

Was Newspaper Chief Here Since 1944—

Herald-Register Publisher L. B. Watt Dies at 82

2/21/74

Lawrence B. Watt, 82, publisher of The Grinnell Herald-Register for the past 30 years, died Thursday night at Grinnell General Hospital.

He had been ill for the past four months and had been hospitalized at the University Hospitals in Iowa City, and here in Grinnell.

Funeral services were held today (Monday) at the United Methodist Church in Grinnell. The Rev. John McCallum was in charge.

Pallbearers were five grandsons, Peter Collinge, James Elk, Robert Elk, Lawrence W. Pinder, Joseph Pinder; and David Schroll, a grandson-in-law.

Honorary pallbearers were Carl Child, James P. Christensen, Raymond L. George, C. S. Griewe, W. B. Hoyt, F. A. Jones, Kyle Jones, Charles L. Kaufman, R. S. Kinsey, Hugh McCleery, Eldon Olds, Carl Orr, Lawrence Pedersen, Sam Rasmussen, Max Thompson, and Howard Tinnes.

Clark Watkins and members of Hermon Masonic Lodge No. 273, Grinnell, conducted Masonic rites at the church.

W. K. Richardson, chaplain, and members of the Grinnell veterans Ceremonial Unit conducted military graveside rites.

The organist was Mrs. Willard Heffner.

Survivors

Survivors include his wife, Hazel; three daughters: Mrs. A. J. (Dorothy) Pinder, of Grinnell; Mrs. Donald (Elizabeth) Elk of Storm Lake; and Mrs. James (Mary Ellen) Collinge of Rochester, N.Y.; and 12 grandchildren, Peter, Jody and Janet Collinge of

Rochester, N.Y.; Mrs. Sally Elk Schroll of Minneapolis, Minn., James and Robert Elk of Storm Lake, and Joseph, Peggy, Jeanne, Anne, Lawrence W. and Martha Pinder of Grinnell.

He is also survived by two sisters, Mrs. Arthur Hadley and Mrs. C. A. Penwell, both of Villisca; and three brothers, Raymond of McLean, Va., Orville of Moline, Ill., and Everett of Loveland, Colo.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Rowland W. and Viola Barton Watt; two brothers—Lester W. and Floyd; and five sisters—Leona (Mrs. Perry Silvara); Ethel (Mrs. Walter Young), Elma (Mrs. James Prather), Hermia (Mrs. Harvey Swank) and Bertha (Mrs. Harold Peters).

He was born in Corning, Iowa, on June 6, 1891. After graduating from Villisca High

School in 1910, he attended Grinnell College, graduating in 1914.

After graduation, he returned to his hometown, Villisca, where he worked for the Villisca Review from 1914 thru 1921, with the exception of two years, 1917-19, when he served as an ensign in the Navy during World War I.

In 1921, he married Hazel Erickson of Villisca. The Watts moved to Des Moines where Mr. Watt spent two years with the University Publishing Co. before returning to the newspaper business.

In 1923, they moved to Storm Lake where Mr. Watt became editor and publisher of the Storm Lake Register. He served in that position until 1944 when he purchased the majority interest in The Grinnell Herald-Register.

Mr. Watt served as president

of the Iowa Press Association in the years 1948-49.

Press Honor

He was also named as Master Editor-Publisher by the Iowa Press Association in 1955. This is the highest honor that the organization confers on newspapermen in the state.

He was a longtime active member of the Methodist Church, and served the church in many capacities.

A member of Hermon Masonic Lodge No. 273, Mr. Watt recently became a 50-year member of the Masonic lodge.

He is also a 50-year member of the American Legion, past commander of the Storm Lake post, and a member of Hopeful Barracks of Grinnell, WWI Veterans.

An active Rotarian, Mr. Watt served as president of both the Storm Lake and the Grinnell Rotary Clubs.

He was past president of the Storm Lake Chamber of Commerce, past member of the Storm Lake Library Board, chairman of the Salvation Army Service Unit in Grinnell, and had held many other civic and community positions in the communities in which he lived and served.

He was awarded the Grinnell College Alumni Achievement Award in 1964, and had served as president of the alumni class of 1914 for several years. He had been involved in helping plan for the 60th reunion of the class which will be held this summer.

Mr. Watt was active in numerous other civic, community and social organizations in Villisca, Storm Lake and Grinnell.

A memorial has been established in Mr. Watt's name at the Grinnell United Methodist Church.

