



## Robert Searcy Allison

September 9, 1932 - March 24, 2021

Robert Searcy Allison, age 88, died peacefully on March 24, 2021 following a brief illness surrounded by his beloved family.

Born in Knoxville, Tennessee September 9, 1932, the son of Margaret Elizabeth Searcy Allison and George Upton Allison. His parents and his younger brother George (Bud) Allison predeceased him. His Mom was from South Alabama and his Dad from East Tennessee.

A 1954 graduate of the University of Tennessee, Bob was elected president of the University's student body. He was actively involved and an officer in his fraternity, Phi Gamma Delta. Later he was named Outstanding Senior by the Omicron Delta Kappa leadership fraternity. Just before graduation, Allison was one of eleven students selected as a Torchbearer. "The Torchbearer is the highest student honor conferred by the University of Tennessee. Torchbearers are Seniors who have served their Alma Mater with overall excellence."

Following graduation from the University of Tennessee, Bob married the love of his life, Anne, in July 1954. He immediately moved with his bride to Schenectady, NY, having been hired by General Electric's Advertising and Sales Promotion Department.

He served two years active duty as an officer in the U.S. Army. One of those years was in the Territory of Alaska during 1955 and 1956. Anne joined him in Alaska, teaching kindergarten in the small port town of Whittier.

Allison left GE in Schenectady to join Doe-Anderson Advertising Agency in Louisville in March 1960. In early 1973, he was elected the agency's president/CEO and served as its leader for the next 20 years until his retirement in 1993. During Bob's working years he was chosen for membership on the national board of directors of the American Association of Advertising Agencies, also serving as chair of the U.S. Central Region of the AAAA. He was chair of the Advertising and Marketing International Network.

Bob's most treasured community-involvement memories were the years he spent as a leader of Troop 318 of the Boy Scouts (affiliated with Second Presbyterian Church), and the lifelong friendships he enjoyed with so many of these young men. He delighted in following their achievements in life as the years passed, and was especially proud of the many Troop members who earned the highest award in Scouting - the Eagle Scout rank.

Bob served for years as Eucharistic minister for his Catholic Church to Norton Hospital and also Naples Community Hospital in Florida.

Allison's community involvement began shortly after his arrival in Louisville. Early days included promotion for our Community Chest and also for the Fund for the Arts. He was an early and long-time member of the Louisville Waterfront Board; a founding member of the Ali Center; served on the Saint Xavier High School Board and also the Kentucky Country Day School Board; was chair of the University of Louisville Board of Overseers; and treasurer of the UofL Athletic Board.

Allison followed closely the entire career of Muhammad Ali-from Ali's Rome Olympic Championship through each of his professional fights. A thrill came when Bob was invited to spend several days at Ali's training camp in Pennsylvania. He ran each morning with the Champ and had dinner with him each evening. Years after Ali retired, Bob was having dinner with Ali and John Ramsey. Bob told the Champ he had never been so scared as on the night Ali fought Sonny Liston, a fighter Bob felt was a fierce opponent for Ali. When he said this, Ali leaned across the small table toward Bob, his eyes grew large as saucers and said, "You think you were scared," - followed, of course, with a huge Ali smile. Later, Bob was on the Board which helped organize and set in motion the building of the present-day Ali Center.

In 1999, Bob was inducted into the Junior Achievement Business Hall of Fame. He was also a member of the University of Tennessee Alumni Board of Governors, and was inducted into the University of Kentucky Advertising Hall of Fame. He worked with a small group formed by the UofL Athletic Department under Athletic Director Bill Olsen, to create the Papa John's UofL football stadium. Success for the group, he professed, was the unusual result of "upside-down marketing" wherein the incredibly strong support of UofL fans (with their commitments to a Lifetime Seating offering) eventually got the attention and support of the City, the Commonwealth, and corporations. Result: the Stadium was built.

