

# 'Pounding' no more: Humpal retires from Free Press

BY TOM STANGL

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It's the end of an era.

Pam Humpal is retiring after 36 years as Advertising Manager at the Amery Free Press. Her last day is June 15. An open house to honor Humpal will be held Wednesday, June 16 from 2 – 4 p.m. at the Free Press office, 215 Keller Ave. S. in Amery.

A lifelong resident of Amery, Humpal joined the staff of the Free Press in March 1985.

After leaving high school, Pam worked at Kroy Ufe's assembly plant in Amery and then Dresser for a year before taking a job at ComPrintCo, the commercial printing operation owned by the Sondreal family.

Humpal worked at ComPrintCo and Publisher's Printing Service (PPSI)

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# HUMPAL: 36 year run at The Amery Free Press comes to a bittersweet end June 16

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from 1978 to 1985. Pam worked on billing, cutting and gluing jobs at ComPrintCo. When extra help was needed inserting flyers at PPSI, she helped there as well.

“I loved working out there,” she said.

In March, Jerry Sondreal stopped by with a job offer. Renee Jensen, the Advertising Manager at the Free Press was moving after 10 months on the job. Jensen replaced Evy Nerbonne, who had left the Free Press for the Star Observer in Hudson.

“We need a salesperson and we think you could do it,” Humpal recalls Sondreal telling her. “Why would you think I could do it?” she remembers asking. “You can talk, you know everybody in town, you like the Amery community, and we think you can do it,” Sondreal replied. “I said ‘well, OK.’”

Humpal had a few hours meeting with Jensen, had lunch by herself at Soo Line Park and considered the opportunity. “I thought: ‘Am I crazy? What am I

doing?’ but then I came back, she was gone and that was it.”

In her 36-year run at the Free Press, Humpal was active in Community Club, serving on the Retail Committee, was a member and president of Women Helping Others Organization (WHOO), served as Fall Festival Chair in 1998 and served as a 4-H leader for almost 30 years.

In 1978, Pam married Dave Humpal and moved into a house they were building, a home she lived in until this spring when she sold it to her son, Ryan. Dave and Pam had two sons, Matt and Ryan and were active in participating or watching many sports. Baseball, softball, bowling and even horseshoes.

Dave ran a tractor repair business in Deer Park with his father Al, until 2000, when he took a job at Cardinal Glass. Dave contracted ALS and died in 2018.

When Humpal joined the Free Press staff, she worked alongside a core group of people for many years: Palmer, Jerry and Steve Sondreal, Eileen Markee and Bette Elmer. Bette and Pam continued on

at the Free Press when the Sondreals sold the newspaper to Gene and Carter Johnson in 2012.

“We went with the building,” she recalled with a laugh. The pair had a pact to retire at the same time, but Elmer retired in 2018.

In retirement, Pam plans on spending time with her children Matt and Ariel, Ryan and Rachel and grandchildren Gavin, Bentley, Graeme, Finn and Rory along with her friend and companion Mike “Katt” Elmer.

Humpal carried on a tradition of earlier advertising managers writing a weekly column, “Pounding the Pavement with Pam.”

Humpal enjoyed her time at the Free Press. “Every day is different, you have so many things going on and get to meet so many wonderful people. I enjoyed getting to know business owners, and their staff, becoming friends that are like family to me, we grew up together,” she said. “And my Free Press crew that’s always been my family. You spend more time with them than you do with your family. I am very lucky to have loved my job for 36 years.”