



James Oleg Kruhly

August 11, 1947 - October 17, 2023

James Oleg Kruhly, a practicing architect in Philadelphia, died on October 17. He was 76, and he was at peace.

Mr. Kruhly was born on Aug. 11, 1947, in Bayreuth, Germany, to his parents, Ivan Kruhly and Katherine Kruhly, and his sister, Louise Kruhly. His first memory, he said, was of sitting in a high chair in his mother's kitchen.

The Kruhly family had fled Ukraine during the war, and would soon leave for a better life in the United States, sailing on the General McRae to New York City and arriving on Dec. 11, 1950. There, they would see the Statue of Liberty for the first time, and feel safe.

The family turned to Philadelphia, settling at first on 7th Street and Girard Avenue, near the Ukrainian cathedral. Mr. Kruhly proved to be a talented student, excelling through his years at Saint Helena's Middle School and Cardinal Dougherty High School.

He was "so bright, loved by all the teachers," his sister said. "There was a magnetism about him that drew people to him." She spoke of the time in grade school when he drew a painting of the Blessed Mother and Child. It was so extraordinary, she noted, that the nuns hung it in their convent.

Mr. Kruhly attended the University of Pennsylvania and graduated in 1969 with distinction in architecture. From 1971 to 1973, he completed his Master of Architecture at Yale University. He loved his years in New Haven, and met some of his closest friends there.

In 1977, he opened his own architectural practice, James Oleg Kruhly and Associates — later named, simply, Kruhly Architects. He ran the firm for over 40 years, with a focus on places of worship, full of light. Over those decades, he also taught and lectured about architecture across the U.S., U.K. and Europe.

In 1992, Mr. Kruhly was elected as a fellow of the American Institute of Architects, which cited his national contributions of “originality, subtlety and quiet excellence.” He loved to remind his children, twins who were born one year before the award, of this last point.

One of his most notable projects was the Pasquerilla Spiritual Center at Pennsylvania State University. It is the largest multi-faith center of its kind in the country. If you go there, look not only at the building and its spectacular design, but also at the 14'x16' mural, titled "Into the Light," behind the altar in the main space. Mr. Kruhly painted that, too.

When not designing the buildings that have outlived him, he was a listener of Van Morrison, a reader of Russian poets and a sunbather. But above all else, Mr. Kruhly was a father who loved proudly and fiercely.

He is survived by his children, Alexander Kruhly and Madeleine Kruhly, his sister, Louise Kruhly Papparone, his brother-in-law, Thomas Papparone, his nephew, Michael Papparone, his nieces, Laura Shively and Tina Papparone, and his former wife and friend, Leslie Kruhly.

Tribute Wall

GW

“Oleh Kruhly was our friend. We met in State College while he was designing the Pasquinella Spiritual Center at Penn State. Nina and I helped sponsor the mural, “Into the Light” and Oleh gifted us one of his prototypes which we greatly value and have hanging in our home. The last time we spoke was shortly after covid passed and we agreed to meet for dinner in NYC where we both traveled to visit our children. We never followed through with this plan. This makes Oleh’s passing even sadder to us because now it is too late to catch up. God bless Oleh, our friend and all of his family, sister Louise and her husband Thomas, his nieces and nephew and especially Alexander and Madeleine his children.

George and Nina Woskob

George Woskob - November 26, 2023 at 03:43 PM

JP

“I am so sorry to hear of Jim’s passing. He and I were schoolmates together at UPenn, friends partly because of a shared Ukrainian heritage. He was multitalented- an artist and an architect, a designer of significant buildings and an inspiring teacher, both locally and in Europe. He never forgot his old friends, organizing occasional get-togethers with us fellow designers, exchanging stories of our education that gave us such a strong background to tackle the world’s challenges and make meaningful contributions. Remembering him, I will miss him.

john james pron - November 12, 2023 at 07:40 AM