Among those from out-of-town attending funeral services for L.B. Watt on Monday, Feb. 25, were the following relatives: Peggy Pinder of Mt. Vernon, Mr. and Mrs. Donald (Elizabeth) Elk, James and Robert Elk of Storm Lake, Mr. and Mrs. Dave (Sally Elk) Schroll of Minneapolis, Minn., Mr. and Mrs. James Collinge, Jody and Janet of Rochester, N.Y., Peter Collinge of Lansing, Michigan, also Albert Reira of Barcelona, Spain; an exchange student in the Elk home in Storm Lake, Mr. and Mrs. Carl Newquist of Red Oak, Miss Marjorie Newquist of Omaha, Neb., Mrs. Charles Coffin of Omaha, Neb., Mrs. Marshall Meier of Waterloo, Orville Watt of Moline, Ill., Mrs. Charles Swank of Keithsburg, Ill., Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd Young of Prescott, Iowa, Mrs. Helen Penwell of Villisca, Mr. and Mrs. Neal Gray, also of Villisca, Mr. and Mrs. Chuck Rucker and Julie of Burlington; newspaper friends attending from out-of-town were Mr. and Mrs. Don Reid of Des Moines, (the former is Executive Secretary of the Iowa Press Association); Lester Benz of Iowa City; friends from Mt. Vernon attending were Paul Scott and Joe Meade. 2/25/74



Lawrence R. Watt

JMC 2/25/74
LAWRENCE BARTON WATT
 (The Register's Iowa News Service)

GRINNELL, IA. — Lawrence Barton Watt, 62, publisher of the Grinnell Herald-Register since 1944, died at Grinnell General Hospital Thursday night after a four-month illness.

Services will be at the United Methodist Church in Grinnell at 1:30 p.m. Monday. Burial will be at Grinnell.

Mr. Watt, who had been editor and publisher of the Storm Lake Register 21 years before buying the Grinnell newspaper, was president of the Iowa Press Association in 1948 and 1949 and in 1953 was given the newspaper organization's Master Editor-Publisher award. He had been associated with University Publishing in Des Moines between 1921 and 1923.

Born in Corning, he was graduated from high school at Villisca and from Grinnell College.

Survivors include his wife; three daughters; two sisters; three brothers and 12 grandchildren.

An Editorial—

Lawrence B. Watt

We'll miss him.

Lawrence B. Watt had been publisher of the Grinnell Herald-Register for the past 30 years. And he'd been an Iowa newspaperman for the past 60 years.

It won't seem the same without his presence, without his counsel, without the constant influence of his sense of "right."

Truth is that this editorial represents a violation of his teachings. But it's one that we must write, with a quiet apology to him.

L. B. wouldn't win any popularity contests. And in his view of newspapering, the object wasn't to win such contests. Instead, the object was to serve—to give the community the best newspaper possible and to help in whatever way was necessary to make the community a better place in which to live.

L. B.'s dedication to Iowa is best demonstrated in his three principal jobs after his graduation from Grinnell College in 1914. He spent some seven years in his hometown of Villisca, 22 in Storm Lake, and then returned to Grinnell where he had been for the past 30 years.

That he was good at his profession is clearly evidenced by his selection in 1955 to the highest award that the Iowa Press Association makes—that of Master Editor-Publisher. The plaque declared that he had "worked hard, lived honorably, thought carefully and influenced unselfishly."

His newspaper colleagues had recognized his talents earlier—and had elected him to serve as president of the Iowa Press Association during the 1948-49 year. It was a post he handled with vigor, and with the same dedicated enthusiasm to good journalism which he applied in directing his own paper.

Perhaps to some he was one of Grinnell's most misunderstood men. His apparent abrupt business personality begged for wrong conclusions. 'Tis sad that those who never got to know him beyond these superficial contacts never got to know the real man.

L. B. had a genuine compassion for his fellow beings. This is evidenced by his lifelong work in many service clubs and private charities. It is also evidenced that he was one of the most loyal and active hospital visitors in Grinnell.

It was a constant occurrence for us to be stopped by friends and even strangers who told us how much they enjoyed a visit from L. B. while they were hospitalized.

We've seen countless other demonstrations of compassion and charitable concern for his fellow man—but it has always been without ostentation, and with the maximum of anonymity.

Advancing years threatened, but they seemed to take little toll on L. B. until some four months ago. He always showed up at the office—and if there were things that needed doing, he did 'em. And even after he was struck by illness, he continued to try to perform as he felt he should, to do those things which needed doing.

L. B. will be missed—by his family of course, but also by the large number of colleagues who know and appreciate his contributions, and by the host of associates and friends who actually got to know and understand him. They looked on with admiration and respect.

Anyone who has ever been with him socially when any members of his family were present know of the love and respect that flowed in both directions.

It's our guess that L. B. Watt would be content to be called a "a good newspaperman."

We'd like to violate another one of his rules and say: "He was a good newspaperman, and one helluva good human being."