

SHADY AVE

Highlighting the News and Lifestyles of Pittsburgh's East End, Fox Chapel and Oakmont

FALL 2017

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

What We Call Our Schools Reveals
Our Past and Our Priorities

THE GREAT RACE

Fit and Fabulous at 40

DRINKING AGE

We're 21 and Celebrating!





48

SHADY AVE

DEPARTMENTS

- 6** Publisher's Note
- 8** Your Letters
- 12** Shopping, Dining, & Stuff
- 44** Neighborhood Reports
- 60** Local Flavor
Il Pizzaiolo Comes to Indiana Township
BY CHARLENE CAMPBELL

FEATURES

Fall 2017



84



88



62

- 26** **The Great Race**
Fit and Fabulous at 40
BY MARY GILBERT
- 32** **An Unmentionable Exhibit**
Underwear in the Spotlight at the Frick
BY HILARY DANINHIRSCH
- 40** **The Diplomat Next Door**
American Middle East Institute's
Simin Curtis
BY SARAH TUTHILL
- 48** **What's in a Name?**
Origins of Our Local Schools' Names
BY MATTHEW WEIN
- 78** **A View to the Garden**
A Sneak Peek at One Home on this
Year's Shadyside House Tour
BY NANCY POLINSKY JOHNSON
- 84** **Eye on Penn**
A New Home for Silver Eye Center for
Photography
BY LAURI GRAVINA
- 88** **Honoring the Past, Inspiring
the Future**
Congregation Beth Shalom Marks 100 Years
BY RACHEL BERRESFORD
- 108** **Drinking Age**
Shady Ave Celebrates Turning 21
With a Cocktail or Two—and More!
- 116** **Barring the Way**
Favorite Places to Watch Our Home
Teams Play
- 120** **Dirty Girty**
A Legendary Historical Figure Gets His Due
BY CHARLIE STEWART

- 62** **Artist Profile**
Photographer Maranie Rae Staab
BY SANDRA LEVIS
- 64** **Official Outlook**
- 66** **Neighborhood News**
- 83** **Neighborhood Values**
- 94** **Personality Profile**
The Warhol's Patrick Moore
BY DANIEL CASCIATO
- 98** **Neighborhood Calendar**
- 104** **Getting Down to Business**
*Franklin West: A Legacy in Bricks
and Mortar*
BY JEFF FORSTER
- 126** **Neighborhood Nosh**
Park Bruges Freshens Up
BY MACKENZIE CARPENTER
- 139** **Just for Laughs**
Over the Moon for Babymoos
BY NANCY BERK
- 140** **A Look Back**



78



108

Cover: Pittsburgh Colfax in Squirrel Hill, a Pittsburgh Public Schools K-8 school.



Printed on Recycled Paper



www.NewWindEnergy.com

GETTING DOWN TO BUSINESS

BY JEFF FORSTER



A Legacy in Bricks and Mortar

A pioneer in preservation, **Franklin West** founded the rental company that helped shape the Shadyside of today.

Although it's hard to believe today, the eastern part of Shadyside in the early 1960s was crumbling. The neighborhood's stately Victorians suffered neglect as suburban development and mass-produced housing superseded the Millionaire's Row of Pittsburgh's industrial heyday. But an urban visionary named Franklin "Frank" West Jr.—trained in architecture at Carnegie Tech and in city plan-

ning at Yale—saw potential in the neighborhood's historic housing stock, location, and dense urban fabric. In 1965 he bought a three-story, Second Empire house with tall windows, a mansard roof, and beautiful trim at 513 Shady Avenue in the eastern part of Shadyside as an investment property. He moved into it and renovated it, converting what was then a boarding house into apartments.



The late Frank West Jr., on the steps of his first investment property, with his wife, Sara; daughter Caroline West; and son-in-law Antonio Castracani, in 2004.

So began the eponymous rental-property company that continues to this day.

Although Frank West died in 2005, his wife, Sara, still serves as president of the company, and their daughter Caroline West and son-in-law Antonio Castracani run the day-to-day operations as general counsel and vice president, respectively.



Frank West Jr. in 1972

Copyright, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, 2017, all rights reserved. Reprinted with permission.



The house at 513 Shady Avenue as it appeared when Frank West Jr. bought it in 1965 (above), and the same property today (right), still reflecting the changes West made when he renovated it after the purchase.



Describing what her father saw in Shadyside over 50 years ago, Caroline West calls it “the Georgetown of Pittsburgh,” referring to the charming historic neighborhood in Washington D.C., where she attended law school. Shadyside’s nature as an urban and urbane place outside the city center makes the comparison apt. “You can get everywhere easily,” she says. “You have tree-lined streets. You can sit on your deck and drink your coffee in the morning. We still have bunnies here.” The bunnies add the natural touch, of course, but more importantly, Shadyside, like so many Pittsburgh neighborhoods, has a character and authenticity of its own. West calls it “part of the patchwork quilt that is Pittsburgh.”

