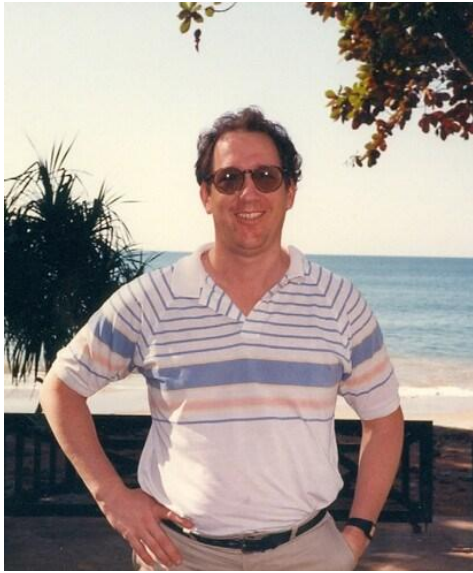


## Gordon West Obituary



Although he was taken from us too soon at age 77, Gordon Haughwout West lived an incredibly full life without regrets, defined by purpose and meaning. On January 26th, 2025, Gordon passed away peacefully in his sleep after a hard-fought battle with Alzheimer's Disease. He remained healthy and active throughout his later years until a more pronounced decline in his final year of life. He leaves behind a legacy of hope, love, and humanitarianism. Gordon worked hard and played hard, with a remarkable strength of character that enabled him to remain committed to the core values he held most dear: family, friendship, generosity, helping others, and adventure. He left this world a better place and enriched the lives of many. His good will carries on, as do the fond memories of him we cherish in our hearts.

Gordon was born in Oak Park, Illinois on August 15th, 1947 to Wynant and Dorothy West. He grew up in a large and loving family with siblings Barbara, Donald, Norman, and Nancy. In addition to family; religion, music, and sports were defining aspects of his youth, shaping Gordon's sense of spirituality, community, and adventure. After graduating from Wheaton High School, Gordon studied Industrial Engineering at Purdue University and worked as an engineer for Dow Chemical. Following an intuition that would lay a solid foundation for his future career, Gordon then attended the University of California, Berkeley and obtained a Master's degree in Urban Planning.

Gordon's vision for life began to crystallize when he decided to join the Peace Corps, the government volunteer agency for international development. He spent three years in Fiji volunteering on civil engineering and construction projects, which was a turning point in his life that firmly shaped his belief in helping others. His spirit of adventure was also able to shine through brightly, living on a boat for three years where he later fondly recounted stories of hurricanes, sharks, giant clams, and festive nights partying and celebrating life the Fijian way. Little did he know at that time that his career would eventually take him across much of the globe. Gordon's knack for recognizing and bringing out the best in people gave him a deep appreciation for the many cultures he experienced and an ability to connect with just about anyone.

After Fiji, joining the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) was a natural next step for Gordon, who was first stationed as a Foreign Service Officer in Dhaka, Bangladesh. While visiting Thailand on summer break, Gordon was introduced by a long-time friend Henry ("Hank") Merrill to the love of his life and future wife, Kanha ("Noi") Cheyapanta, who at the time was working as a language instructor for USAID in Bangkok. Gordon and Noi married in Thailand on May 11th, 1979 and remained happily married, lovingly devoted companions for the 45 years that followed. Together they had two sons: Gavin Haughwout West in 1982 and Benjamin Kasem West in 1985. Gordon was adored by his family and possessed so

many traits that made him a wonderful husband, father, and grandfather – patience, humor, and wisdom among them.

Following his marriage to Noi, Gordon moved back to Chicago to help his brother Don with an entrepreneurial pursuit before rejoining USAID, an agency he served proudly for 28 years on behalf of the American people to build a better, safer, and more just world. Gordon loved his country, believed in democracy, and cared deeply about uplifting the less fortunate and those in need. His overseas assignments included Egypt, Indonesia, Pakistan, and the Philippines before serving as Mission Director in both Cambodia and during a second tour in Bangladesh. In Washington DC, he served as the director of Economic Restructuring of Eastern Europe from 1991-1993 after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Deputy Assistant Administrator (Asia and Near East Bureau) from 2001-2004, and Senior Reconstruction and Stabilization Advisor from 2004-2005 with focus on Afghanistan and Iraq. Gordon retired from the federal government in 2005 and received the Administrator's Award for Distinguished Career Service. His first retirement was short-lived as he felt the pull to join RTI International in Indonesia to lead their Democratic Reform Support Program for five years, followed by three years as their Vice President of International Development in Washington, D.C.

After Gordon's second retirement, he continued on his path volunteering as the president of the neighborhood association as well as a devoted volunteer of the Shepherd's Center of Northern Virginia, helping to drive and assist the elderly. He also rediscovered his love of music through singing for the Fairfax Jubil-Aires chapter of the Barbershop Harmony Society. With a sailor's spirit, Gordon fought Alzheimer's as best as he could. He taped Albert Einstein's quote "once you stop learning you start dying" to his wall and continued to pursue his hobbies and volunteer activities to the best of his abilities. He relished time spent with friends and family and was especially grateful for his wife Noi, who cared for him at home for as long as she could until December 2024 when his condition required professional care and medical support. While physically gone, Gordon's zest for life, love, and generosity continue living in all of us that he touched.

To plant trees in memory, please visit the [Sympathy Store](#).

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