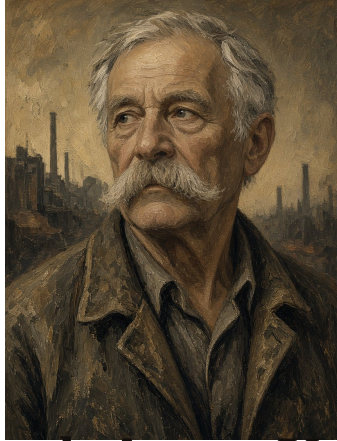




Joseph Anton Kovac

June 27, 1945 - August 26, 2026

Cleveland, Ohio

Joseph Anton Kovac died in Cleveland on August 26, 2026. He was eighty-one. Born there on June 27, 1945, he grew up speaking a house Slavic that the mill later tried to iron out of him, and he kept enough of it to season a joke. He learned a brush before he learned a highway. Paint, he said, is a kind of weatherproofing for a city that does not flatter anyone who waits for mild weather.

He spent decades on bridges and tanks, then a few more years teaching younger men that a harness is not a suggestion. He did not romanticize height. He said the lake was beautiful from a hill and dishonest from a girder, and that both facts could be true before breakfast. When the work slowed he painted houses for widows at a price that made his wife sigh.

He married Helen Kovac in 1968. They kept a bungalow off Broadway and a garden that was half tomatoes and half argument. Two sons grew up knowing how to hold a ladder and how to be quiet in a boat. Helen packed lunches. Joseph packed her thermos with the same seriousness he packed a toolbox. After he retired he walked the lakefront in every month except the ones when the wind made walking a kind of argument.

Friends remember a dry laugh, a refusal to own more than one good coat, and a habit of showing up to scrape a porch as if that were the natural use of a Saturday. He could name the bridges of his youth and would stop himself before the list became a lecture. He died in Cleveland, the city whose rust and weather had written his calendar. The span still goes up. He would have liked that the work outlasted the man.

Services

Visitation in Cleveland, followed by a simple service. A walk along the lake afterward, weather allowing.

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