Putting her father’s vision in perspective, West likens it to “what you see on HGTV now,” referring to the television network’s many popular home-renovation shows. She says he would “live in a property, renovating it, renting it out, and moving on to the next one.” Because he saw a whole neighborhood awaiting rebirth, he kept repeating the process, marching forward step by step. “Each block was a way to overall rebuild the neighborhood and stabilize it,” she recounts. “Doing it little by little, it would spread.”



The structure at 260 Shady Avenue, before West purchased it in the 1960s (above), and the apartment building as it appears today (left).



This duplex on Denniston Street is one of a cluster of duplexes in Shadyside that West purchased and renovated (right).



West is able to run down the list of places her family lived in Pittsburgh's East End in her early life, with addresses and apartment numbers fresh in her memory. Most continue to house Franklin West tenants today. Her mother's joke was always that when Frank would say, "I think we need a different apartment," she would knowingly reply, "You rented ours, huh?"

Eventually, when West and her sister, Rebecca, were in middle school, their father found a house with extensive property off of Dorseyville Road in Fox Chapel, and the family moved there. West, who today lives in that same house with her own family, would go on to graduate from Fox Chapel Area High School, and Rebecca from her father's alma mater, Shady Side Academy.

West worked in her father's office all through high school in leasing and maintenance. She remembers doing "every job that there was to do. I've cleaned toilets, I've done turnover cleans." Rebecca moved to Wyoming, but sits on the board of Franklin West.

In the 1970s, Frank West saw opportunity along the Allegheny River in Oakmont, where he constructed Oakmont Landing, a garden apartment development built on the site of the former public pool known as The Willows. West recalls that when Oakmont Landing was completed, Franklin West's maintenance technician made a present to her father of a bench, painted white and stenciled in beautiful lettering "Stolen From



Oakmont Landing apartment complex in Oakmont, developed by Franklin West in the 1970s.

Willow Pool.” The joke came back to bite the jokester when the Oakmont police pulled him over with the bench in the back of his Franklin West pickup, demanding an explanation.

Although the company now owns properties in Shadyside, Oakmont, Butler, and Gibsonia, it remains small and close-knit, varying in size from 18 to 25 employees, including seasonal hires like lifeguards for its outdoor pools. “More than just being a family-owned company, Franklin West has incredible dedication to its employees,” West says. Listing multiple employees with 20- to 40-year tenures, she explains that Franklin West started a profit-sharing plan in 1982, long before tech startups and others offered such a benefit. “We’re part of a lot of people’s lives,” she says. “That’s not something that one wants to mess with.”

Franklin West distinguishes itself in the growing rental market with variety and quality, says West. The company currently has almost 1,000 apartments, about half of which are in Shadyside. In that neighborhood alone, units are divided among 72 buildings, each with unique attributes. Oakmont Landing features 153 one- and two-bedroom garden apartments with both a deck and a pool overlooking the river.

“Whatever you’re looking for, we have something to meet people’s needs and desires,” West says proudly.

Franklin West’s approach to quality stems from Frank’s vision to build the company along with communities that would stand the test of time. Nearly every property that Franklin West bought and renovated or built is still in the company’s portfolio, reflecting the company credo. “You look to do things right, because you’re going to have it for the long haul,” West summarizes. “You’re going to be the steward for this building and all the people living in it for the next 50 years. That’s our mentality.”

In addition to caring for tenants and employees, Franklin West supports the greater community with its stock in trade: apartments. Since 2000, the company has provided a fully furnished two-bedroom apartment—and covered all utilities, even WiFi—to the Center for International Legal Education at the University of Pittsburgh’s law school. The apartment, which West says would rent at market value for \$1,500 a month, has hosted international students from multiple African, Asian, and Eastern European nations. While a fellowship might



This sculpture, “The Walk,” stands in front of a Franklin West apartment building on Shady Avenue. It was created by Jim West of Fox Chapel, as a tribute to his cousin, Frank West Jr.

pay students’ tuitions, living expenses are usually not covered. The Franklin West apartment therefore makes it possible for them to pursue advanced degrees.

Likewise, West supplements her service on the board of WQED in Oakland by providing a furnished property for people coming to Pittsburgh for a week or two at a time to produce different shows.

The company has many properties and stewards a long legacy, but today’s keepers of that legacy are always looking for what’s next. Most recently, they’ve begun the leasing process on a new apartment building at 219 Carron Street in Shadyside, just behind Casbah restaurant. The newly constructed structure offers 12 one-bedroom and loft-style units to help meet the ongoing demand for housing in the vibrant neighborhood Frank West did so much to revive.

Observant Shadyside pedestrians may have noticed that the striding-figure sculpture on Shady Avenue, between Kentucky and Howe Street, is dedicated to the memory of Frank West. Titled “The Walk,” it was created by Frank’s cousin, sculptor Jim West of Fox Chapel, and dedicated on what would have been Frank’s 79th birthday in 2011.

According to Caroline West, the figure is not a likeness of her father, but the personification of his philosophy. “‘The Walk’ is really the character of our company,” she says, “remembering and respecting its past, existing in it now, and preserving it with vision for the future.”

SA