



Susan Frank

September 11, 1942 - May 21, 2026

Susan Heil Abernethy Frank—beloved wife, mother, grandmother, sister, and friend—passed away peacefully on May 21, 2026.

Born September 11, 1942, in Cincinnati, Ohio, to Edna and Phil “Bud” Heil, Susan grew up in the Village of Terrace Park, where her redheaded spirit and boundless energy quickly became part of the fabric of the community. She proudly graduated from Mariemont High School and the University of Cincinnati and was later honored by Mariemont High as a Distinguished Alumna.

Susan lived by a simple but powerful belief, often reflected in her email signature: “Diversity is a privilege.” It wasn’t something she merely wrote—it was how she lived. She had a rare gift for bringing people together, making everyone feel seen, and finding genuine joy in others’ lives. Whether at a social gathering or around a campfire, Susan was never one to be the first to leave for home.

Her career in fashion and public relations helped shape Cincinnati’s cultural scene. From her early days at Shillito’s to her celebrated work at Gidding Jenny, she was known for creating events that were not just stylish but unforgettable. She later brought that same creative energy to the Kenwood Towne Centre, helping to establish it as a regional destination. Susan

understood that great style was ultimately about people—and connections between them.

While her professional accomplishments were significant, Susan's true legacy is found in the lives she touched. She gave generously of her time and energy to her community, serving on numerous boards and supporting organizations across Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky, including Planned Parenthood, the Cincinnati Parks Foundation, the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center and its Ambassador Support organization, and the Cincinnati Youth Collaborative. She was especially proud of her work as a mentor, forming lasting relationships with young women whose lives she helped shape with encouragement and unwavering belief in their potential. In recognition of her local impact, she was named a Cincinnati Enquirer Woman of the Year in 2011.

Susan's greatest joy of all was her family. She was deeply devoted to her children, Scott and Molly, and to her ten grandchildren, whom she adored and championed in all they pursued. Later in life, Susan found a true partner in her husband, John. Together, they shared a love of travel, attending cultural and sports events and a passion for serving those in need in their community.

Susan is survived by her devoted husband, John; her children, Scott (Heather) Abernethy and Molly (Sean) Smyth; her stepchildren, Andrew Frank and Charley (Amy Snyder) Frank; her grandchildren Kylie and Julia Abernethy; Christopher ("Topher"), Patrick, and Stuart Smyth; Teddy, Lydia, and Axel Frank; and Sam and Avery Frank; and by her sister, Lynne (Dick) Mileham. She was preceded in death by her parents, Edna and Phil 'Bud' Heil.

A service celebrating Susan's life will be held on June 3 at 3:00 p.m. at St. Thomas Episcopal Church in Terrace Park with a reception to follow. In

keeping with Susan's vibrant spirit, guests are encouraged to wear color. A private graveside ceremony for family and close friends will be held at Spring Grove Cemetery at 9:30 a.m.

Memorial contributions may be made in Susan's honor to organizations that reflect her lifelong commitment to community and inclusion, including the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, Planned Parenthood, or the Cincinnati Parks Foundation.

Cemetery Details

Spring Grove Cemetery

4521 Spring Grove Avenue
Cincinnati, OH 45232

Previous Events

Celebration of Life

JUN 3. 3:00 PM - 4:00 PM (ET)

St. Thomas Episcopal Church
100 Miami Ave
Cincinnati, OH 45174

Tribute Wall

MW

“ Susan was an amazing, lovely, vivacious person, and a very dear, true friend of my late mother, Miriam West. My father, John West, and I will be eternally grateful for the kindness, support, and care Susan offered to my mother throughout their friendship, but especially in the later years of her life as she suffered from Alzheimer's disease. We are both devastated to learn of her passing and we are deeply sorry that we are unable to attend her service this afternoon. We will miss her and we send our love and support to Susan's family and friends during this difficult time.

Melissa West - June 03 at 10:44 AM

DK

“ Susan was a warm, kindly force to be reckoned with. I feel privileged to call her friend. We first met years ago at the formation of our beloved book club, which is still running strong all these years later.
I will miss her dearly

Darlyne Koretos - June 02 at 10:52 PM