Allison ran three marathons- the first two just minutes over four hours. His final marathon

was the 1983 New York City Marathon. He was determined to get under four hours this time and crossed the finish line in Central Park in 3 hours and 56 minutes. He had quietly promised Anne (in a tag strapped to his running shoe) he would quit running "crazy distances" if she would stop smoking. Being an independent soul, Anne did not jump at Bob's offer of a deal - but waited until December 31, 1983 to smoke her last cigarette (which Bob captured, framed with a brass plaque noting her important lifetime achievement).

He studied and enjoyed water coloring, clay and stone sculpturing – each of which he took up following his retirement. He continued with these fun activities the rest of his life.

The family would like to thank Dr. Allan Currie and the outstanding caregivers at Baptist East Palliative Care.

His greatest pride, without question, was his marriage of his college sweetheart, Anne, since July, 1954. He is survived by his wife of 66 years, Anne Lewis Witt Allison, and their two wonderful and much-loved children: Jeanie Allison Gatchel (Hunter), and Rob Allison (Cindy), and four loving and talented grandchildren Beth Anne in Orlando, and George (fiancee Sami), Natalie, and Louise in Louisville.

Visitation will be held on Monday, March 29, 2021 from 4pm until 7pm at Pearson's, 149 Breckenridge Ln. A Funeral Mass will be held at 10am on Tuesday, March 30 at Holy Trinity Catholic Church, 501 Cherrywood Rd. Louisville, Ky, 40207, with private burial to follow.

In lieu of flowers, if one wishes, the family requests gifts in his memory be sent to Kosair charities, 982 Eastern Parkway, Louisville 40217; or St. Xavier High School Foundation, 1609 Poplar Level Rd., Louisville 40207; or Sacred Heart Schools Foundation, 3177 Lexington Rd., Louisville 40206; or the charity of your choice.

# Events

---

**MAR** **Visitation** 04:00PM - 07:00PM

**29**

---

Pearson Funeral Home

149 Breckenridge Lane, Louisville, KY, US, 40207

**MAR** **Funeral Mass** 10:00AM

**30**

---

Holy Trinity Catholic Church

501 Cherrywood road, Louisville, KY, US, 40207

# Comments

---



“ Sunny Memories was purchased for the family of Robert Searcy Allison.



March 29 at 02:57 PM

---



“ Anne, our thoughts and prayers go out to you during this difficult time. Bob was the first “Pi Guy” I ever met. Your love and life is an inspiration. Alpha Love and Mine  
Heather S

Heather Stanton - March 29 at 07:30 AM

---



“ Dear Anne, My prayers and love are extended to you and your family. I remember all the wonderful things you've shared over the years about Bob and your loving relationship. And the beautiful art he created that you and he shared in your holiday greetings, will be treasured by all who received them...a memory shared.

You are a special sister and I weep for you and hope you find peace and comfort in time, knowing that we care.

Roses and Love  
Mary Williams

Mary Williams - March 28 at 12:35 PM

---



“ I was so sorry to hear about Bob's death. He was a very special, talented, gentle, and caring person. As a communications professional, I appreciated being able to pick his very accomplished brain about advertising, public relations, and many additional topics. He and Anne had a respectful, loving relationship that many couples would envy. My love and support is being sent to Anne and their family.

Ginger Banks - March 27 at 12:03 PM

---



“ My Uncle Bob was the most accomplished person I've ever known. He continued to re-invent himself after "retirement," diving fully into his latent art talents. He created some of the most beautiful marble sculptures I've ever seen, and my husband Greg and I have some of his watercolor paintings framed and hanging in our home.

The family didn't mention these in his list of achievements, but Uncle Bob and Aunt Roonie had quite an enviable vegetable garden and Uncle Bob even raised bees for their honey, creating fun labels for "Bob's Bees!"

Greg and I will always love him dearly and are eternally grateful for the infinite ways he blessed us with his presence.

Annie Sims



**Annie Sims** - March 27 at 11:31 AM