Background of the Al McIntosh Distinguished Service to Journalism Award:

The name Al McIntosh was long one of the most distinguished in the field of editorial writers. In the ’60s, McIntosh wrote the editorial “I’m a Tired American” which was reprinted across the country hundreds of times. He also served as president of both MNA and the National Newspaper Association. McIntosh was publisher and editor of the Rock County Star Herald in Luverne, MN, from 1940-1968.

The award was established to recognize those who have provided exceptional service to journalism. It is not necessarily given every year. Nominees for the award must be approved by the MNA Board of Directors.

Past Recipients:

1966 Clark Mollenhoff 1991 Peter Popovich
1971 Walter Brovald 1993 Justice John E. Simonett
1973 John Finnegan 1995 John R. Finnegan
1974 Charles W. Bailey, Frank Premack & Peter Vanderpoel
1975 Ellen Olson
1976 Judge C. Donald Peterson
1979 Scott Schoen
1980 August Erickson
1981 Grant Utley, Cass Lake
1982 Robert M. Shaw
1983 Jared How, Mankato
1984 John Cameron Sim
1985 Otto Silha
1986 Gene Johnson & Jerry Kline
1987 Lynn Smith
1988 Walter Barnes & Mitchell Charnley
1989 Charles Warner
1990 Mark Anfinson
1991 Peter Popovich
1992 Robert R. Weishair
1993 Justice John E. Simonett
1994 Philip S. Duff, Jr.
1995 John R. Finnegan
1996 Michael A. Parfa
1997 Arlin Albrecht
1998 Donald Q. Smith
1999 Donald Gillmor
2000 Elmer L. Andersen
2003 Reed Anfinson
2004 James M. Kinney
2005 Jim Pumarlo
2006 Gary Gilson
2007 Michael Vardie
2008 Peter and Lynne Jacobson
2010 Sandy L. Neren
2011 Terry McCollough
2013 John R. Finnegan
2015 Mary Liz Holberg
2016 Rollin & Julie Bergman
2017 John Bodette
2018 Bruce Fenske
2019 Sen. Amy Klobuchar
Minnesota Newspaper Association’s Distinguished Service to Journalism Award criteria describes Tom West perfectly. The award was established to recognize those who have provided exceptional service to journalism.

Tom’s newspaper career spanned more than 42 years. He is a past president of MNA serving as its president in 2004. Tom is a longtime member of the MNA legislative committee and has been active with numerous community and civic organizations. Many know him as the BNC awards reader.

When Tom retired from newspaper work in 2017, he wrote a retirement column for the *Morrison County Record*, which showcases the magic of his writing. These are a few highlights taken from his column which, tell the story of his newspaper career better than a biography written by anyone else ever could.

**After 42 years, his ‘checkered’ career nears an end.**

*By Tom West*

“More than 42 years ago, I walked into the *Waseca Daily Journal* for the first time to become its editor.

Perhaps I was crazy to take a job under sight-unseen circumstances, but as I learned, you have to be half crazy to work in an industry where everybody in town not only can see the fruit of all your labors, but pass judgment on it as well.

In 1978, I moved on to the *Mankato Free Press*, and became its political reporter.

In 1981, I was promoted to opinion page editor. I wrote 10 opinions a week plus a column. What I lacked in quality, I made up for in quantity.

In 1983, some co-workers and I determined that the only way to make money in the newspaper business was to own one. However, I was the only one nuts enough to go out and actually buy one.

My wife and I became the proud owners of the *Janesville Argus*. After eight years in the business, I thought I knew a lot about newspapering. Boy, was I wrong. I learned more in the first eight weeks than in the previous eight years.

If I wanted the sidewalk shoveled, I shoveled it. If I wanted the paper to be mailed, I drove it to the post office. And most importantly, I learned that if I wanted to feed my family, I needed to sell some ads.

We had seven good years in Janesville, but could see the future for what it was. The key event for me was covering a Christmas program at the school. The kindergarteners all wore grocery sacks with holes cut for their heads and arms.

Janesville had two grocery stores, our biggest advertisers, but 70 percent of the students wore bags from the new Cub Foods store in Mankato, 17 miles away.

In addition, I was working 80 hours a week. My solution? To start working 100-110 hours a week.

I made the biggest mistake of my career, and became involved in a newspaper war back in Waseca.

After 19 months of true insanity, both sides proved if you work at it hard enough, you can make each other miserable.

So we sold to a third party, and I went across town to become the publisher of one newly merged *Waseca County News* staff.

I’m sure the new owner, Bob Bradford, never thought I would last. Eight years later, Bradford decided to sell his holdings, and it became time for me to move again. By then, I was on the board of directors of the Minnesota Newspaper Association, so I had lots of publisher friends around the state.

We left Waseca for the *Duluth Budgeteer News*. We went through five ownership changes, and were eventually bought out by our daily competitor, owned by Knight-Ridder, then one of the largest newspaper companies in the nation. I learned to be resilient.

The highlight of my Duluth years — indeed, of my career — was serving as president of the Minnesota Newspaper Association in 2004-05.

In 2007, I moved to Little Falls to manage the *Morrison County Record* for ECM Publishers (now APG). Two years later, in 2009, I was named a regional manager and began overseeing the *Dairyland Peach* in Sauk Centre as well.

However, while I intend to live forever, aging has caught up to me.
I can honestly say that there has not been a day when I have not looked forward to going to work. My biggest fault is workaholism. But while I know I will miss it, I also know it’s time to go on to the next stage of my life.

**Tom West, West words**

“I can’t think of a more deserving person in our industry than Tom West to receive MNA’s most prestigious award. Tom has touched the lives of readers throughout our state as one of Minnesota’s most influential columnists and journalists. He continues to inform and educate readers with thought-provoking *Morrison County Record* columns. As a trusted newspaper executive, Tom positively influenced the careers of newspaper professionals throughout Minnesota being a mentor and friend to all. Tom dedicated his life and entire career to the health of Minnesota newspapers. Congratulations, Tom!”

*Mark Weber, Regional President - Adams Publishing Group of East Central Minnesota (ECM)*

“How privileged we are to have known Tom West, who through quiet perseverance taught us so much at the *Morrison County Record*. He listened, he advised, he explained and sometimes he just quietly insisted, and finally, we learned — and we learned from the best. His leadership was offered with dignity and respect — something he shared in his writing with the community. Whether readers agreed with his opinions or not, ultimately, they respected his straightforward and unwavering opinion. However, that is not to say he did not appreciate and value their input and took great pains to consider their point of view.

“Beyond work, I personally have found a friend, a comrade, a respected voice in my life. ‘Faithful friends are a sturdy shelter; whoever finds one finds a treasure.’ (Sirach, Ch. 6).

“No one is more deserving of the DSTJ award than Tom West, who has spent a lifetime as a treasure to journalism and to those who are blessed to call him ‘friend.’

“Anyone fortunate enough to have worked directly, indirectly, or for that matter, even to have known him for any period of time, would find it hard to disagree that there is anyone more deserving of the DSTJ award than Tom West.”

*Terry Lehrke, Managing Editor - Morrison County Record*

“How lucky we are to have Tom in our presence and our paper, and how lucky I am to know him as not only my mentor, but as my friend.”

*Carmen Meyer, General Manager/Publisher - Adams Publishing Group, Little Falls*