

= Emmett Watson =

Emmett Watson (November 22 , 1918 ? May 11 , 2001) was an American newspaper columnist in Seattle , Washington , whose columns ran in a number of Seattle newspapers over a span of more than fifty years . Initially a sportswriter , he is primarily known for authoring a social commentary column for the Seattle Post @-@ Intelligencer (P @-@ I) from 1956 until 1982 , when he moved to The Seattle Times and continued there as a columnist until shortly before his death in 2001 .

Watson , who grew up in Seattle in the 1920s and 1930s , was a tireless advocate , through his column as well as through a fictional organization he created called Lesser Seattle , for limiting the seemingly unbridled growth and urban renewal that dramatically altered the Seattle landscape during the second half of the twentieth century .

= = Early life = =

= = = Childhood = = =

Born in Seattle , Watson and twin brother Clement were the sons of Garfield and Lena McWhirt . Emmett 's mother and twin brother died of Spanish Influenza the following year ; his father , an itinerant laborer unable to care for his 14 @-@ month @-@ old son , arranged for Emmett 's adoption by long @-@ time friends John and Elizabeth Watson of West Seattle .

= = = School and baseball = = =

Watson suffered an ear infection as a child that permanently damaged his hearing . He attended West Seattle High School before transferring to Franklin . A catcher on the Quakers baseball team , he played with future major league pitcher Fred Hutchinson. and graduated in 1937 .

Watson enrolled at the University of Washington and played baseball for the Huskies under head coach Tubby Graves . He played very briefly with the Seattle Rainiers of the Pacific Coast League , amassing one hit in a total of two at @-@ bats . He often blamed his lack of success in professional baseball on his inability to hit a curveball . He graduated from the university in 1942 with a bachelor 's degree in communications . After leaving baseball , Watson worked in the Seattle @-@ Tacoma Shipyard during World War II .

= = = Early writing career = = =

During the war , Watson and some friends produced a newsletter to send to baseball players serving in the military . The newsletter brought him to the attention of an editor at the Seattle Star (a now defunct daily newspaper) where Watson was hired to cover the Rainiers in 1944 . It was while working at the Star that Watson contracted polio .

In 1946 , The Seattle Times lured Watson away from the Star , where he continued to cover sports until 1950 , when he received an offer from the Seattle Post @-@ Intelligencer that The Seattle Times chose not to match . He initially wrote a sports column at the P @-@ I. In 1956 the P @-@ I was pitched the idea of an " Around the Town " column by a group of restaurant owners who offered to partially underwrite the costs of producing the column in exchange for an occasional plug . The new column , " This , Our Town , " was assigned to Watson .

= = Columnist at the Seattle Post @-@ Intelligencer = =

Watson 's new column quickly broadened its scope to cover all aspects of life in Seattle . In 1959 it was rechristened " This , Our City . " By 1962 , the column , primarily a " three dot " compilation of short items , was running five days a week . When a particular issue caught his attention , Watson would produce a longer , essay @-@ style column . It was these essay @-@ style columns that

provided most of the fodder for his 1993 book , My Life in Print .

In his column , as in his life , Watson was an early champion of civil rights , social reform , and the anti @-@ war movement . He denounced urban renewal plans aimed at flattening Pioneer Square and radically altering Seattle 's Pike Place Public Market . He was the founder and leader of " Lesser Seattle , " a parody of Greater Seattle , Inc . , which advocated several schemes for Seattle 's civic improvement and development that Watson considered ill @-@ advised . Feeling that the influx of outsiders , primarily from California , was ruining the city , Watson often published tongue @-@ in @-@ cheek columns suggesting ways to make visitors to Seattle feel unwelcome . He also invented a fictional organization called Keep the Bastards Out (KBO) that fought against the influx of newcomers to the Puget Sound area from out of state .

= = = Reporting the suicide of Ernest Hemingway = = =

Watson received international notoriety in 1961 when he broke the story of novelist Ernest Hemingway 's suicide in Idaho , which had initially been incorrectly reported by Hemingway 's wife as an accidental shooting .

= = = Major League Baseball in Seattle = = =

Watson and long @-@ time friend U.S. District Judge Bill Dwyer were ringleaders in the anti @-@ trust suit against Major League Baseball when the Seattle Pilots were moved to Milwaukee after a single expansion season in Seattle in 1969 . It was the effectiveness of this action that proved to be instrumental in Seattle being awarded the Seattle Mariners in 1977 .

= = = Growing disenchantment with the Seattle P @-@ I = = =

In the early 1980s , Watson left the P @-@ I after he believed he was treated unfairly by a new editor , although he still contributed to the paper as a freelancer . Watson 's criticisms of then Mariners owner George Argyros eventually led to the P @-@ I reducing the frequency of his column . Watson remembered , " I picked up the paper and saw the column wasn 't in there . The managing editor called and said he was thinking of cutting me back to one column a week . I said maybe we should make it zero columns a week . " On October 30 , 1983 , after a hiatus of more than three decades , Watson 's column appeared once again in The Seattle Times .

= = Columnist at The Seattle Times = =

At The Seattle Times Watson continued to write his column in the style that had made him a well @-@ known fixture of Seattle journalism . As was his custom , he continued to skewer the rich and powerful in his columns , always fighting against the kind of development and modernization that he felt was destroying the city he knew and loved . Over the years the tone in his columns softened somewhat and they often consisted of his reminisces of " Old Seattle . " In November 2000 , when his union , The Newspaper Guild , went on strike against The Seattle Times , Watson , then in his eighties , made regular , daily appearances on the picket lines . During the strike he wrote for the Seattle Union Record , the strike paper of the Pacific Northwest Newspaper Guild .

= = Oyster Bar = =

Emmett , along with his friend Sam Bryant , opened the city 's first oyster bar on February 18 , 1979 . Watson sold his share of the Oyster Bar to Bryant in 1987 . Still in business today , Emmett Watson 's Oyster Bar is located in Seattle 's Pike Place Market and is currently owned by Sam Bryant 's son , Thurman .

= = Death = =

In March 2001 , 82 @-@ year @-@ old Watson underwent surgery for an abdominal aneurysm at Virginia Mason Medical Center in Seattle and died of complications from the surgery on May 11 .

= = Accomplishments = =

Watson was called " one of the greats " by contemporaries Herb Caen of the San Francisco Chronicle and Jimmy Breslin of the New York Daily News and he considered himself a protégé of Caen 's . He wrote four books (including My Life in Print) and received the Distinguished Service Award from the Society of Professional Journalists ' Western Washington Chapter in 1998 .

= = Published works = =

1982 Digressions of a Native Son ISBN 0 @-@ 9609450 @-@ 0 @-@ 8

1992 Once Upon a Time in Seattle ISBN 0 @-@ 9634102 @-@ 1 @-@ 0

1993 My Life in Print ISBN 0 @-@ 9634102 @-@ 2 @-@ 9

1994 Above Seattle (with Robert Cameron , photographer) ISBN 0 @-@ 918684 @-@ 41 @-@ 2