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# Bubil: Sarasota architect Brosmith remembered for his talent

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Berthold “Bert” Brosmith is not the best-known architect to have ever worked in Sarasota, but he is one of the most important.

He ran Paul Rudolph’s office here in the 1950s — Rudolph became dean of architecture at Yale in 1958 — and oversaw construction of Rudolph’s much-admired and recently renovated addition to Sarasota High School.

He also worked with I.M. Pei on the design of the 1965 “Pei Dormitories” at New College. His list of notable houses in Sarasota includes a 1962 addition to the Tim Seibert-designed Hiss Studio in Lido Shores and the 1965 Dawson House on Indian Beach Drive.

Brosmith died Jan. 23 in Bethel, Connecticut, at 86.

“He was an outstanding architect — he studied under Louis Kahn at Penn, and then he ran Rudolph’s office,” said Carl Abbott, who was Brosmith’s only employee in his Sarasota office in 1960. “So he worked with the two best architects in the world.

“And, he was an intellectual. Bert could out-think anybody. He would work and work on a project, and if he wasn’t pleased, he would scrap it, even if the client liked it.”

Tampa architect John Howey interviewed Brosmith when he was writing “The Sarasota School of Architecture,” and also met him when Sarasota High School’s addition was under construction in the late 1950s.

“He was a very bright guy, very talented,” said Howey. “Everything was precise, perfect — he was probably more of a perfectionist than Rudolph.”

Of all the “Sarasota school” architects, Brosmith was “the most gentlemanly,” said Howey.

Abbott disputes that, however.

“He was hell to work with, a taskmaster,” Abbott said. “He would rip you apart. I think that came from Rudolph. I worked every night, and Saturdays we worked a half day — and some Sunday afternoons.

“But he was a good man, an important architect and a big part of my professional life.”

Fort Myers architect Joyce Owens interviewed Brosmith several years ago. In the resulting article, she wrote that he focused on “architecture as space, which he still felt is the essence of architecture. It’s not about focusing on what is built, i.e., the walls, floors, doors and windows, but defining boundaries and connections between functions and the outdoors and understanding how a person navigates between spaces.”

After starting his own office in 1960, Brosmith designed a juvenile detention facility on 17th Street in Sarasota with noted local designer Frank Folsom Smith.

In the mid-1960s, he moved to New York and worked for Perkins and Will until 1969, and then as a partner in Juster, Brosmith, Levine Architects and Planners before establishing his own practice in Pound Ridge, New York.



**HAROLD BUBIL**  
Harold Bubil is real estate editor of the Herald-Tribune Media Group. Born in Newport, R.I., his family moved to Sarasota in 1958. Harold graduated from Sarasota High School in 1970 and the University of Florida in 1974 with a degree in journalism. For the Herald-Tribune, he writes and edits stories about residential real estate, architecture, green building and local development history. He also is a

photographer,  
videographer and  
public speaker.  
Contact him via  
[email](#), or at (941)  
361-4805.

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