



**JOSEPH ALAN WILLIAM WITHERS**

**J/10182 formerly R/91895**

Officer/navigator.

**Family affairs.**

Joseph Alan William Withers is born on February 1st 1916 in Winnipeg, Manitoba. He is married on February 18th 1942 with June Isabelle Best. They lived in Toronto, Ontario, 80 Oakcrest Avenue. Later on his widow moved to 39 Dunkirk Road, also in Toronto. He was the son of Roy Alan Withers and Edith Elizabeth Keenan, both born in Ireland and living in Winnipeg, 18 Chateau Apartments. He had 1 sister Pearl Strome-Withers, who lived in New York, USA Apt. 58, Butler Hall 400W, 119th street. The profession of his father was insurance agent. He studied from 1923-1927 at the Lord Roberts Primary School, from 1927-1928 at the Gordon Bell Primary School, from 1929-1931 at the Daniël McIntyre High School and from 1931-1933 at the St. Johns College, all in Winnipeg. From 1937-1940 he worked as a salesman and promotor at McFadden Publications Inc, 270 Fort Street, Winnipeg. His hobby was collecting souvenirs, he sported on moderate level swimming, hockey and skating.

**Military affairs.**

**See also remarks.** February 6th 1941 he was enlisted to the Royal Canadian Air Force in Winnipeg. His education and training he got subsequently until February 18th 1941 in Winnipeg, until March 25th Toronto, until May 16th in Jarvis, Ontario until 21st again in Toronto, until July 8th in London, Ontario until August 31st in Trenton, Nova Scotia until December 9th in Malton, Ontario, until February 17th 1942 in Pennfield Ridge, New Brunswick and until March 5th 1942 in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Then to Great Britain.



He died December 6th 1942, because his aircraft was shot down in a bombing raid on Eindhoven, Noord-Brabant.

He is temporarily buried on the German Military Cemetery in Bergen op Zoom, Noord-Brabant, Sh.3 , GSGS 4336, 626286, British plot.

April 15th 1946 he is reburied on the British War Cemetery in Bergen op Zoom, Plot 3, row B, grave 12.

### **Bijzonderheden.**

- On his tombstone no additional text is written.
- He received the following awards: 39-35 Star, War Medal, Canadian Volunteer Service Medal and Clasp, Aircrew Europe Star and the Operational Wings.
- Total salary in 1 year and 10 months active service at the RCAF: 340,71\$(Canadian).
- From August 1st 1940 until his enlistment at the RCAF, he was a member of The Winnipeg Grenadiers, a non-permanent active militia.
- In a letter, dated January 29th 1945, to the Canadian Minister of Defence, his widow stated that she didn't agree with the proposal to bury all the war victims in their own homeland.
- In a letter, dated January 15th 1945, to the Canadian Minister of Defence, his widow expressed her displeasure about the fact that she only received an anonymously paper, with the statement, that her husband was buried on the German Military Cemetery. In her opinion she should have been at least personally told.
- In a third letter, dated August 20th 1944, to the Canadian Minister of Defence his widow complained about the fact that since her husband was missing/probably killed, she only received one single letter during 20 months.
- Joseph's aircraft (Lockheed, Ventura, MK II, AJ196, EG-C, RAF 487 Sqdn ) left of from Feltwell, England on December 6th 1942 at 11.20 hours for a bombing raid on the Philips factories in Eindhoven, Noord-Brabant. From this mission it didn't return, because it was shot by flak at 12.25 hours on December 6th 1942 near the airfield of Woensdrecht, south of Bergen op Zoom, Noord-Brabant.



Names, service numbers of the crew members:

Pilot F.C. Seavill (RAF) 29216  
Navigator/Bomb aimer J.A.W. Withers (RCAF) J/10182  
Wireless operator/Airgunner F.E. King(RCAF) R/106627  
Air Gunner T.M. Richings (RAF) 1066223

Two of the four crew members were from the RAF and the other two from the RCAF. Nobody survived the crash and they were all temporarily buried on the German Military Cemetery in Bergen op Zoom and later on in 1946 reburied on the British/Canadian War Cemetery in Bergen op Zoom. **It is very strange that one of the two Canadians (King) is reburied on the Canadian Cemetery and the other (Withers) on the British Cemetery.**

**Source:**

<https://www.verliesregister.studiegroepluchtoorlog.nl/zz.php>

- **December 6th 1942** at 12.25 hours a British Lockheed Ventura II of the 487 squadron crashed in the south-eastern of the airfield Woensdrecht. The bomber, registration number AJ196 and *call sign* EG-C, came from his home base and was on his way to Eindhoven in the context of operation *Oyster*. This was an allied attack on the Philips factories in Strijp 5 and the Emmasingel. This so called Sinterklaasbombing was from a strategical point of view a success, because the production of radio tubes for the Germans was stopped for six months. But there was also a seam side: during the attack more than 150 civilians were killed, because also stores, houses, churches and the Binnenziekenhuis were hit. The RAF made a propaganda film about it. The Ventura was shot down by German flak and all the crew members(4) were killed. Pilot W/C Francis Cecil Seavill (32), observer F/O Joseph Alan William Withers (RCAF) and the two air gunners Sgt. Francis Edward King (22) (RCAF) and Sgt. Thomas Montague Richings (22) were buried at the Canadian War Cemetery in Bergen op Zoom, respectively in the graves 3 C 9, 3 B 12, 1 A 6 en 1 A 1( **is not correct**). Sixteen of the 90 bombers (different types) in this operation didn't return to their home base, nine of them were Ventura's.

**Source:** <https://www.bhic.nl/ontdekken/verhalen/neergestorte-vliegtuigen-in-woensdrecht-1940-1945>