



Jan Franzke Rigaud

July 1, 1941 - March 28, 2025

Jan Franzke Rigaud was a global traveler, a lover of languages, a dynamic educator, and a stalwart friend. His penetrating intellect and fiercely independent spirit were balanced by great sensitivity, a deep appreciation for arts and culture, and the warmth of friendships cultivated and maintained across oceans and decades.

Born in Paris during World War II, Jan was proud of both his French ancestry (on his father's side) and his Dutch heritage (on his mother's), preferring the Dutch version of his given name, Jean. (Later, he would change his middle name as well, in honor of his longtime friend, German author and art critic Andreas Franzke.) In his youth, due to his father's foreign service assignments, he was widely traveled, residing with his family in North Africa and South America as well as in Europe, before setting out on his own. Inspired by the charismatic Mormon missionaries he encountered as a young man, he emigrated to the United States to study Philology and Philosophy at Brigham Young University, where he received both bachelor's and master's degrees. He went on to earn his doctorate in Philosophy from the University of Michigan.

Upon moving to Philadelphia, Jan served as an adjunct faculty member at both St. Joseph's University and Villanova University before joining Villanova as a tenure-track professor. There, he gained a reputation for being a

challenging and compassionate teacher, inspiring countless students with his intellectual rigor and energetic presence in the classroom. Eventually, he would come to lead Villanova's French and Francophone Studies Program. Those who had the privilege of joining one of his summer programs in France—many traveling abroad for the first time—were profoundly impacted by the experience, some becoming lifelong friends.

Over the years, Jan developed a great affinity for the moral vision of the Nobel laureate Albert Camus, author of the celebrated novels *The Stranger* and *The Plague* and the plays *Caligula* and *The Misunderstanding*. He was also inspired by the deep friendship shared by Camus and his early mentor, Jean Grenier, movingly demonstrated by their collected letters, which were published in 1981. Jan took upon himself the painstaking task of translating this correspondence, courting editors, publishers, and heirs for many years before his own English-language version appeared in print in 2003.

In later years, Jan's intellectual interest would turn to writers in the English language that he had adopted for himself so well. He developed a keen readership of early 20th-century English writers and their history, especially for matters related to the famed Bloomsbury Group and the survivors of the Western Front of the Great War. Ever maintaining an ample personal library, Jan felt he was in good company at home in Ardmore, PA, with his books and the insight pouring out of them, underscored by a vast and carefully curated collection of classical CDs and LPs.

Having retired from teaching in 2011, Jan began spending more time abroad, particularly in Morocco. He established a second home in the city of Essaouira, where, following a stroke, he died on March 28. He is survived by his devoted partner Majid; his loving siblings Nicole, Jacques, and Guy; and their children Elizabeth, Olivier, Noyale, Hervé, Timothé, Julien, Bérengère, Charlotte, and Guyonne. Moreover, he leaves behind countless students who

were edified by his teaching, touched by his kindness, and inspired by his example over the course of decades.

In lieu of flowers, contributions in his memory may be made to one or more of the following Philadelphia arts organizations, which he loved and recognized in his will: The Philadelphia Orchestra, The Opera Company of Philadelphia, The Philadelphia Museum of Art, and Arden Theatre Company

Cemetery Details

St. Paul's Lutheran Churchyard

corner of Athens Avenue and Wynnewood
Road
Ardmore, PA

Previous Events

Funeral Service

APR 25. 11:00 AM (ET)

St. Paul's Lutheran Church
415 East Athens Avenue
Ardmore, PA

Tribute Wall

PA

“*Jan was so special to me. In so many ways he shaped me into the thinker and human I am today. I see him as a model as a human being, as an educator, as a citizen of the world, and as a man who led with love and sincerity. It breaks my heart that I didn't have a chance to see him over the past 25 years - but he formed me into who I am, and he lives in my heart.*

Paul Abeln - April 26, 2025 at 04:36 PM

BB

“*I'm deeply sad to hear of Jan's passing. Dr. Rigaud was easily my favorite professor at Villanova. I took several French classes with Jan (and met lifelong friends in those classes). He was cheerful and encouraging with a wonderful sense of humor. Jan led my summer study abroad trip to Rennes in 2008 and was a huge part of what made that trip so special. I enjoyed getting to know him in France and at Villanova.*

As one of just a few out queer students on campus at the time, I always appreciated Jan's acceptance and support. May his memory be a blessing.

