



J. Howard Sheerin

J. Howard Sheerin, a longtime Watsonville newspaperman, died this morning at Watsonville Community Hospital of cancer. He was 80.

Mr. Sheerin retired as city editor of the Register-Pajaronian in 1974 after a career of 44 years on local newspapers, which began when he was hired by Fred W. Atkinson as a reporter for the Morning Register. The Pajaronian was a separate newspaper in those days and was published in the evening.

Mr. Sheerin became city editor of the Register in 1935, then switched to the Morning Sun when the Register discontinued morning publication in 1937. When John P. Scripps Newspapers purchased the Register and Pajaronian in 1939 and shortly afterward absorbed the Sun, Sheerin went to work for the combined Register-Pajaronian and Sun, and, except for the war years when he worked for Kaiser Shipyards in Richmond, he was the city editor of that newspaper until his retirement.

Mr. Sheerin was born in Virginia City, Nev., in 1909, the son of Edward J. Sheerin, an immigrant from Australia who was a foreman in the mines in that Mother Lode country, and Augusta Ellen Hummel Sheerin, a San Francisco-born school teacher who taught in Gold Hill and Wadsworth during the heyday of the Comstock Lode.

The family moved to another Nevada mining town, Tonopah, in 1912, where Howard was raised, graduating from Tonopah High School and going on to the University of Nevada in Reno, from where he graduated in 1931.

Having taken some journalism courses, although there was no journalism school as such at Nevada, Mr. Sheerin headed for California, winding up in Watsonville, where he hoped to get at least a start on a newspaper career. It was such a perfect match, that he was to spend the rest of his life here.

In a column that he wrote on his retirement in July, 1974, Mr. Sheerin made clear his devotion to his adopted home town. He recalled that when he arrived the mayor was C. H. Baker, who held that job for 22 years, and that in the course of his career, which was almost totally devoted to covering city hall, he had watched seven mayors come and go, as well as uncounted numbers of councilmen, or aldermen as they were known when the city elected its governing board by districts before the shift to the at-large system in the 1950s. (Mr. Sheerin watched with interest and a sense of irony the recent successful effort to return to the district-election system.) He estimated that he had attended more than 1,000 city council, or board of aldermen, meetings.

He also liked to recall his early days here when Pajaro was the locale for one of the largest Chinatowns outside of San Francisco, and it and south Main Street comprised "a veritable warren of speakeasies, flophouses, opium dens and eating establishments."

Mr. Sheerin, who never married, was fond of traveling and had made several trips to South America and Europe. He was always active in civic affairs, having served as a director of the Red Cross, the Santa Cruz County Tuberculosis and Health Association and the American Field Service. He was a member of the 20-30 Club in the early days of its existence in Watsonville, and a member of the Elks and Kiwanis Clubs.

He leaves a brother, Chris, of Elko, Nev., who published the Elko newspaper before his retirement, and a nephew, Gary Sheerin, of Carson City, Nev.

A mass will be said Tuesday at 9 a.m. at St. Patrick's Church. Davis Memorial Chapel is handling arrangements.

REFERENCE