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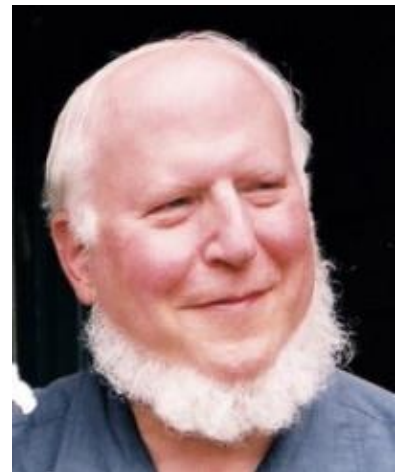
# In Memoriam: David Gordon

JUNE 12, 2023 BY [ANDREW JANSSEN](#)

*David Gordon, the founding editor and board chairman of the Chippewa Valley Post, passed away on Sunday, June 11. The following memorial was written by Michael Dorsher, a CV Post board member and UW-Eau Claire colleague of Gordon.*

Midway through his first semester at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, the assistant professor was no longer surprised to find Communication and Journalism Department Chairman A. David Gordon in his office at 1 a.m.

But the rookie's jaw dropped when he asked bright-eyed Gordon for an obscure bureaucratic form, watched him momentarily stroke his scraggy white beard in thought, scan the 3-foot-high mounds of paper covering his desk, then calmly reach into the middle of them and extract the exact document needed – on the first try.



David Gordon

Never a neatnik nor early riser but also never outworked, never out-organized and certainly never a Trumper, David Gordon received a bachelor's degree from Carleton College in Minnesota, worked as a reporter and mayor's aide in Madison, got his first graduate degree at

At turns authoritative and humble, Gordon groomed generations of journalism students and shepherded innately obstinate faculty during a distinguished 34-year academic career. He taught journalism and ethics at Northwestern University outside Chicago and Northeastern University in Boston, then chaired communication departments at the University of Miami and Emerson College in Boston before coming to UW-Eau Claire in 1997 to chair the "CJ Department."

Gordon retired from academia just five years later but settled in Eau Claire and never quit working to strengthen journalism, democracy and his Jewish faith. He partnered with The Washington Post to bring the annual Ann Devroy Memorial Forum to UWEC and has helped keep it going strong for the past 26 years. He was the lead author of a textbook used worldwide, "Controversies in Media Ethics," the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of which he spent years expanding and revising, even as an unpaid professor emeritus.

Gordon also volunteered on the boards of directors for the Wisconsin Newspaper Association and the International Society of Weekly Newspaper Editors, alternately serving as chair of both organizations. Eight years ago, Gordon founded the Chippewa Valley Post website to cover the Eau Claire region's nonprofit organizations and give it an alternative to the conservative Leader-Telegram newspaper. He continued as the CV Post's editor and chairman until two months ago, when its board donated the site to UWEC journalism classes in his honor.

Aaron David Gordon died early Sunday, surrounded by his wife and three daughters in an Eau Claire care facility, ending a short, painful attack of stomach cancer. He was 87.

His funeral is scheduled to start at 10:30 a.m. Tuesday at Temple Sholom, 1223 Emery St., Eau Claire, followed immediately by burial at B'nai Brith Jewish Cemetery. The service will be livestreamed on the Temple's YouTube Channel. The main shiva gathering will be 6:30-8 p.m. Wednesday in the Community Room/Chapel at River Pines Nursing Home, 206 N. Willson, Altoona, with a service beginning at 7 p.m. All are welcome to attend then as well as brief shiva services on Tuesday and Thursday at 7 p.m. at the Gordons' home, 3619 W. Country Club Lane, Altoona.

Gordon is survived by his wife Suzon and their three daughters, Debora, Lisa and Adina.

In the foreword of the 600-page "CME3" textbook, published in 2011, Gordon said his "approach to media ethics is usually from a utilitarian perspective, with touches of Rawls's and

and care for the most vulnerable members of society.

"Media ethics is not an oxymoron," Gordon wrote. "Rather, it is a necessity." Although he was dubious about social media's surveillance characteristics and "shoot now, ask questions later" commentary, he used Facebook to publicize stories in the Chippewa Valley Post and followed President Trump's machinations on Twitter.