Brigid Black - April 25, 2025 at 10:58 AM

JR

“*3 files added to the album Mur d'hommage*



JACQUES RIGAUD - April 25, 2025 at 09:24 AM

DD

“ We lost an incredible Villanova Professor recently, Jan Rigaud. Jan was a force of life, one of the most Authentic and generous human beings I have ever met; one who valued culture, friendship, creativity, the arts, travel, writing, and teaching. He also looked and lived much younger than his age, a testament to his Carpe Diem mentality and Joie de Vivre.

Jan was one of my core French professors in college when I minored in the language. We developed a friendship that lasted many years. My Junior year Summer semester abroad in Dijon, Normandy, and Paris is a core memory, filled with laughter, food exploration, and travel. I had my first “moules à la crème avec frites à volonté” with Jan, bowlfuls of mussels in cream sauce with unlimited Belgian-style fries during this time. It not only opened my eyes to the wonders of French cuisine and dining, but also the joys of sharing meals with friends and wine.

During a trip to Versailles that Summer, Jan accompanied me on a bike ride throughout the grounds that made the visit to the property truly special, seeing the Château in a different light. It was that sense of Adventure that made Jan a special being.

After graduation, we shared countless meals on his beautiful patio in Ardmore, as well as concerts & dinners in Philadelphia. His zest for life always shined, and his passion for Philosophy too, especially relating to Albert Camus, a figure on whom he wrote his own book, delving into the translation of correspondence between Camus & Jean Grenier. Additionally, the concept of L'Authenticité by André Gide was essential, and it left an indelible mark on me regarding the importance of living true to oneself and being genuine in self-expression. Jan truly embraced this ideology throughout his life.

Unfortunately, I hadn't seen Jan since before Covid, but he always remained in my thoughts, and I'm happy that he found a second home in Morocco, where he savored Life as fully as ever. We always shared texts on birthdays and holidays; he was one to

remember milestones and share positivity.

Jan had an affinity for Classical music, and had quite the collection and library of CDs. Whenever I hear “Carmina Burana O Fortuna” by Carl Orff, I think of him immediately. These moments of connectivity are essential. He will forever be memorialized through pieces of music & art, books, food & wine for me. He impacted my life for the better, along with so many others.

I'll miss you, Jan. Rest peacefully, Mon Ami. 🙏

Darren DeBlasi - April 23, 2025 at 12:56 PM

DB

“ *Such a special kind man, Rest in peace. Many fond memories from Villanova.* ”



Diane Marie Brocchi - April 22, 2025 at 11:40 AM

DK

“ *I was a student of his at Villanova and had a formative travel abroad experience with the French department the summer after my sophomore year. I recall a very memorable dinner at his house where students spoke French, listened eclectic music, and enjoyed a wonderfully curated meal. He will be missed! - Dan Koehler, class of 2009* ”

Dan Koehler - April 22, 2025 at 09:21 AM

XM

“ 2 files added to the album *Mur d'hommage*



Xavier MIROUDOT - April 21, 2025 at 07:10 AM

KS

“ Thank You Jan for introducing me to Pouilly Fuisse and La Boheme.
May you rest peacefully my friend.

Kermit Springstead

Santa Rosa, CA

Kermit Springstead - April 18, 2025 at 11:47 AM



“ Jan served as the President of the Harrison House Condo Association for many years. We often looked to his leadership to maintain our home. He also had impeccable taste when it came to decorating. I worked with him in picking out new wallpaper and carpet for the building. He was fun to work with. He was a good soul. Jan will be sorely missed. I will miss him. Rest In Peace Jan.

Your Friend,

Monica Robinson

Harrison House Secretary

Monica Robinson - April 18, 2025 at 09:18 AM

ST

“ I took an Advanced French Class with Jan Rigaud when I was a freshman at Villanova in 1976! It was one of the best experiences I had at Villanova. He was alive, interesting and interested in everything! May his soul rest in peace.

Suzanne Tavani, Class of 1980

Suzanne Tavani - April 17, 2025 at 12:54 PM