

# Newsman writes 30 to long, rich life

By Erik Watt



Maturity finally caught up with Erik Watt in Yellowknife on November 10, 2003. The effect, as he'd expected, was lethal. He was 76.

In his time as a newsman, public relations consultant, cartoonist, carpenter, freelance writer and broadcaster, outdoorsman, playwriter, raconteur and poet, Mr. Watt made no secrets of his flight from maturity. "ANYBODY can grow up," he once said. "But why?"

Born in Edmonton March 4, 1927, Mr. Watt was a fifth generation newsman who worked on 12 dailies (two of them twice) before "selling out for money."

"I had a hard time finding my niche," he said. "I wasn't the smartest, the brightest or the best writer, but I was faster than most of the people I worked with. A lot of big stories were turned over to me because of that."

Mr. Watt had been editor of the Sudbury Star, managing editor of the Cornwall Standard-Freeholder, Sarnia Observer, Oshawa Times and the Calgary Albertan, and a reporter or deskman for the Edmonton Journal, Winnipeg Free Press, Ottawa Citizen, Toronto Globe and Mail, Lethbridge Herald, and the Toronto Telegram, as well as publisher of two Telegram-owned suburban weeklies, the Mississauga News and the Bramalea Guardian.

He branched out into freelance work for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and magazines in that period, and between 1956 and 1962 covered the Northwest Territories for the Journal and, later, the Free Press, as the only North American reporter with the North as a full-time beat.

In 1976, seeking new challenges, Mr. Watt came back north to establish a tourism venture on the Mackenzie River. That never got off the ground and he wound up as editor of the Yellowknife for a year and then regional manager, later director, of public affairs for Indian and Northern Affairs Canada in Yellowknife.

In 1984 he became the first editor of Up Here magazine in Yellowknife before setting up his own public relations and media consultancy business, Erik Watt and Associates, the following year. He retired in 1998.

Mr. Watt worked as "stringer" for Macleans and Time magazines, and had produced two books, *Yellowknife: How a City Grew* and *McDougall's Bash*, a collection of northern poetry, and one play, *BushPilot*, which made its debut in Yellowknife in 1997.

He was better known, however, as a lyricist for the Moron Tabernac Choir and the Neveryly Brothers, locally infamous, neither of which, fortunately, ever cut any records.

Survivors include his wife, Joy, and beloved dog, Qimmiq; three daughters, Kathryn Matzigkeit and Enid (Mrs. Alan Thornburn), both of Calgary, and Judy of Kimberley, B.C.; five grandchildren and one great grandchild; brother Peter (Liz) of Grande Prairie, and sister-in-law Fern of Nanaimo, B.C. He was predeceased by his brother Robin last June.



Erik Watt