

The Risa Goldberg Memorial Scholarship for Women in Capital Markets at the Rotman School of Management

**Risa Erin Goldberg, Rotman MBA (2008), CFA
February 13, 1982 – June 14, 2012**



Risa was the first-born child of Bonnie and Michael Goldberg, sister to Heather and Jeremy, and grandchild to Shirley and Sydney Pellat and the late Lil Goldberg z”l. She was adored by them and they took tremendous pride in her accomplishments. As a baby and toddler, Risa loved Sesame Street, particularly Cookie Monster and his infamous song “C is for Cookie.” She participated in dance, learned to play piano, and went to summer camp. Risa was a fun-loving, happy child and made friends wherever she went. Bonnie and Michael believed in the importance of education and wanted to share their Jewish heritage and traditions with their children. Risa attended elementary school at [United Synagogue Day School \(USDS\)](#), where the curriculum included standard Ontario elementary school subjects and Hebrew and religious studies. Risa loved to learn and excelled at the lessons and challenges set before her. In 1994, her family watched with pride as she was called to the Torah as a Bat Mitzvah. After graduating from USDS, Risa attended [Community Hebrew Academy of Toronto \(CHAT\)](#). She continued to excel in both the standard Ontario and Hebrew curriculums. She was beloved by classmates, many of whom remained close friends, and by teachers who admired her devotion to learning. Risa’s favourite courses were the sciences, including biology. She was fascinated with how life worked and evolved in a myriad of complexity. Risa graduated from CHAT as an Ontario Scholar. Her hard work and academic excellence were rewarded when she considered her postsecondary options. She was accepted to all of the universities where she applied. Ultimately, Risa set her sights on pursuing Biology at [Queen’s University](#) in Kingston, Ontario.

At Queen’s University, Risa explored her passion for science and biology. Like many university students, her life was full of study, friendship and fun. Risa developed friendships that she cherished for the rest of her life. Risa’s academic excellence continued as she completed an honours thesis in evolutionary biology, working with fruit flies at Queen’s Bio-Evolutionary lab. It was during this thesis work that Risa began to understand what it would be like to continue her work in biology and while it was something she was certainly capable of undertaking, her passion for biology was soon to be overtaken and combined with a new focus on finance.

During each of the four summers during her undergraduate studies in Kingston, Risa returned to Toronto to work and expand her professional experience. In the summer between her third and fourth year at Queen’s, Risa worked on the Equity Trading Desk at [Desjardins Securities](#). She was hired as a general assistant, but Risa’s efforts and dedication were quickly recognized by the team and she was given more opportunities to add value. She set up the first back office function in Toronto to ensure daily trading was completed in a timely fashion. She thrived in the industry’s characteristically tight deadlines and long hours. As Risa returned to Kingston for her final year at Queen’s, no one realized the impact that this summer job would have on her subsequent field of study or on her career choice. The first indication came when Risa decided to take the [Canadian Securities Course](#), which she passed easily. In 2004, Risa graduated from Queen’s with an Honours Bachelors of Science with a major in Evolutionary Biology. However, her experience at Desjardins and completion of the Canadian Securities Course led Risa to pursue a career that would combine her education in biology and her interest in finance.

Risa was hired as a research analyst with [Millennium Research Group](#) (MRG), a company specializing in biomedical consulting. Risa threw her passion into the position, always seeking to rise to the top among her colleagues in an atmosphere of challenges for a recent graduate. Her efforts were rewarded through opportunities to influence major projects, incubate sparks of leadership, and develop relationships with executives of some of MRG's clients. While working at MRG, Risa was drawn to leadership roles but also to the notion of pursuing a career deeper in the field of finance and capital markets. After much thought and consideration, Risa decided that her best chance for a change in career would be a finance-focused MBA. Risa was accepted to the [Joseph L. Rotman School of Management](#) at the University of Toronto, solidifying her chances for her dream career path.