With the CV Post, Gordon leaves a legacy of "providing a non-Republican media outlet in Eau Claire," said David Lewis, Ph.D., a chemist who came to UWEC as a new department chair in 1997, the same year Gordon did. "Dave was very much an advocate for honest presentation of the news. Dave had a reasonable political sense to him. He seemed to be able to read the electorate."

"The two Dave's," Gordon and Lewis, became fast friends while pairing for weekly evening bridge games with Arts and Sciences Dean Carl Haywood and Dave Lund, his assistant dean and successor.

"We were partners, and we usually got the bad cards," Lewis said. "For instance, I had the ace, king and queen of spades, and I bid three spades – but we went down in flames, because that turned out to be the *only* spades we had. Dave Gordon never let me forget that."

Gordon and Lewis celebrated Thanksgiving together, along with their wives, Sue and Debbie, for 25 years, and the two Dave's also had lunch together once a week in the Dulany Inn faculty dining room. They talked about campus and local politics part of the time, but much of the banter involved sports. Gordon "bled red" as a Boston Red Sox fan, while Lewis mainly followed the Milwaukee Brewers, but mostly their loyalties clashed over the gridiron, with Lewis supporting the working-class Pittsburgh Steelers and Gordon remaining a loyal Green Bay Packer backer.

The only time they went to an NFL game together, Gordon suffered through a 38-31 Steelers victory at Green Bay on Dec. 22, 2013, but Lewis recalls he didn't say much, either. "It was butt-freezing cold, and I was surrounded by Cheeseheads."

But the two Dave's still kept season tickets together for UWEC home football games for 25 years: "N29 for Gordon and N28 for Lewis," he said.

"We became good friend," Lewis said

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past 46 years. "You can count on your mate when you can't count on your family. He's me mate."

Coincidentally, it was at a conference in Australia that Gordon was elected president of the International Society of Weekly Newspaper Editors for 2016-17. During that year, he initiated a competition for professors to research problems facing small-town editors, along with an internship program encouraging students to consider a career in community journalism.

"Dave and Sue made generous donations each year to the ISWNE Foundation, which helped pay for eight-week summer internships for university students at ISWNE-member newspapers," said Chad Stebbins, the organization's executive director then and now. "Dave particularly enjoyed traveling to Washington Island, Wisconsin, to conduct site visits for the interns at the *Observer*. I've never met anyone who had so much energy in their 80s as he did."

Gordon's interests in internships and community journalism were manifest at UWEC, too, remembers Nathaniel Shuda, a 2007 graduate now a health reporter at the Columbus Dispatch in Ohio. A chance meeting with Gordon on campus helped persuade Shuda to change his major to journalism from biochemistry/molecular biology.

"During the next four years," Shuda said, "I would get to know Dr. Gordon well through our work with SPJ, attending various conferences and other events and eventually planning programs and activities — usually over a pint and some cheese curds at one of two local pubs on Water Street — as I took on the role of chapter secretary and later president. Dr. Gordon also helped me land a spot in SPJ's prestigious Ted Scripps Leadership Institute, and I later got a reporting scholarship that bears his name."

Shuda also fondly remembers meeting Gordon for a drink at several Wisconsin Newspaper Association conventions.

"At one such convention, shortly after I graduated from UWEC," Shuda wrote, "I ran into him while he was chatting with my soon-to-be boss, Mark Baldwin, who at that time was regional executive editor of Gannett's four daily newspapers in central Wisconsin. It was then that I learned the two knew each other since Mark was a child. Come to find out that Dr. Gordon and his wife used to babysit Mark several decades before. Not long after that, I learned I got the job."

And long after he retired from UWEC, Gordon continued to mentor that rookie professor who tapped on his office door at 1 a.m. "After some students complained to him that my grading

and critiques were  
as well as the gre

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follow the news and become good citizens," said Michael Dorsher, Ph.D., who went on to become a full professor, a Fulbright Scholar and a co-author of Gordon's ethics text.

"Dave Gordon didn't just write about ethics, he lived them," Dorsher said. "Eau Claire was lucky to have him. We all were."

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| Wind mph       | 5    | 4    | 4    | 3    | 2     | 3    | 6    |
| Wind gusts mph | 10   | 9    | 7    | 9    | 9     | 9    | 8    |
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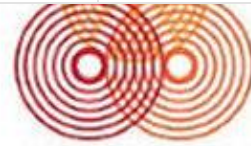
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