

## Everest Raymond Watrous – a Sugar House neighborhood business pioneer – Part III

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Home and Garden Variety and Sporting Goods REI flyer  
 Courtesy of Tom Watrous

In parts I and II, readers were introduced to Everest Raymond 'Ray' Watrous – his birth in Big Cottonwood Canyon and enduring love of the outdoors, his family's move to Sugar House, his work ethic developed at an early age, his employment with Safeway, his marriage and purchase of a home on Redondo Avenue, development of the Little Mountain Ski Resort, and his realization of a business of his own via his development of the Home and Garden Variety Store on 1700 East and 1700 South.

The post-war building period in the surrounding area and the ensuing surge of new families, made the Home and Garden Variety store an almost instant success. It became a gathering spot for the neighborhood, ultimately expanding to the edge of the house. In 1952, Watrous decided to expand the store further. The house at 1682 East 1700 South was torn down to accommodate the addition. The latter provided a sporting goods area, an REI franchise, where, according to Watrous, he sold more mountain climbing equipment than any other franchisee between Denver and Los Angeles.



Courtesy of Tom Watrous

Watrous purchased other property in the area to build a new home. That home, where daughter Carolyn and husband Kim Taylor ultimately moved, raised their family and still reside, was one of the first in the neighborhood to have a swimming pool.

Many of the store's employees also lived in the area; for some it was a second job to help make ends meet or provide money for land scraping or home improvements for their own newly purchased homes. Wife Mildred and children Patricia ('Tish'), Carolyn and Tom also worked in the store.

In the mid-1960's, Watrous saw that 'big stores' were taking over many small businesses like his. Though he had been asked to franchise his operation, he reluctantly decided against it, feeling that such a decision would ultimately result in a loss of control of the operation and the personal touch he had brought to it.

In 1965 Watrous sold the property to Francis Horner, whose family still operates the Chevron gas station that replaced the variety store. The Horner family had previously owned a full service gas station on the southeast corner of 1700 East 1700 South, where Dave's (Smith)

Shop and Go currently operates, minus the service bays, a self-service gasoline and variety store combination. According to Ray's daughter Carolyn 'Dave is maintaining the variety store tradition.'

Following the sale of the store, Ray and Mildred moved to Brighton to run the Brighton Village Store, adding food service, and continuing to provide that same great customer service and 'neighborhood' convenience as the 17th and 17th variety store. After selling the Brighton Village Store in 1974, Ray and Mildred moved to Bicknell where they purchased and ran the Fremont Meadow Ranch. Ray Watrous passed away on October 22, 1989.

Those who still remember the Home and Garden Variety and Sporting Goods Store (they are dwindling), do so fondly, recalling its unique charm and the personal touch of Ray Watrous and his family. Watrous was ahead of the times in customer service and one-stop convenience in a small, neighborhood operation that has, up until recently, become almost extinct.

With the assistance of programs like those initiated by Salt Lake City, designed to renew that venue and the examples of individuals, like Watrous, who pioneered in those efforts in the past, it is possible that today's generation will see a revival of that unique, personalized neighborhood shopping experience.

Source:

Conversations with Carolyn Watrous Taylor

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

### **SUGGESTED LINKS**

- [Everest Raymond Watrous – a Sugar House neighborhood business pioneer – Part II](#)
- [Everest Raymond Watrous – a Sugar House neighborhood business pioneer – Part I](#)
- [Dave's Shop 'n Go in Sugar House](#)