



Clare Josephine Ross Tobin

August 13, 1944 - November 17, 2023

Clare Josephine Ross Tobin (August 13, 1944–November 17, 2023)

There was always a place at Clare Tobin's table. Anyone who was far from their family — or didn't have one — was welcome, whether it was a major holiday or a weekday night. Maybe it was because she knew what it was like to be far from home. As a young, newly married woman, Clare Tobin and her husband immigrated to Chicago from Ireland in 1972 with two forks, two knives, two spoons, her favorite cookbook and five suitcases of clothing. They got an apartment in Marina City towers, and while they only intended to stay a few years, there was something they loved about Chicago. They raised their three sons — Killian, Malachy and Naoise — on Lakewood Avenue in Edgewater, and it was here that she started working and organizing with her neighbors to make their community better — a passion that would last throughout her life.

But let's begin at the beginning. Clare was born in County Longford, Ireland on August 13, 1944, to Ann and Joseph Ross. She was fourth of seven Ross siblings, and was raised on a cattle farm in the midlands of Ireland. She studied at University College Dublin, graduating in 1968 with a degree in Economics — a choice that was driven by her passion to better understand Irish oppression. Clare moved to London with her future husband, Brian, to get a teaching degree. They married at their mutual alma mater, University College Dublin church, in 1968, and with few jobs in Ireland at that point, they immigrated to Chicago where she build a beautiful life filled with love.

Clare was a lifelong learner who loved to take on new challenges and was unafraid of failure. She was brave, strong, rebellious, and never afraid to ask tough questions or be herself. She had deeply held convictions of right and wrong — not only that, she put those beliefs into action. She was an avid member and eventual executive director of the Edgewater Community Council, which connected neighborhood residents, business owners and political leaders. She was adamant that the only way to force societal change is to make sure your voice is heard, whether it's voting, letter-writing, making phone calls, organizing, attending meetings or hitting the streets to march and protest. And this is how she lived. She spent her time researching issues she felt strongly about, taking detailed notes, making protest signs, showing up, and making her voice heard. She gave her time,

energy and money generously and wholeheartedly. She was committed to causes like voter integrity, climate change and women's rights, but she never forgot it was all about the people who were being impacted. She cared so deeply for other people, whether she knew them or not.

While Clare was a serious person who worked tirelessly on big causes, when she laughed, there was nothing better. She loved traveling both the US and abroad, going to art museums, working in her garden, going on walks with friends or picnics at Millenium Park classical music concerts. She was known for her epic annual Christmas letters, which cataloged the year's highlights, followed by a quick swerve to the state of politics, always accompanied by a slightly blurry family photo.

She showed up for everyone she knew, whether it was a friend's birthday, a grandchild's baseball game or dance performance, or her own weekly Sunday dinners, where she would spend all day in the kitchen creating a spread of from-scratch dishes that made her family — and anyone who needed a warm place — feel so very, very loved.

Clare is preceded in death by her parents, Ann and Joseph Ross, her sister Mary Claffey, and brothers Michael and John. She is survived by her dear sisters Brigid Connaughton, Frances Ross and Ann Ross; her sons Killian, Malachy and Naoise Tobin, her daughters in-law Molly and Elissa; her ex-husband Brian; and her grandchildren Fiona, Declan, Aine and Saoirse Tobin. She was the best mom, mother-in-law and nana ever, and we will miss her terribly.

A memorial service for Clare will be held December 2 from 1-4 p.m. at Berger Park Cultural Center (6205 N. Sheridan Road), with a tribute at 3 p.m. Those attending from afar can join us for the tribute via Zoom:

<https://zoom.us/>

Meeting ID: 312 388 7946

Passcode: LoveClare

Or

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/3123887946?pwd=OmXmBuS6n08nr bx2d3fYJRahvshb9S.1>

Memorial contributions may be made in Clare's honor to Care for Real (careforreal.org), a local organization supporting the Edgewater community.

Previous Events

Memorial Gathering

DEC 2. 1:00 PM - 3:00 PM (CT)

Berger Park Cultural Center
6205 N. Sheridan Road
Chicago, IL 60660

Memorial Celebration

DEC 2. 3:00 PM (CT)

Berger Park Cultural Center
6205 N. Sheridan Road
Chicago, IL 60660

Tribute Wall

AR

“ I first met Clare in the 1990s along many like-minded trails and causes. She was a true civic wonder, election voter rights activist, friend to all, and petition passer extraordinaire—a true American. She will be missed, but she left the world a better place. Andrea Raila & Familia



Andrea Raila - February 12, 2024 at 02:21 PM

RF

“ Dear Killian, Malachy, Naoise and Brian,

We were so sad to learn of Clare's passing. From the day she saw us with our toddler daughter and suggested she would be a good playmate for her toddler son through crusading with her to drive out the slum landlord at the corner to getting the St. Ita basketball lot turned into a children's playlot, she was a force in our lives and our community.

In her many activities, she enriched the lives of those around her on our block and in our greater community. Our condolences to you and your families.

Rog and Dolores Flaherty

Roger Flaherty - December 10, 2023 at 05:44 PM



“ Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Clare Josephine Ross Tobin.



