

# Dennis Blake West

1943

January 28, 2022

Williams Bay, WI



With wife Kathi by his side. **Dennis Blake West, 78**, of Williams Bay, WI, died at home on January 28, 2022.

Dennis said he was “born, old and grumpy, in Rockford, IL in 1943.” A 1961 graduate of Rockford West High School, Dennis attended the University of Illinois in Urbana for two years, then “stumbled” through a number of jobs before landing one at WROK radio. He spent most of the next 25 years selling advertising, managing others who did the same, and finally becoming president and general manager of WIFR-TV

and a Vice President of Worrell Broadcasting. During his 21 years at WIFR, he won several awards for editorial writing for such organizations as United Press International, the Associated Press and the Illinois Broadcasters Association. He also worked at the CBS Television Network, leaving television in 1988.

A year after he and wife, Kathi, moved to their summer home in Williams Bay, he entered the University of Wisconsin, Madison, where he completed the journalism degree begun in 1961. In about 1993, the family moved to the Lake Geneva area. After editing *The Bay Times* and running his own advertising agency, in 1996, he purchased and, for over 25 years, edited the monthly newspaper, *The Beacon*, now a bi-weekly publication with a circulation of 20,000 in greater Walworth County, WI (including the resort communities of Lake Geneva and Delavan.) Part of that publication is a section called Good Humour, using the British spelling that kept the GH ice cream company from suing him. In addition to WestWords, he authored “Bringlish: A Reader’s and Viewer’s Guide to British English.”

Dennis was a friendly, outgoing person, always ready to share a good story, and never shy about giving his opinion. His regular Beacon column, WestWords, was an entertaining mix of information, humor, and words of wisdom. He will be missed by many. He and Kathi enjoyed many travels and good times together. He and about a dozen high school classmates, called themselves The Old Warriors, gathered each summer in northern Wisconsin to relax and reminisce. He loved his pets, especially

his cats. He once said that when he died, he hoped he'd go to a place where all his former pets would be. Here's hoping he's with Charlie, Noah, and many more.

He is survived by his loving wife of 57 years Kathi Bovi West; sons Paul and Mark West; grandsons Miles and Ethan West; sister Martha West; brother Paul West; and cats Molly and Shamus.

At Dennis' request, there will be no funeral service; cremation and burial will be private. Send condolences to Kathi West, P.O. Box 69, Williams Bay, WI 53191.

## Reference:

<https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/legacyremembers/dennis-west-obituary?id=32760090>

# Saying good bye to a friend

*Former editor, publisher of The Beacon dies*

By Tracy Ouellette  
STAFF WRITER

Dennis West, the former editor and publisher of *The Beacon* died Jan. 26, at the age of 79.

West purchased *The Beacon* in the early 1990s and became well known in the area for his every-other week, general-interest newspaper in Williams Bay.

West was a graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, earning a degree in journalism.

He was born in Rockford, Illinois, and his family owned a cottage in "The Bay" from 1928 to 1953 when it was sold.

"We continued to rent cottages for at least one week during most of the summer of my childhood and teenage years. Some years after we married, Kathi and I bought a piece of property across the street from the old homestead and eventually built a small house," West recalled in the introduction to his book, "Westwords - Observations from the Desk of a Small-Town Newspaper Publisher."

West worked in media - radio, newspaper and advertising - throughout his career. He was an award-winning journalist, recognized by the Associated Press, United Press International, Illinois Broadcasters Association and other organizations.

After earning his degree, he took a job at *The Bay Times* and a couple of years later, purchased *The Beacon*.

In October of 2017, West sold *The Beacon* to Southern Lakes Newspapers and he and long-time assistant, Wendy Shafer, joined the newsgroup, which also owns the Burlington Standard Press, Elkhorn Independent and Delavan Enterprise, among other local, weekly newspapers.

Shafer, who joined West at *The Beacon* in 2005, said losing her friend and coworker has been difficult, but her fond memories are softening the blow.

"I worked with Dennis at *The Beacon* for over 13 years. I enjoyed every minute of it. It was a fun, relaxed, creative atmosphere, with kids, cats, and dogs around the office. We laughed a lot. I will miss talking to him. He was a good writer and a good man, with a wicked sense of humor. I will miss him," Shafer said.

She recalled how West and his wife always ran a Lakeland School prom section and Dennis and Kathi would go over on prom night and take pictures of all the couples, the king and queen and the court.

"It was a big deal to those kids," Shafer said.

His love of the community showed in each edition of this newspaper.

"Dennis had the innate ability to find an interesting angle in every story. His folksy writing style and ability to connect with the community made *The Beacon* a familiar friend for his readers. Community journalism just isn't the same without people like

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SUBMITTED PHOTO Walworth/Fontana/Williams Bay Times

Dennis West (second from right) with his son, Mark (second from left), and Mark's sons, Ethan (left) and Miles (right).

## • Good bye (Continued from front page)

Dennis," said Ed Nadolski, editor in chief of Southern Lakes Newspapers.

West took pride in his writing and connection to the community, Shafer said.

"And being honest, he was honest to a fault. And what a sense of humor; he was so funny. We laughed so much in the office," she added.

Yes, West was a funny guy. He could find the humor in any situation, sometimes to his detriment.

Shafer recalled that West would write satire news stories for this paper under the byline of "Frankly Facetious" and more than once, he was taken seriously.

Shafer said one instance was when West wrote that the abandoned dog track in Delavan would be turned into a prison.

"They thought it was real," she said. "We had to point out the byline."

All of which, West found hilarious, she added.

"He never took life too seriously," Shafer said. "And if someone would get really mad, he would tell them they were welcome to cancel their subscription. A subscription to a free newspaper."

Dennis shared his sense of humor in his Westwords column which appeared in *The Beacon* until October of last year, when he decided to step back from the newspaper.

After he sold the paper to Southern Lakes, West had continued to be the editor until February 2020. At that time, he was battling cancer and he gave up his editing duties, but still stayed involved with some promotion/advertising and writing his bi-weekly column.

Last fall, West left the newspaper completely while he continued to fight the cancer that was taking its toll. He told me it was time for him to go and he was comfortable leaving *The Beacon* in "good hands" and thanked me.

West is survived by his wife, sons Mark and Paul; grandsons, Ethan and Miles; brother, Mark; sister, Martha West-Edwards; and nephew, Jason Blake.

Rest in peace, Dennis, you will be missed by many.



SUBMITTED PHOTO Times Reporter

Dennis West and his wife, Kathi, enjoy some time outside.