



Frank Smith Wilkinson, Jr.

August 29, 1939 - July 3, 2025

Minneapolis, MN - Like the mountains and forests he loved, Frank Smith Wilkinson, Jr., stood with presence and elegance in the world. Born in Rocky Mount, NC, on August 29, 1939, he flourished in the South of his youth in an almost idyllic childhood and family. His father, Frank Smith Wilkinson, Sr., an insurance, savings and loan executive, and his mother, Dorothy Battle Wilkinson, active in historic preservation, were pillars of their tight-knit community that imbued him and his big sister, Gordon Wilkinson Folger, with intellectual curiosity, love of art and music, and a commitment to community service. Thus, prepared for life, Frank embraced the broader world both nationally and internationally. From his business acumen to his passion for the environment, and from his love of music and art to his humanitarian, magnanimous heart, Frank was a model of personal and professional integrity, optimism, creativity, and philanthropy.

Curious and broadminded, Frank studied history at Davidson College before earning an MBA at the Wharton School. After an early chapter working for GenRe, a global reinsurance company in New York City, Frank relocated to Minneapolis in 1960, where he spent over thirty years at E.W. Blanch as a reinsurance broker and then as Executive Vice President. He was a leader and a pioneer in the industry, introducing actuarial modeling to assess risk and loss to an otherwise relationship/sales driven industry. Frank also taught several generations of reinsurance professionals the importance of ethics and

philanthropy. Leading by example, he told ambitious and talented junior brokers that they would likely be financially successful but that they should also be generous and charitable with their resources.

Frank lived his values. Having a deep passion for the outdoors, Frank climbed and hiked many of the National Parks of North America. In addition, he became a catalyst for environmental advocacy in Minnesota. Frank worked with a group of Sierra Club activists, lawyers, and university professors in the early 70's to become a "fulltime lobbyist" for the environment as his philanthropic focus. The result was the creation of Project Environment, now the Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy, whose mission was to hire lawyer lobbyists to advocate for environmental laws at the Capitol thus creating the voice for the nascent environmental movement in Minnesota.

Frank also had a deep affinity for art and music and served for over a decade on the board of the Walker Art Center. His love of jazz, blues, Brazilian bossa nova, and traditional Irish music was legendary amongst his friends and family-in fact, it was that passion for art and music that brought Frank together with his wife, Frances, the love of his life, who is also a fellow jazz aficionado and art lover. They married on March 8, 1990, and had a splendid lifelong romance that was marked by ever-deepening affection, expansive curiosity and a care for family and the world until his very last breath.

Frank was predeceased by his parents and sister. In addition to Frances, Frank leaves many who will cherish his memory, including his children Smith (Jenna) Wilkinson, Eloise Ratan (Rajeev), Charlotte Heins (Garrett) and Ben (Kelley) Wilkinson, as well as his grandchildren Scottie, Josephine, and Westray. Frank wished to thank his personal care assistant, Alex Mungai, for his devotion and upbeat sports-loving presence. Frank's family loved and admired him, both as a role model who was modest and constant and for his straight-to-the-point words of advice, including one favorite: measure twice,

cut once.

A celebration of life will be held Aug. 26 at 1 p.m. with visitation one hour prior at St. Mark's Episcopal Cathedral, 519 Oak Grove Street, Minneapolis.

In lieu of flowers, the family kindly requests donations to The Trust for Public Land, Conservation Minnesota, The Minneapolis Parks Foundation, the Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy or The Walker Art Center.

"We all cannot do great things, but we can do small things with great love."

Previous Events

Visitation

AUG **26**. 12:00 PM - 1:00 PM (CT)

St. Mark's Episcopal Cathedral
519 Oak Grove Street
Minneapolis, MN 55403

Memorial Service

AUG **26**. 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM (CT)

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