden is honoured in the City of South Perth by "Grayden Reserve" in Collier, WA and the "Bill Grayden Room" at the South Perth Senior Citizens' Centre.