

2002 — Foundation moves to 211 E Kemp, establishing its own office for the first time in their history. The building was a gift from the Kenneth B. Way family.

2002



Kenneth B. Way

By Roger Whittle
Public Opinion Editor

Former Watertown businessman, community leader and philanthropist Kenneth B. Way was an early and frequent supporter of the Watertown Area Community Foundation, and even donated the building that the WACF now calls home.



Way, who passed away in 2006 at the age of 99, was the longtime owner/publisher of the Watertown Public Opinion. He worked to make the newspaper the best it could be and did the same for the city. He was a founding board member of the earliest Watertown development company, a founding member of the Watertown Planning Commission, where he served for over 40 years in the volunteer position, helping the City of Watertown grow and prosper in an organized manner.

He and his wife, Mickey, along with his sister Vera Way Marghab, were also lovers of the arts and perhaps did more than anybody to ensure Watertown has a strong arts community. They were all active in supporting the arts, both monetarily and by serving on various boards.

Mickey Way was a charter member of the Watertown Concert Association and served on its board for more than 50 years before passing away in 1999 at age 93. She loved to play piano and paint. Marghab, who passed

away in 1995, was an accomplished classical pianist.

All three Ways avidly attended as many local plays and concerts as Watertown could offer, including Municipal Band and high school band and orchestra performances.

Then and now, they made sure Watertown could offer exceptional concerts to the public. Their legacy lives on and supports their passions through funds at the Watertown Area Community Foundation. Since 1997, the funds have supported the Watertown Concert Association on an annual basis.

"Back in the '80s, this group was close to going out of business," said Doug Herr, WCA board president, in a past Community Foundation article. "There was an opportunity to get the Canadian Brass, but they cost \$15,000. Kenneth Way heard about it and ended up paying \$10,000 of his own money to help get them here. That was a turning point for the group."

Herr said that, in addition to Mickey Way being on the board,

Kenneth Way continued to help out financially throughout the years. The reason was simple: "The Ways wanted to make sure everyone in Watertown could afford a ticket if they wanted to go.

"The Way and Marghab gifts still allow us to offer that," Herr said. Until the Anritter sisters gave a whopping \$3.2 million to the Foundation in 2013, a \$1.5 million gift from the trust of Kenneth Way stood as the largest donation ever. In a letter from Kenneth Way to the Foundation in May 2003, he wrote, "My father instilled in each of us the importance of Watertown and South Dakota. Watertown has been very good to the Way family and each of us have tried to repay through our personal efforts over the years and financially through the Watertown Community Foundation."

"We are very honored Mr. Way chose our foundation," said Jan DeBerg, WCF executive director. In addition to supporting the Watertown Concert Association, the Ways' and Marghab funds at

the Foundation also support Town Players, educational and other initiatives that promote a better quality of life in Watertown.

"They were really quite visionary, not only with their love for the arts and Watertown, but philanthropically," said DeBerg. "Their funds at the Foundation will support their passions forever."

Way was also known as a tireless promoter of downtown Watertown and the retail and commercial businesses in the downtown area. In 1992 when County Fair Foods announced plans to leave Watertown, he organized a behind-the-scenes effort to keep the grocery store where it was. The grocery store was, and is, a major business anchor for the downtown area and contributes greatly to the economic health of downtown Watertown.

Way worked on several development projects, and donated several commercial properties to the Community Foundation, including the Foundation's current office building on Kemp Avenue.

"From working with him ..., I just learned a lot about his family's generosity to the Watertown community," DeBerg said, "even going back to the days of his father in the early 1900s. ... I think that kind of showed the Way family has been one of the most important promoters of Watertown, its development and the quality of life here."

