

Jay Kreuzer - April 13, 1941 to March 23, 2021

Jay (James/Jim) Kreuzer, a cherished member of the recorder community, died three weeks short of his 80th birthday on March 23, 2021. Jay was a faithful presence at SFEMS summer recorder workshops and could always be counted on to play for any event when asked. He was a cornerstone of the San Francisco Recorder Society and his recorder ensemble, SDQ.

SFRS president Greta Haug-Hryciw remembers, "I met Jay when I joined a weekly playing session at Florence Kress's home. He told me later that, for some reason, he was impressed that I could play bass. He was always quiet and reserved so he didn't start conversations, but his skillful playing impressed me and I asked if he would agree to be in the band for a local production of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*. Of course he agreed. When the run of the show was over he was the first person I asked to become a member of my new quartet. We became excellent friends and eventually as close as brother and sister."

Jay's unique, quirky style was legendary. He often referred to himself as an old hippie, preferring to wear his hair in a long pony tail and sporting a full mustache. He often painted his fingernails with dark colors and wore earrings that dangle, and being 6' tall those features made him hard to miss in a crowded room. He played chromatic harmonica and on occasion he would surprise an audience with his skill. Several pieces for recorder were arranged to feature his lyrical harmonica playing - one in particular, Don McLean's *Vincent*, never failed to move audiences.

Jay had been playing with Sharp Harp harmonica ensemble in San Jose (CA) for decades before he discovered the recorder. He was walking in Golden Gate Park when he heard someone playing an alto in a pedestrian underpass. He was so taken with the sound that he bought an instrument and started taking adult classes at his local community college, taught by Kay Arnaudo. Those classes, combined with an in-depth, cover to cover study of Andrew Charlton's method book and many years' private lessons with Louise Carslake, made him an excellent player. But he was a shy, self-deprecating one, whose ability was often underestimated because he wasn't first to raise his hand for the "good parts" in workshop classes.

He had such a deep love of music, but he had absolutely no knowledge of popular culture and didn't even know much about the Beatles. When he was a boy he would borrow vinyl LPs from the library of great classical works and "conduct" them in his basement. He learned to play the dulcian and took some lessons on the viol with John Dornenburg. He bought a piano in 2019 and would practice scales and arpeggios for hours on end, working systematically on new pieces, often getting up at 3:00am if he couldn't sleep and play until sunrise. Jay also sang with the Skyline College Community Chorus for many years, singing baritone and bass. He had near-perfect pitch - "cheating" because he had a constant 'C' ringing in his right



Jay Kreuzer with his A415 von Huene boxwood voice flute (tenor recorder in D)

ear that he could use as a reference pitch. Once he retired from his long career in Telecommunications, he enjoyed devoting his time to his musical pursuits and watching classic films.

Here are some comments about Jay from fellow recorder players:

- Jay was a fixture, the Recorder Workshop won't be the same without him.
- He will be so missed by all of us recorder players. What a talent.
- I can't imagine the recorder world without him.
- I remember Jay's excellent bass playing back when basses were not common. I always enjoyed hearing him play and perform.
- A unique personality, a singular musician.
- They broke the mold when they made him.
- Jay was a Renaissance man with a rebel spirit.
- I can't believe he would have been 80. He had such a young soul!
- I do fondly remember his kind presence and warm smile.
- At the next [workshop] I'll bring an extra music stand, plus a piece of paper with "Jay Kreuzer" to sit on an otherwise empty chair.

We will miss Jay very much for so many reasons. He leaves behind a handful of pieces he composed for recorder, including one published for the ARS Members' Library: [Jay's Pyramid Scheme](#). Future publication of his other works is pending. A memorial concert will be planned when it is safe to publicly meet in person. As a gift from Jay to all our members and guests, [CLICK HERE](#) for a score to his "neo-medieval" composition, *Gloria in Prius Maximus Profundum* for three tenor recorders (or voices of any range). His sense of humor is evidenced by the composer credit.

As of this writing, a scholarship fund is being created in honor of Jay by the [Occidental Center for the Arts](#). Details will be published on the SFRS [News & Events](#) page as soon as the fund has been established.

Jay is survived by his beloved younger sister Cheryl Niermeyer of Stockton (CA) and his two daughters, Kimberly and Aurora (both estranged).



Jay playing with the Barbary Coast Recorder Orchestra (center foreground)