

The following is a bit of remembrance for a good friend we lost this past week. Emerson Brown was nearly 97 1/2 years old when he died, and his was truly a life well lived. His death is not only the end of our personal relationship with one of the most interesting, involved, and ethical people we have ever known. It also means the loss of the knowledge, the sense of history, and the insight that was in his remarkable mind.

The first time we met Emerson was at a Democratic meeting, and I thought—What a great shock of hair! Later, after we became acquainted, I came to admire the formidable mental powers concealed under that hair.

Emerson, and as time went on, his family, became treasured friends. His interests and knowledge—both deep and broad—did not seemingly diminish as he advanced through the tenth decade of his life. He was interested in Everything. Along the way, he told stories of his childhood and youth, of his life in the foreign service, and of his farm and orchard.

We were privileged to meet Emerson, Jim and Mary Murnik, and other friends nearly monthly for the past several years. I always referred to this as “Emerson’s salon.” Conversation topics ranged far and wide and changed depending on who was in attendance that day. With Runo and me, Emerson’s questions were often about the sheep flock or other farm topics. Others in the group were his sources for information about ships, science, speech, languages, sawmills, literature, and much more. Books and politics were always on the agenda, and I saw our little group as an oasis of liberalism in this desert of right-wing non-thought in our area.

But, I don’t believe Emerson was a hater. In fact, he chided me for using the word “hate,” though I did not apply it to individuals. I argued that it was proper and allowable to hate things and activities—golf and football, in particular. He also bullied me into reading Stig Larsson’s *Girl With the Dragon Tattoo* trilogy. I reported back—okay, but not my favorites.

Emerson was born the same year that Warren Harding was elected President. He died during the tenure of a President that is much worse. But, when, as a young man, he went to the polls for the first time, he had the privilege of voting for Franklin Roosevelt, the President who rescued this country from the worst of the Great Depression. Perhaps from this came this sense of hope, maybe even a touch of optimism, that seems to me to have been one of Emerson’s great strengths. After talking about some discouraging event—or about a health crisis—he’d say, “And yet,—“

and go on to something positive.

We will remember that, just as we will remember Emerson as one of the unexpected gifts that came into our lives. He's gone now, "and yet—" we will think about him, quote him, and remember him during the years to come.