

F O U N D A T I O N O F O A K P A R K
P. O. B O X 2 2 2 2 , O a k P a r k , I l l i n o i s , 6 0 3 0 3 - 2 2 2 2

October 24, 2002

To Whom It May Concern:

Tom Kapusta, AIA, (TKA + Partners, Ltd., 641 W. Lake Street, Suite 102, Chicago, IL 60661) was a principle architect and contractor for the restoration of Ernest Hemingway's Birthplace in Oak Park, Illinois. This long-term project of over five years demanded both extensive professional experience and customer service. In working with a non-profit association board of directors on an historical project, Tom helped guide the Foundation's efforts in Historic Preservation and Restoration of what is now an historical landmark, while being both fastidious to detail and attentive to budget.

The Ernest Hemingway Foundation of Oak Park purchased the birthplace at 339 N. Oak Park Avenue, which had been built in 1890 as a Queen Anne Victorian home by Ernest Hemingway's maternal grandparents. After the Hemingway/Hall family sold the house in 1905, it was transformed into a Prairie style home and later changed from a single family to a multiple family housing unit. Every room of the original house had been changed by the time the Foundation acquired it in 1993. Over the next several years, Tom and others assisted the Board with Master Planning gained from historical evaluation of the property and archeological type investigations of the building to discover its original layout and materials.

Restoration efforts began in 1997 and moved haltingly with private donations until public fundraising actions were completed in 2000. These efforts required Tom to provide suggestions for cost management that would gain the confidence of donors and public granting organizations while enabling the Foundation to accomplish its goal of a completely restored building within the dollars available. The result is a major Oak Park tourist site that opens, the year-round, to international visitors.

Accessibility for the physically challenged was entirely planned by Tom Kapusta and overseen by his firm. His creative approach brought the physically challenged in the front door through the subtle addition of a wheelchair lift on the side of the historic front porch of the house. Secondly, an elevator addition on the back of the house blends in with the historic architectural style, and is used to transport guests to the accessible lower level restrooms, and the second floor where the room Hemingway was born is located. Tom provided this plan to make the house ADA compliant while respecting the historic presence of the internal rooms and the Victorian appearance of the building exterior.

In September 2002, Tom and the Foundation were recognized with a special award from the Oak Park Universal Access Commission at a regular meeting of the Village of Oak Park trustees.

On behalf of the Board of Directors of The Ernest Hemingway Foundation of Oak Park, I thank Tom Kapusta and his firm for their excellence in historic preservation and renovation. I recommend them to any entity seeking quality work performed within an historical conscience that is rooted in good planning and cost control.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Scott Schwar". The signature is fluid and extends to the right with a long, sweeping tail.

Scott Schwar, CAE
Executive Director
The Ernest Hemingway Foundation of Oak Park