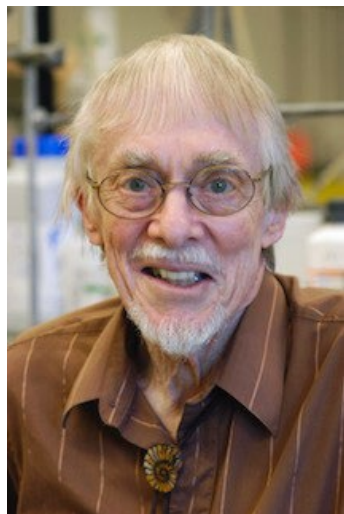


In Memory of Bob West —Who ascended summits of chemistry, humanity and mountains



Robert (Bob) Culbertson West, Jr., of Madison, Wisconsin, died on October 12th, 2022, at the age of 94. Born on March 18, 1928 in Glen Ridge, NJ, Bob was the first-born son to Robert C. West Sr. and Constance Maitland MacKinnon. He is survived by his two biological sons and many other people who love and adore him.

Bob was, first and foremost, a scientist. He began his professional career working in a metallurgy laboratory for the Manhattan Project in New Jersey. Remarkably, his young and inquisitive mind drove him to quickly discern what the goal of the entire Project was and he extricated himself immediately. Bob pursued his PhD in chemistry at Harvard University before igniting an outstandingly successful career at the University of Wisconsin (UW) in Madison where he became the Eugene G. Rochow Professor of Chemistry and later Director of the Organosilicon Research Center.

It was at UW that Bob and his research group discovered that silicon atoms are capable to form bottleable compounds with silicon-silicon double bonds similar to carbon-carbon double bonds in olefins, an extraordinary breakthrough in organometallic and main-group chemistry that provided pathways to novel chemical structures that hadn't previously been accessible or even imagined. In addition to his academic research, he co-founded a company, Silatronix, to pursue practical applications of his ground-breaking work in silicon chemistry for improvement of today's lithium batteries. His many achievements earned him countless invitations to present his research, in particular in Europe and Far-East Asian Countries; top citations in his field; several nominations for a Nobel Prize and many other honors.

Bob was also ahead of time in human rights, foremost gender equality. He was a staunch feminist. When he first arrived at UW, women were so severely underrepresented in chemistry and physics that entire floors in those buildings didn't even have women's restrooms. Bob helped change that. For example, he quietly went through stacks of graduate school applications before admissions committees got to them, in order to identify outstanding female applicants whose applications might otherwise have been rejected. Many of these women went on to become successful scientists and educators with long and productive careers of their own. Bob also applied his feminist world-view to politics. In the 1960s and 1970s, he became an activist and political supporter of women's reproductive health and the right to safe abortions. In 1972, he co-founded the Women's Medical Fund to help Wisconsin women pay for abortions. He continued to support these causes financially for the rest of his life.

Bob was also a fearless adventurer. He was one of those people who was not content merely to summit nearly-impossible mountains; he preferred to conquer mountains that no one had ever climbed before. He claimed 50 first ascents, primarily in the Selkirk

Mountains in British Columbia. Bob also loved to fly, and was inspired to obtain a pilot's licence and a small plane as one way of creating even more adventures. Bob's partner, Petey, was at his side on many of his adventures throughout his life—in the mountains, in the air, and overseas. They were avid travellers, visiting every continent and dozens of offbeat corners of the world together, where they accumulated many eccentric artifacts and delightful stories. Now Bob is off on some new adventures; and, just as he did throughout his remarkable life, he will make the most of them.

Bob would probably recommend against sending flowers. Instead, Bob would appreciate it much more if you continued his legacy of supporting women's reproductive rights. Some of his favorite charities are: Planned Parenthood & Emily's List. If you would like to send a card, they may be sent to his family: c/o Derek Whipple, 5328 47th Ave S, Seattle WA 98118