



Nancy Freehafer

November 17, 1939 - December 24, 2025

Nancy Freehafer was a lover of words, song, books, nature, and communities.

Born in 1939, she grew up in the Dayton, Ohio area as one of two children. She attended college at Denison University and eventually earned an MAT from Harvard. She married T.T. Chen. She was a stepmother to T.T.'s children, David, Luke, and Rosie.

She worked in Chicago for DePaul University as Director of the Student Writing Lab and a teacher of Nature Writing and Environmental Literature.

For most of her time in Chicago, she lived in the Logan Square neighborhood, where she had an extensive native plant and vegetable gardens.

She and T.T. built a log cabin on property in southern Wisconsin, and vacationed there for many years, nurturing a prairie and old oaks on their land.

She was a passionate volunteer throughout her life, championing causes that were important to her, beginning with anti-war activities in the 60's, and continuing with feminist and environmental causes later in life. She was active for many years with the North Branch Restoration Project, a volunteer group that stewards prairies, savannas, and woodlands on Cook County Forest

Preserve land along the North Branch of the Chicago River.

She was the co-founder of Seeding the Snow, a journal of women's nature writing and artwork; the journal was published twice a year and sponsored events which celebrated female creativity and connection to nature.

Nancy loved music and song. She frequently attended concerts with student musicians at DePaul University. She was part of a community chorus, the Bullfrogs, that performed at neighborhood events such as equinox and solstice celebrations as well as other local venues.

She cofounded a neighborhood book club that continues to this day, reading books on climate change and environmental justice. After she moved to The Breakers in 2023, she expressed her love of words by joining the Poetry Club there. She also dedicated herself to organizing a choir with other residents, which is ongoing. They performed a well-attended holiday concert last year.

She is survived by her nephew, William, her great nieces and nephews Anna, Audrey, and Grayson as well as many friends who loved her.

Arrangements by Inclusive Funeral Care, 773-318-1305 or www.InclusiveFuneralCare.com.

Tribute Wall

“ I met Nancy in 2000 when I was organizing Logan Square Neighbors for Justice and Peace to protest the pending Iraq War. Nancy and T.T. helped organize the group and we became close friends. I remember wonderful evenings having dinner and viewing Nancy’s always amazing garden. One evening we sat in the kitchen waiting for a once-a-year bloom to open on this amazing plant, showing its beauty and distinctive scent. Nancy was living at the Breakers where my sister moved. She invited my sister to join her dinner group. Always a generous, intelligent and kind woman. The world is a better place because of Nancy Freehafer. Several days before she died, I visited her and asked her if she wanted me to bring T.T. ‘s poems to read to her. She brightened and said yes. Unfortunately, she died before I could read to her. So, this is for you, Nancy. A love poem from your beloved T.T.
TO NANCY, November 17, 1996

*Ever since I knew stars
In the sky,
I had a companion star
Wherever I go
She is with me.
Whenever I think of her,
She is there.
She could disappear in the daylight.
She could be covered by a cloud,
She never goes away.
She goes around the sky.
Every year she has a birthday.*

*It is your birthday.
Wish you happiness
This year, next year
And the next.
As the star in the sky
Year after year.*

TSUAN TONG CHEN

*I will always look at the stars and remember you and T.T. my friend.
You are missed and loved and have no doubt, your life made a
difference. My condolences to all the family.*

Gretchen Henninger

Gretchen Henninger - January 15 at 07:35 PM