



## Obituary: Franklin West Jr. / Restored Victorian homes in East End

Wednesday, March 09, 2005

By Joyce Gannon, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Franklin West Jr., a pioneer in urban real estate development whose signature properties were Victorian homes in the East End that he restored into upscale apartments, died Sunday of cancer at Forbes Hospice.

Mr. West, of Fox Chapel, was 72.

A native of Squirrel Hill, Mr. West attended Shady Side Academy and earned a bachelor's degree in architecture from Carnegie Mellon University and a master's degree in city planning from Yale University. After a two-year stint in the Army, he returned to Pittsburgh and joined his father's home construction firm.

Bored with suburban housing, he went to work for the Pittsburgh Regional Planning Association and started buying and rehabilitating run-down homes in Shadyside.

In an interview with the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette last October, when he was turning management of his business over to his daughter and son-in-law, Mr. West said that even though parts of Shadyside were decaying significantly in the 1960s, he invested in housing there because the neighborhood had strong community anchors, including Mellon Park and Calvary Episcopal and Sacred Heart churches ("[West went the East End](#)," Oct. 31, 2004).

Mr. West's restorations quickly gained attention in the rental market because he kept intact the homes' classic features: fireplaces, hardwood floors, wood trim and high ceilings. He leased many of the units to young professionals and got to know many of them personally by attending to repairs himself.

His company, Franklin West Inc., now owns and manages about 400 units in Shadyside and another 300 in the suburbs.

A strong proponent of education and international travel, Mr. West served on the advisory board of the Center for International Legal Education at the University of Pittsburgh School of Law and in recent years donated an apartment to students from the Third World or developing nations to live in rent-free while they pursue a master's degree in legal education at Pitt.

"He had encouraged and mentored so many people, including tenants, relatives, friends and employees," said his daughter, Caroline West of Pittsburgh.

After he became sick last year, Mr. West opted not to retire but handed over day-to-day operations of the business to his daughter and her husband, Antonio Castracani.

Besides his daughter, he is survived by his wife, Sara West; another daughter, Rebecca West, of Cody, Wyo.; two sisters, Helen West, of Boston, and Mary Jo Kraft, of Pittsburgh; a brother, Edmond West, of Berwyn, Chester County; and two grandchildren.

A memorial service will be held at 2 p.m. tomorrow at Calvary Episcopal Church, 315 Shady Ave., Shadyside.

Memorial contributions may be made in Mr. West's name to the Center for International Legal Education at the University of Pittsburgh School of Law or to the Whitney Gallery of Western Art Acquisitions Fund at the Buffalo Bill Historical Center, Cody, Wyo.

Arrangements are by McCabe Brothers Funeral Home, Shadyside.

---

*(Joyce Gannon can be reached at [jgannon@post-gazette.com](mailto:jgannon@post-gazette.com) or 412-263-1580.)*

[Back](#)

---

Copyright ©1997-2004 PG Publishing Co., Inc. All Rights Reserved.