



Susan Frost Spice Buckley Nelms

February 8, 1937 - August 16, 2025

Heaven has welcomed another angel, with a joyous voice and a heart filled with laughter. Susan Spice Nelms' wondrous life made a positive impact on all she encountered and left an indelible impression on her Houston community.

The story of Susan Nelms' remarkable life began in San Antonio, Texas, where, as the youngest of two children born to parents Hallie Overstreet Spice and William Henry Spice, Jr. She was reared with older brother John Spice in a home in Terrell Hills filled with love, laughter, and unusual parents. Her father, Bill Spice, went to South America for six years after college at Harvard with a rifle to prospect in the jungles for oil. Her mother, Hallie Spice, was socially active in San Antonio, especially with the Fiesta.

Susan began her academic career at St. Mary's Hall and somehow linked up with the Tolar family when only eight years old to begin her swimming career. Jack Tolar, the second oldest of five athletic children, began her swimming instruction. Breaststroke seemed to be her best event, especially after an unknown man who happened to be walking by the pool one day taught her how to do a better frog kick. When Susan was nine years old, she swam in her first race event, easily winning her age group. So she swam and won in each older age group, including adult women, also winning that breaststroke event. The lady who usually won exclaimed "you are not any older than my daughter" to Susan.

Under the tutelage of Jack Tolar with the San Antonio Aquatic Club, she won every Texas age group breaststroke title from the age of 9 to 14. At the age of 12 she was the youngest competitor at the U.S. Nationals and finished sixth in the 100-meter breaststroke. She continued competing until the age of 15, when she retired from swimming, since her high school and college did not have a women's swimming team. Instead, she turned her athletic energies into summer camp at Camp Waldemar, racing war canoes and other events.

In the 1960's Susan lived in El Paso, seeking her master's degree in English at UTEP (University of Texas at El Paso). She was a tutor for Hall of Fame basketball coach Don Haskins' team, a team that won an NCAA title in 1966.

In 1973 Susan was inducted into the Texas Swimming Pool of Fame by Tex Robertson, which spurred her return to the sport she loved as a coach at the Dad's Club in Houston AAU swimming program. Alongside legendary coaches Skip Kenny of Stanford University, Richard Quick also of Stanford University and University of Texas, and TSDHOF inductee Pete Payne, where her teams won TAGS each year she was there, as she helped develop numerous collegiate and Olympic swimmers.

In 1974 her first and only son was born, Reagan Langford Buckley, whom she had swimming daily at a young age to "develop his muscles." He excelled in football in high school, baseball in college, and became a professional baseball player - catcher. Now he is following in his mother's footsteps, coaching in Houston.

Following her stint with the Dad's Club she became the lead official for US Swimming, officiating several National championships and an Olympic Trial.

When Susan's husband, Tony Buckley, passed away in 2010, followed by her brother in 2011, she moved back to San Antonio. While pulling up blue jeans,

she fell onto her left hip. After walking on it for 3 weeks, she finally had it X-rayed, revealing a fracture, for which she required surgery. Unknown to her, that event, falling backward, was the first sign of a progressive neurological disease that would haunt her for the rest of a still long life. Along came Bob Nelms, a fellow high school student, and they married in 2015. In 2022, Susan was inducted into the Texas Swimming and Diving Hall of Fame.

Susan was predeceased by her mother, Hallie Spice, her father, Bill Spice, her brother, John Spice, her first husband Will F. Whitehead, and her second husband of 40 years, Charles Anthony Buckley.

She is survived by her son, Reagan Buckley, her grandson, Charles Anthony Buckley, II, her current husband Bob Nelms, and eight step-children – David Nelms, Diane Nelms, Cynthia Barbarits, Joe Nelms, Candice Nelms, Carey Nelms, Rob Nelms, and Debbie Baker. She is also survived by four step-grandchildren, Zoe Nelms, Joie Paciulli, Keenan Nelms, and Ruby Nelms.

A memorial service is scheduled for St. John the Divine Episcopal Church in Houston, Texas, for Friday, September 19, 2025, 11:00 AM in the smaller chapel. Address is 2450 River Oaks Blvd, Houston, Texas.

Susan loved roses and lilies, a suggestion for anyone wishing to send flowers.

May her memory be eternal.

Expressions of remembrance and condolences are welcome and may be left for the family at www.davisgreenlawnfh.com.

Arrangements are under the direction of Davis-Greenlawn Funeral Home, 3900 B.F. Terry Blvd. (Hwy 59 South @ FM 2218), Rosenberg, Texas 77471,

Phone: 281-341-8800.

Previous Events

Service

SEP **19**. 11:00 AM (CT)

The Church of St. John the Divine
2450 River Oaks Blvd
Houston, TX 77019
(713) 622-3600

Tribute Wall

TF

“ *The Stryker Family purchased the Loving Lilies and Roses Bouquet for the family of Susan Frost Spice Buckley Nelms.*



The Stryker Family - September 18, 2025 at 04:15 PM

AR

“ *Anita Ricca purchased the Arrive in Style for the family of Susan Frost Spice Buckley Nelms.*



Anita Ricca - September 16, 2025 at 09:21 AM

EF

“ *Edmund, Roy, & Rihl Buckley and Families purchased the Ocean Breeze Spray for the family of Susan Frost Spice Buckley Nelms.*

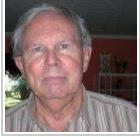


Edmund, Roy, & Rihl Buckley and Families - September 11, 2025 at 11:13 AM

EF

“ *Edmund, Roy, & Rihl Buckley and Families planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Susan Frost Spice Buckley Nelms.*

Edmund, Roy, & Rihl Buckley and Families - September 11, 2025 at 11:13 AM



“ 2 files added to the album Susan Nelms



Bob Nelms - August 20, 2025 at 08:48 PM

VL

She was very beautiful. I'm so very sorry for your loss. I hope you find comfort and peace from your precious memories and love for her. Hugs , love and prayers 🤗❤️🙏

Valerie Dufner Lof - August 20, 2025 at 09:25 PM