

AVIATION WALL OF HONOR

**First Lieutenant
Charles F. Watson
Bomber Pilot USAAF WWII
Killed in Action**

No Photo
available
at time of
printing

Charles F. Watson, son of Frank and Flossie Watson, moved to Marquette with his parents in 1937. He was a graduate of the Coyne Electrical School of Chicago, Illinois and opened a radio repair business at 510 Third Street, Marquette.

He received his early flight instruction from Rolf Olson at the Marquette County Airport in 1939

and 1940 and subsequently was licensed as a private aircraft pilot. He enlisted in the United States Army Air Corps in 1941, having sold his radio repair business to B&C radio service. He entered the military as a cadet graduating on September 2, 1941. He received his commission at Kelly Airfield, San Antonio, Texas.

Charles' parents received word that on September 12, 1942 he was killed in action on a flight over Buna, New Guinea in the South Pacific. He was piloting a B-17 Flying Fortress when hit by anti-aircraft fire.

In a subsequent letter, the parents received the following citation: By direction of the president, First Lieutenant Charles F. Watson, reported killed in action, has been posthumously awarded the Air Medal "for meritorious achievement while participating in an aerial flight over

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enemy territory on September 12, 1942 as a member of a crew of a B-17 type airplane which bombed enemy installations in the Buna area. During the attack, one hostile anti-aircraft battery was silenced and seventeen enemy airplanes and other installations destroyed. While over the target, the airplane sustained a direct anti-aircraft hit in the fuselage, causing fire and explosion of a gasoline tank. Unable to extinguish the flames, members of the crew were forced to jump from the damaged airplane. His action during this mission reflects the highest credit on the military forces of the United States." In a later statement, the copilot said everyone jumped but Watson, the copilot and the navigator. The plane was losing altitude too rapidly for them to get out of the plane. By some miracle, when the plane hit the water, the copilot and navigator were thrown clear of the wreckage. Watson was killed in the explosion that followed.

The copilot wrote "Whatever has happened Mrs. Watson, you can rest assured that Charles stood out, doing his best for God and country. I knew him very well and held him in great esteem".

TJ Mudge, Feb 2004