

Jo Ann Marie Roberts

SPARKS - Heaven gained a new angel on February 2, as Jo Ann Roberts completed her work here on earth.

Jo Ann was born July 9, 1935, the eldest of five siblings to Frank Arian Zubieta and Helen Escalle and grew up on a small ranch/farm in Sparks.

Her father was a sheepherder, emigrating from Basque country to Nevada. She recalled it was a humble beginning, during a difficult time in our country's history.

Jo Ann excelled in school, graduating from Sparks High School with a \$4,000 Smith Scholarship (named for Harold Smith of Harold's Club). It was a "king's ransom" in the 1950s and would cover four years tuition and expenses at the University of Nevada. She was the first member of her family to go to college or graduate from college.

As a new graduate with a degree in secondary education, Jo Ann was ready to tackle classroom teaching. Unfortunately, there were no teaching jobs open at the time. So, she went to work for First National Bank, starting at the bottom as a clerk/typist.

Jo Ann married O.B. Roberts in 1962 and became an "instant mom" to his pre-teenaged son and daughter. A year later Jo Ann gave birth to her daughter Dee Ann.

Tragedy struck in 1977, when O.B. was diagnosed with ALS (Lou Gehrig's disease) and died three months later.

All the while Jo Ann worked her way up at the bank to become the first female branch manager in northern Nevada. Her branch experience was supplemented a couple of times with work assignments in administration and Human Resources.

Recognizing her well-rounded experience and talents, Jo Ann was promoted to senior vice president of Human Resources for what had become First



Interstate Bank, as the highest-ranking female at the bank at the time. As the bank was transitioning to become Wells Fargo, Jo Ann retired in 1983, after 35-plus years in banking.

Through the years Jo Ann engaged in many volunteer and appointed community positions, serving on the State Board for March of Dimes, the City of Reno Task Force on Affordable Housing and the Nevada Self-Employment Trust, developing the state's first micro-lending fund. The City of Sparks appointed her for an eight-year term on the city's Civil Service Commission. She was an early inductee into the Nevada Women's Fund Hall of Fame; was named a Soroptimist Woman of Distinction; received the Hannah Humanitarian Award from the Committee to Aid Women; and was a Sparks High School Outstanding Alumna.

Jo Ann joined Soroptimist International of Truckee Meadows (SITM) as a charter member in 1978 and remained active throughout her life. She served as SITM's President from 1983-84. She went on to become Sierra Nevada Region Treasurer for two terms, Governor-Elect and Region Governor from 1990-1992, followed by many years as the Region Archivist.

Speaking of her community service, Jo Ann once said, "The service we provide in our communities is the rent we pay for our place on earth."

Jo Ann is survived by her sister Deynese Cassidy of Kentucky; grandchildren Travis Clinton, Madison Clifton and Daniel Roberts-Smith of Sparks; her stepdaughter Sharon Roddam of Oregon; step-granddaughter Jennifer Kincade of Arizona; numerous nieces, nephews and great grandchildren.

She was pre-deceased by her parents; husband O.B. Roberts; sister Charlene Urizar; brothers Frank and Dennis Zubieta; daughter Dee Ann Roberts.

A memorial service is planned for Friday, February 28, 2025, at 10 a.m. at Mountain View Mortuary 425 Stoker Ave., Reno. A reception and graveside burial will follow. In lieu of flowers, please send donations in Jo Ann's name to Soroptimist International of Truckee Meadows for the Jo Ann and Dee Ann Memorial Scholarship, at P.O. Box 20125, Reno, NV 89515, or visit www.sitmv.org.