



## Cynthia "Cindy" Zirkle

September 12, 1946 – May 14, 2026



Painting of Cindy Zirkle by Leslie Ficcaglia

Dear Friend,

In May we lost a member and staunch friend of CU Maurice River, Cynthia "Cindy" Zirkle.

Cindy was one of the most deliberate and committed persons I have ever known. She had high expectations of those around her. Over time I came to realize that the expectations she had of others were no more stringent than those she had for herself. Even in the face of her recovery from cancer I witnessed her persistence in

participating wholeheartedly and forcefully in environmental issues. Cindy was spirited and intelligent.

She was a hard worker and dedicated to the maintenance of her property. Along with sheep and horses and a huge organic garden she raised her favorite dog breeds, first Boston terriers, then Rhodesian ridgebacks, and finally German shepherds, and greatly enjoyed their antics. But she suffered no fools in people or animals. Her dogs were obedient, and her friends and associates knew she meant business. But that is not to say that Cindy didn't have a sense of humor - she was quick-witted and quick to laughter.

I learned a great deal from watching Cindy's relentless pursuit of the complexity of the issues that concerned her. In researching a topic she left few stones unturned, and constantly sought the truth. Many people benefited from her diligence in these matters.

She believed in the importance of lifelong learning for herself and others, serving capably on her local board of education for many years.

She was also dedicated to the Cohansey River's environs, helping to found Cohansey Area River Preservation and attending endless meetings to advocate fiercely for its protection.

She was predeceased by her husband Ernie in 1921. In my observation this loss was devastating for her. They were kindred spirits as she and Ernie had shared many of the same interests and as a result, after his loss there remained a vacuum that was impossible to fill. I'd like to think of them as reunited and of Cindy being entirely on her game, laughing heartily and retaining her dynamic personality.

We offer our condolences to her family and friends. The family's obituary captures a sense of Cindy's spirit; I hope you will take note of it below.

Cindy, God's speed!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jane Morton Galetto".

Jane Morton Galetto  
CU Maurice River Board President

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September 12, 1946 – May 14, 2026

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Cynthia Zirkle, age 79, passed away peacefully at home on May 14, 2026, surrounded by her loving family.

Born on September 12, 1946, in New York City, Cynthia lived a life marked by intelligence, determination, service and deep devotion to her family and community. She attended The Brearley School and later studied at University of Pennsylvania. In the mid-1960s, Cynthia enjoyed her time as a guide in Colonial Williamsburg, where her love of history and storytelling flourished.

Cynthia's adventurous spirit led her to aviation, where she achieved licenses as a private, charter, instructional, and commercial pilot. From the early 1970s through the mid-1980s, she spent many years in the skies and continued flying privately long afterward. Aviation remained one of her greatest passions.

A lifelong gardener and student of horticulture, Cynthia cherished her time studying at Longwood Gardens and cultivated many different gardens on her property along the Cohansey River, each reflecting her creativity and care for the natural world.

Deeply committed to preserving the natural beauty and future of her community, Cynthia was a founding member of Cohansey Area River Preservation and remained involved with the Cohansey Area Watershed Association. She also dedicated more than 25 years of service to the Cumberland Regional High School Board of Education and volunteered for many years with CASA, advocating for children in need.

Cynthia is survived by; her children, Kimberley Carrell and her husband Gene and Arthur "Jody" John Bretnall III and his wife Seren; her stepchildren, Lorraine Maddox and her husband Kendall, Scarlett Gotwals and her husband Brad, Douglas Zirkle and his wife Judy, and Gwen Zirkle; and many beloved grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Cynthia will be remembered as a strong, fierce, and deeply heartfelt woman whose intelligence, independence and compassion touched countless lives. Her legacy lives on through the family she loved, the community she served, and the many people inspired by her strength and spirit.

In lieu of flowers, please consider making a donation to your favorite charity in Cindy's name. Donations can also be made to USAHA the US Animal Health Association that meant so much to Cindy and Ernie throughout the years. Please put GRITS or Cindy Zirkle in the subject. The Address for USAHA is: 4221 Mitchell Ave. St. Joseph, MO 64507. Written condolences can be sent to the family through the funeral home website [www.padgettfuneralhomes.com](http://www.padgettfuneralhomes.com).

A Celebration of life is being planned for this summer at her home at a later date.

Lovingly Submitted, The Family



Ernie and Cindy, Minnamuska Creek Farm, on March 17, 2013 / Photo by Leslie Ficaglia



Ernie and Cindy with then Deputy Freeholder Director Darlene Barber September 27, 2019 Annual Democratic Committee Dinner / Photo by Steven Defelice

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