



## Ralph Thomas Unkefer Jr.

July 24, 1931 - December 10, 2022

Ralph Thomas Unkefer Jr died peacefully at his home at the Quadrangle in Haverford, PA on December 10, 2022 at the age of 91 after what can only be considered a full and rewarding life. He is survived by his wife, Jane, his three children, Charles, James and Emily, son-in-law Dan Goodman, and five grandchildren.

Tom was born in Philadelphia, PA and grew up in Wayne, PA. He graduated from Radnor High School, as a member of the class of 1949, before attending Dartmouth College where he received a Bachelor's degree and Master's degree in Civil Engineering. Tom went on to join the Navy, serving as a Lieutenant in the Construction Battalion. After receiving an honorary discharge in 1957, he taught at a preparatory school long enough to realize that teaching was not his calling then went on to Harvard Business School where he earned an MBA.

Jane Miller and Tom Unkefer were married in 1962 and lived in Philadelphia, PA until moving to the Quadrangle in 2010. In 1963, Tom went to work with his father at Unkefer Brothers Construction Company, becoming president after his father's death in 1964. Under his leadership,

Unkefer Brothers grew into one of the city's outstanding general building contractors. The firm's projects included restorations of historically significant structures such as the Arch Street Friends Meeting House, Fairmount Park Historic Houses (Hatfield, Woodford, Mt. Pleasant and Belmont Mansion), Bartram's Garden, Smith Memorial Playhouse, the German Society Library, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the University of Pennsylvania's College Hall, Logan Hall and Irvine Auditorium, Beth Shalom synagogue, and Louis I. Kahn's Erdman Hall at Bryn Mawr College. In 2011, Unkefer Brothers received the Philadelphia Preservation Alliances Board of Directors Award for Exceptional Contributions to Historic Preservation.

A practicing Quaker, Tom remained committed to the Quaker testimony of stewardship throughout his life. His service included involvement with a number of non-profit organizations such as Youth Service Inc., Associated Services for the Blind, Friends Select School, the Library Company of Philadelphia, General Building Contractors Association, the Carpenter's Company of the City and County of Philadelphia, and Arch Street Friends Meeting where he attended as a member until his passing.

Tom will be remembered by all who knew him as a thoughtful and compassionate person, with a wealth of knowledge, amazing stories, who was always considerate to those around him and

who never failed to give sage advice.

A memorial service will be held in the spring of 2023 at the Arch Street Friends Meeting House at a date and time to be determined.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to the Arch Street Meeting House Preservation Trust ([www.historicismh.org/donate](http://www.historicismh.org/donate)), 320 Arch Street, Philadelphia PA, 19106.

# Previous Events

## Memorial Service

MAR **25**. 11:00 AM (ET)

Arch Street Friends Meeting House  
320 Arch Street  
Philadelphia, PA

# Tribute Wall

JK

“ Thanks for all you have done for me and my family. You touched my soul!

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**John Kane** - January 20, 2023 at 01:40 PM

BS

“ To the Unkefer Family, Tom was a good friend and a great contractor who

*treated everyone fairly and performed high quality construction work.*

*throughout the 33 years of working with Tom, I would saw he treated us as*

*part of his team. Our offices were 6 blocks apart on Callowhill St. and that*

*allowed us to see each other often . Tom and Jane made a lovely couple .*

*Tom will be remembered and has been a great role model for me. .*

*Warmly,*

*Bruce D. Shelly*

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**Bruce D. Shelly** - January 03, 2023 at 10:10 PM

AN

“ On behalf of everyone here at O'Donnell & Naccarato, I would like to offer our sincerest condolences to the Unkefer family. Tom was a vital member of the greater Philadelphia construction community, who certainly leaves a lasting legacy. God Bless Tom's family and friends during these difficult days.

*Anthony (Tony) Naccarato, President*

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**Anthony F Naccarato** - January 03, 2023 at 12:41 PM

TA

“ Tom was a wonderful, caring, kind, thoughtful, honorable and engaged person. I got to know him, on my own, when I worked at Bartram's Garden 2003-2006 as Development Director, when he was consulting on historic architecture for the site, he would come into the administrative office and we would have lovely, soothing, informative, funny, wide ranging chats (he had a gentle sense of humor, intelligent on so many different topics, and was a fine distinguished expert in his craft) and before that I got to know Tom through his wife Jane Unkefer when she worked for the Bryn Mawr College Alumnae Association (he was a devoted husband, calm and patient, gentlemanly, thru her many long evening work meetings) also I knew Tom and Jane thru their commitments and association with the Friends Meeting and theater in Center City Philadelphia (while I worked at the Wilma Theater, late 1990s). I recently (2022) took a Main Line School Night class on Zoom and it happened that Jane and Tom were participating as well!, I was so glad to see them as engaged and as interested as ever, individually and as a couple, thriving at Quadrangle. I'll cherish my memories of my interactions with Tom. My condolences. Theodora "Teddy" Ashmead BMC 1982

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**Theodora W. Ashmead** - January 02, 2023 at 05:01 PM