

## 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
1970	Judge Archie Gingold	1992	Robert R. Weishair
1971	Walter Brovald	1993	Justice John E. Simonett
1972	Dave Vorland	1994	Philip S. Duff, Jr.
1973	John Finnegan	1995	John R. Finnegan
1974	Charles W. Bailey, Frank Premack & Peter Vanderpoel	1996	Michael A. Parta
1975	Ellen Olson	1997	Arlin Albrecht
1976	Judge C. Donald Peterson	1998	Donald Q. Smith
1979	Scott Schoen	1999	Donald Gillmor
1980	August Erickson	2000	Elmer L. Andersen
1981	Grant Utley, Cass Lake	2003	Reed Anfinson
1982	Robert M. Shaw	2004	James M. Kinney
1983	Jared How, Mankato	2005	Jim Pumarlo
1984	John Cameron Sim	2006	Gary Gilson
1985	Otto Silha	2007	Michael Vadnie
1986	Gene Johnson & Jerry Kline	2008	Peter and Lynne Jacobson
1987	Lynn Smith	2010	Sandy L. Neren
1988	Walter Barnes & Mitchell Charnley	2011	Terry McCollough
1989	Charles Warner	2013	John R. Finnegan
1990	Mark Anfinson	2015	Mary Liz Holberg
		2016	Rollin & Julie Bergman
		2017	John Bodette
		2018	Bruce Fenske
		2019	Sen. Amy Klobuchar

Al McIntosh

# Distinguished Service to Journalism

153rd Annual Convention  
January 31, 2020  
Minneapolis Marriott Northwest



Minnesota Newspaper Association  
10 South Fifth Street, Suite 1105  
Minneapolis, MN 55402  
[www.mna.org](http://www.mna.org)

# Tom West

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)*

“For some, journalism is a job. For Tom it has been a calling. He has spent a lifetime immersing himself in, and reporting on, the issues, achievements, disappointments and the people that define community. As an exceptional columnist he has tackled everything from immigration reform to the merits of marriage. He has been fearless, yet fair, in his assessment of government leadership and the programs they administer. His consistent and unwavering commitment to the people he works with and the readers he serves is remarkable. That determination has ushered in greater awareness to the critical issues that affect people's lives, the true sign of a journalist. Throughout his career Tom has been a tremendous resource to readers and colleagues throughout Minnesota. The Distinguished Service to Journalism Award was tailor made for Tom West.”

*Keith Anderson, Director of News -  
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 Lebrke, Managing Editor -  
Morrison County Record*

“Having been one of the ‘lucky’ ones that has worked directly with Tom for almost 15 years, I can say with certainty that Tom is among the most highly respected, knowledgeable, talented, hardworking, and endeared people I have met. Rarely has a week gone by that I haven't had at least one person tell me that Tom's column is one of the highlights of our paper, and they look forward to reading it every week! His wisdom, dignity, compassion, family values and quiet strength are all part of what makes Tom the best journalist he can be.

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*