December 02, 2023 at 03:06 AM

TF

“ The Bohan Family planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Clare Josephine Ross Tobin.

The Bohan Family - December 02, 2023 at 03:06 AM

AF

“ To Brigid and Family all our condolences Bernard and Aisling Roche

Aisling Flanagan - December 01, 2023 at 07:45 AM



“ Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Clare Josephine Ross Tobin.



November 29, 2023 at 02:37 PM

DF

“ Dermot Mulvihill anf family planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Clare Josephine Ross Tobin.

Dermot Mulvihill anf family - November 29, 2023 at 02:37 PM

JB

“ I have a memory of Clare that I would like to share, even though it's quite selfish. On the trip to New York for the big, big climate march, I got on a train car where I was by myself among strangers. Then I heard Clare calling my name. She came and got me and took me to the group of people I knew. It was so nice of her. She was watching out to keep us all together.

Jan Boudart - November 28, 2023 at 10:20 PM



“ Vivid Recollections was purchased for the family of Clare Josephine Ross Tobin.



November 28, 2023 at 05:12 PM

FF

“ From Your CA Friends planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Clare Josephine Ross Tobin.

From Your CA Friends - November 28, 2023 at 05:12 PM



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Clare Josephine Ross Tobin.*



November 28, 2023 at 03:41 PM

JM

“ *I am so sorry to hear of Clare’s passing. I have great memories of Clare coming home with the biys, my cousins, when they were children and she’d organised the most epic treasure hunt for us in the garden, and my first ever milkshake. The things that stuck in your mind when you’re 9 or 10! And then over the years I remember well the epic Christmas letters. It wasn’t until last summer I had the opportunity to reconnect with Clare on the art trip to Nice organised by Brigid. I am so glad we got to meet again and experience her great humour and kindness. Many would have been thrown by the inconvenience of lost luggage but Clare was resilient and relaxed with irrepressible good humour in the face of it. My deepest sympathies to Killian, Malachy, Naoise, Molly and all Clare’s family. May she rest in peace. Joan M*

Joan Mulvihill - November 27, 2023 at 06:51 PM

HI

I am so sorry to hear of Clare’s passing. Our prayers and thoughts are with you Brigid. Xxx

Hilary - November 28, 2023 at 04:17 AM

MS

Deepest sympathy to Killian, Malachy, Naoise and to Brigid Francis and Anne on the sad passing of Clare She was always so serene and gentle spoken on her trips home with the boys nothing seem to phase her. May she R.I.P Dan and Mary Smyth and family

Mary Smytb - November 28, 2023 at 05:58 AM

JC

My sincere condolences to my cousins Killian, Malachy and Naoise, my mum, Brigid, and my Aunts Ann and Frances. Very fond memories of Clare's trips home with my cousins, road trips around the Dublin area and of her visit with Frances to Rome some years ago. Despite a twisted ankle and trip to the A&E Clare always stayed upbeat. Un abbraccio from the Roman Irish . Jim.

Jim Connaughton - December 02, 2023 at 06:58 PM

CH

Really sad to hear Clare had died and would like to send deepest sympathy to all her family . She will be very much missed. I remember Clare from London , Chicago and was lucky to meet her on her trips to Dublin . She was such fun, her gorgeous laugh, her interesting slant on all sorts of topics, local and international ,her sincere warmth . A real gem , so lucky to have known her. Deepest sympathy to all. Cliona H

Cliona Hickey - December 03, 2023 at 10:23 AM

RO

I am sorry to hear of Clare's passing. I had the pleasure of knowing her in Madrid with Frances. She was a wonderful person. My condolences to all her family. Rosi.

Rosi - December 04, 2023 at 05:02 AM

WM

*“ I am really saddened to hear of the death of my cousin Clare. From an early age it was clear that she had inherited her father’s passion for politics. Anyone who engaged in a debate with Clare had to be very well informed and prepared for a searching test: the best one could hope for was an honourable draw!
When I visited Chicago I was entertained by Brian and herself and it was memorable.
Clare was a loving and devoted mother to Killian, Malachy and Naoise to whom I send my heartfelt condolences, and also to her siblings Brigid, Frances and Anne. May she rest in peace.*

William Mulvihill and wife Máire.

william Mulvihill - November 27, 2023 at 01:34 PM

MB

So sorry to hear of the death of my cousin Clare RIP. I remember her fondly as s friendly kind confident and glamorous lady. My sincere condolences to Brian, Killian, Malachy, Naoise her wonderful grandchildren and sisters Brigid, Frances and Anne.

Mary O Brien, Dunshaughlin, Meath.

Mary O Brien - November 27, 2023 at 07:16 PM

LM

Lily Mulvihill Terlicken. My Heartfelt sympathy to Killian, Malachy, Naoise , Brian and to Clare’s Grandchildren to Brigid, Frances, and Ann at this sad time for you all. Thank God for the lovely memories we all have of Clare. Her kindness and hospitality was extended even to my brother who visited Chicago many many years ago. May Clare Rest In Peace

Lily Mulvihill - November 28, 2023 at 06:06 AM