

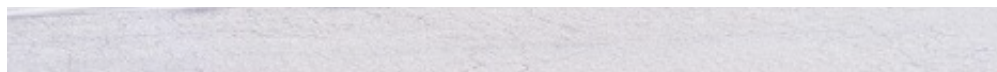
LIFE / NEIGHBORHOODS / COMMUNITY ISSUES

Everest Raymond Watrous – a Sugar House neighborhood business pioneer – Part II

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First Watrous Sugar House family home on 1720 Redondo Avenue
Courtesy of James Brown

In Part I, readers were introduced to Everest Raymond 'Ray' Watrous, who, while born in the rugged mountainous area of Big Cottonwood Canyon, soon moved to and grew up in Sugar House, where, in 1928 he met the woman he would marry, Mildred Bates. Watrous' goal, however, was to obtain full time employment before they wed, with preferences for either Utah Power and Light or Safeway.

Watrous was hired as a day laborer for Safeway one Saturday in 1931. This was not the regular

eight hour day we think the norm today, but one closer to twelve hours, without a lunch break. He was tasked with stocking the shelves of items on special that day—bread at 10 cents a loaf and bananas at three pounds for a dime! As fast as he stacked the shelves they were wiped out by eager customers. At the end of the day he helped clean the store.

Watrous had so impressed Safeway management with his speed and efficiency, he was offered a full time job beginning the next week—the start of an 18 year career with the grocery giant, soon as a store manager at 1488 South 700 East (store no longer exists) and later as a training manager and head of the employee association. As part of the latter group’s activities, Watrous often arranged wilderness trips reflective of his love of the outdoors and his role as vice president of the Wasatch Mountain Club. Members of that club were instrumental in developing various local ski resorts including Brighton and Alta.



Courtesy of Tom Watrous

After marrying in 1932, Ray and Mildred resided in Sugar House, first renting at 761 East Roosevelt, near the Safeway Store, and in 1940 purchasing their first home at 1720 Redondo Avenue.

In 1945, Watrous took the first step in his goal of establishing his own business by purchasing a parcel of property on the southwest corner of 1700 South 1700 East. He, Mildred, and, by now, their three children moved into a house located on that parcel at 1682 East 1700 South, where he would ultimately fulfill his dream by opening the Home and Garden Variety Store.

The only thing holding Watrous back was start up money. Friends who had promised to help backed out; Watrous didn’t have the needed funds. To get those funds, he and a friend developed the *Little Mountain Ski Resort* in Emigration Canyon. Small and relatively primitive by today’s ski resort standards--Little Mountain used tow ropes rather than ski lifts to transport skiers to the top of the slopes, it was the first ski resort in the area to offer ‘night skiing.’ Watrous was honored in a USA Today article after his death as ‘a pioneer in the ski industry.’ Watrous sold his interest in the resort in 1960, purchasing the Brighton Village Store, near the Brighton Ski Resort, with the proceeds.

In 1949, while juggling both the Little Mountain Ski Resort and Safeway employment, Watrous

opened the Home and Garden Variety Store on the 1700 East 1700 South property. At the beginning stock was so limited that Watrous or his wife often had to rush down to Economy Drug at the 1500 East 1500 South shopping area to purchase replacements for the last of a sold item, but, thanks to the profits from the Little Mountain venture, he had no debt.

Part III – Watrous expands the Home and Garden Variety Store to include sports equipment as an REI distributor

Source:

Conversations with Carolyn Watrous Taylor

Watrous, Thomas: *Everest Raymond Watrous: A Personal History*, March, 2009.

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