Roberta O'Brad

June 20, 1941 - March 20, 2025

Roberta Lynne O'Brad (née May), 83, of Lincolnwood, IL, formerly of Ft. Myers, FL, and previously a resident of Niles, OH and Chicago, IL passed away peacefully on March 20, 2025, as always, with perfect lipstick and no patience for any nonsense.

Born in Warren, OH, on June 20, 1941, Roberta graduated from Mineral Ridge High School and Youngstown State University with a degree in Accountancy, later earning an MBA—because one degree wasn't enough.

She built a formidable career in State and Local Tax, starting at Alcan Aluminum in Warren, OH before boldly moving to Chicago in the mid-1980s. She worked at Arthur Andersen, Ernst & Young, Ducharme McMillen & Associates, UHY Advisors, and Deloitte, where she retired as Director of State and Local Taxes in 2003. If you ever wanted to argue tax law, she would have happily obliged, and she would have won.

Roberta was not just a force in the corporate world; she was a leader in the tax community. She was actively involved with the Illinois Tax Federation, where she served as Chairperson, as well as the Institute of Professionals in Taxation and the Taxpayer's Federation of Illinois, where she served on the Executive Committee. And while some might assume tax professionals are all business, her daughter can confirm that State and Local Tax conventions

were the place to be—because tax folks know how to throw a party.

Roberta never forgot her humble beginnings and often recounted the most exciting day of her life: at 16, when her family finally got indoor plumbing. Fast forward to 2022, while moving back to Chicago from Florida, she found it amusing that she had come so far in life that she was now in a position to buy a plane ticket— to transport her cat. She was determined, hardworking, and fiercely independent. Her lifelong motto? "I will do it myself." And trust us, she did.

After retiring, she didn't slow down—she just redirected her energy. She became an active volunteer at local food pantries, clothing closets, and community gardens. She also had an eye for the finer things in life, with a love for the arts, fashion, parties, dancing, and travel. Most recently, in 2022, she embarked on an extensive European tour with her daughter, visiting nine countries and leaving a trail of admirers (and possibly a few bartenders still talking about the fabulous red-lipped woman who graced their establishments).

Speaking of lipstick, Roberta had one non-negotiable rule: "You are never fully dressed without lipstick and a necklace." Generations have now inherited this wisdom, whether they wanted to or not.

She is survived by her loving daughter, Leslie L. O'Brad; her devoted (and slightly spoiled) feline companion, Alexis "Lexi" the mustachioed cat; and her "bonus granddaughter," Kristian L. Brooks.

She was preceded in death by her beloved husband, Robert "Bob" Blair Atkinson, who no doubt greeted her with a mojito and a huge smile upon her arrival.

Roberta was also a proud stepmother to Blair Atkinson Duncan, Robert Lynn Atkinson, and Benjamin Eugene Atkinson and grandmother to their children, Collin, Brayden, Kennedy, Evan, Emma, Emmet, Kealey, Karissa, Kaylen, Kendall and Logan.

Because she was the only child of the late Francis Samuel May and Mae Elizabeth May (née Kennedy), Roberta was, as she often liked to remind people, "one of a kind."

As per her very specific instructions, her family has chosen green cremation and will be taking her ashes on a tour through her favorite fancy watering holes around Chicago. If you happen to sense a particularly chic breeze pass by, it's probably Roberta, making sure you're properly accessorized.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in her name to the Evanston Animal Shelter (evanstonanimalshelter.net)—because if there was one thing she loved as much as a good party, it was a well-cared-for animal.

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

Tribute Wall

PS

I was in a ladies card group with Roberta when she lived at Lexington CC in Ft Myers. She was a great host and made beautiful cakes that looked like they came from a top bakery. She was a very talented lady!

Patricia Sabia - March 30, 2025 at 07:59 AM

RB

I have so many memories working with Roberta at Deloitte. We spent many afternoons in her office talking about everything but tax. I will always remember how much we laughed together. She took little convincing to grab a drink after work because she was always up for some fun. Miss those day with her! Leslie, your mom was a great one. May she rest in peace.

Rene Burris - March 27, 2025 at 01:00 PM

LO

It's the infamous outhouse!

Leslie obrad - March 26, 2025 at 11:06 PM

MN

Roberta was a wonderful friend and colleague. I really miss our Monday morning ritual of catching up from our weekend activities. Golfing, dining, travel, theater and book reading were just some of the topics we discussed. She was always fun to be with and even at the end had that twinkle of mischief in her bright blue eyes. She was a great colleague as well. A true pioneer entering the world of state and local taxation way back in the 70s. I learned a lot from Roberta. She was kind and selfless, coming out of retirement to help me as I started practices at American Express Tax and Business Services and UHY. Leslie, your obituary really says it all! Sending our warmest regards and wishes. Michele and Mark Nachbar

Mark Nachbar - March 26, 2025 at 08:56 PM

SY

2 files added to the tribute wall

sylvia - March 26, 2025 at 03:21 PM

MA

1 file added to the tribute wall

Marie Andrusewicz - March 25, 2025 at 02:58 PM

EW

Her generous heart and inspiration to women everywhere. She was truly one of a kind!

Eric Warren Warren - March 24, 2025 at 12:35 AM

JP

As a her daughter's roommate and friend, I've known Roberta since 1989. She was a woman to admire; fun, witty, sharp and a force supporting women and their ambitions. She will always burn bright in my mind and her spirit, humor and strength will live on. Jennifer

Jennifer Pelino - March 23, 2025 at 10:31 PM

LE

15 files added to the tribute wall

Leslie - March 23, 2025 at 10:26 PM

LE

12 files added to the tribute wall

Leslie - March 23, 2025 at 10:24 PM

BA

Birds
Of a feather. I always got a kick out of her adventures that you shared. You two went together like Putin and Trump. That's just for yuks. I know you will miss her terribly - you were a mini mum sharing laughs and hi jinks when ever you guys were allowed to be together. Sending you so much love and hope that it brings you marvelous memories of your very special mum.

Barrie - March 24, 2025 at 12:02 PM

CN

I worked with Roberta at Niles Expanded Metals back in the 1960's. We remained friends after I moved to Florida and she would come to Orlando for conferences and we would meet up for lunch or dinner. Last had lunch with Roberta while on vacation with my family in Naples in 2015 and 2018. Had not heard from her in recent years and wondered how she was. She was a very special friend.

Sue Summersgill Nagie

Carolyn (Sue) Nagie - March 30, 2025 at 07:37 AM