



Written by [Eric Egan](#) on May 27, 2014

## Widow of Famed Crazy Horse Sculptor Korczak Ziolkowski Dead at 87

Ruth Ziolkowski, the widow of famed Black Hills, South Dakota, Crazy Horse Memorial sculptor Korczak Ziolkowski, died Wednesday, May 21 at the age of 87, following a battle with cancer, according to the Crazy Horse Memorial website.



A public viewing was held May 26, and there will be a celebration of life Tuesday, May 27, at the [memorial](#). All visitor fees are to be waived for this event in honor of the Crazy Horse Memorial matriarch.

When Korczak died in 1982, Ruth carried on his work as the chief executive officer of the Crazy Horse Memorial Foundation until her death. She is survived by nine of her 10 children, six of whom continue their parents' lifelong commitment of ensuring that the monument is finished, even if it takes multiple lifetimes to accomplish.

One of the hallmarks of the monument is that Korczak was adamant about never accepting government funds for the work, on point of principle as well as practicality. In [this video interview](#) of Mrs. Ziolkowski by Sam Antonio for Liberty News Network, she explains that Korczak took the experience of Mount Rushmore sculptor, Gutzon Borglum, as a prime example of the near guaranteed untenability of completing a multiple-lifetime project with government funding. Borglum's ultimate vision never came to fruition, as Mount Rushmore was never finished. Unbeknownst to many, the South Dakota monument was meant to be much more than just the four presidents' heads.

To ensure a different end for his vision, Korczak vowed to accept only private funding for the Crazy Horse Memorial and, to that end, founded the Crazy Horse Memorial Foundation. In an era of government handouts, one could easily imagine the temptation to succumb to Uncle Sam's puppet strings, but Korczak stood firm in his wisdom, and Ruth courageously took up and carried the torch when her husband died. That their children now continue their legacy and were instilled with their parents' passion speaks volumes about Korczak's and Ruth's determination and grit.

The Crazy Horse Memorial Foundation does much more than ensure the continued progress of sculpting what will become the world's largest mountain carving.

According to an [article](#) written by Antonio for *The New American* magazine as an accompaniment to the previously mentioned video interview:

Korczak's dream wasn't just to build a colossal mountain carving. He wanted it to be a humanitarian project. He wanted to tell present and future generations the story of the North American Indians. He wanted to tell it in stone.

As the CEO of the Crazy Horse Memorial Foundation, Ruth carried on her husband's dream for over 30 years.

More can be learned about the history of the Crazy Horse Memorial, Korczak and Ruth's story, and the



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foundation in the aforementioned in-depth article.

The lives and passion of Korczak and Ruth Ziolkowski add a rich dimension to the Crazy Horse Memorial. Far more than “just” a breathtaking memorial to a native American leader that exemplified bravery and honor, far more than “just” a monument to ancient North American cultures and an admission of our country’s complex and oft-checkered past, it is also a lasting testament to the love of Ruth and Korczak and the family values that they exemplified — a monument birthed from the hills themselves to values that are older than the hills.

Model of Crazy Horse sculpture shown

*Related article and video:*

[Crazy Horse Memorial a Tale of Two Stories Told in Stone](#)

[Ruth Ziolkowski Interview on the Crazy Horse Memorial](#)



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