Risa started her MBA at the Rotman School of Management at the University of Toronto in 2007, embarking on an accelerated growth program in which she immersed herself. Risa fully embraced her education at Rotman and proved her academic command driven by her ambition and determination. Risa's academic achievements were well recognized. She received an entrance scholarship and was on the Dean's List for both program years. She was also a Bregman Scholar and a recipient of the Andrew Alexander Kinghorn Fellowship. Risa was most proud of winning the prestigious [Heather L. Main Memorial Scholarship](#) offered by [Women in Capital Markets](#) (WCM). Her experiences with Women in Capital Markets impacted her greatly and gave her assurance that a career in capital markets was within her reach. Risa remained in touch and active with WCM after graduating from Rotman. The Heather L. Main Memorial Scholarship included a paid internship in capital markets at a number of institutions. Risa diligently looked into her options and opted for a position with [Scotiabank's Investment Banking team](#). This internship pushed Risa personally and technically. She came away from the internship with many valuable experiences and a realization that she not only loved the work but felt at home within it.



While it may seem that Risa was exclusively focused on academics, she was also very active in student life at Rotman. She was VP Finance for the [Women in Management Association](#); Director of the [Rotman Finance Association](#); a Rotman Student Ambassador Events & Planning Lead; and a member of the Health Care and Biotechnology Association and Rotman Outreach. Risa also found time to connect and enjoy her time at Rotman with her colleagues over pints, confer with her professors over coffee and remain in touch with her other friends and family.

In 2008, Risa graduated from Rotman with her MBA. She was very proud of her accomplishments and this pride was shared by her family and her husband, Jake Phillips. Risa and her many friends at Rotman celebrated late into the night knowing that while they were ending their academic attachments, many of the relationships made at Rotman would endure for a lifetime. Rotman prepared Risa to take her drive and ambition to the next level.

Risa's first professional experience as a newly minted MBA was as an Associate at [Clairvest](#), a small private equity firm in Toronto. Risa found her niche in the team and she began to provide her unique insights on deals, acquisitions and management of companies, particularly in the biomedical field. It was during this time that Risa's command over the language and technical aspects of finance grew to their highest points. She created financial models that would drive the future of companies that she managed and she navigated politically charged executive climates. Her efforts and integrity were recognized with the invitation to sit for the first time on the board of directors of one of the companies that she helped manage.

While at Clairvest, Risa completed the final of three sections of the [Chartered Financial Analyst](#) (CFA) designation, something that she started during her work with MRG in 2005 and continued, astonishingly, during her MBA studies. Risa was extremely proud of her CFA because it provided further confirmation of her ambition, drive, and ability, but also a challenge that predated her career-changing MBA. Most importantly, it connected her with her father, Michael Goldberg, also a CFA. Combining the Canadian Securities Course with a CFA designation and lastly with her finance-focused MBA from Rotman, Risa felt prepared to embark on a career as a woman in capital markets.

Although Clairvest offered some strategy and strong technicals, Risa craved a more active growth role in a single organization with an eye to a leadership role. [The Royal Bank of Canada's Global Consulting Services](#) provided her a place to combine her consulting and strategy abilities with her solid financial skills inside Canada's largest bank. Several of Risa's fellow Rotman alumni were working at RBC. This gave her the opportunity to maintain personal relationships and build her professional network. While at RBC, Risa participated in several consulting projects across the bank. One of these projects centered on Wealth Management and provided an insight into a field of finance previously unknown to Risa, but one with intriguing growth possibilities. RBC was also where Risa's grasp of management structures and political architecture of financial institutions came together with the help of several key mentors and peers.

After some time at RBC, combining her consulting and finance skills, Risa yearned for even greater challenges. [CIBC Wealth Management](#) presented a unique opportunity to Risa as she would be working with a very small strategy team inside a large organization on the verge of growth. Risa was a natural fit for both the team and the role. Inside of the nine months Risa spent at CIBC, she cultivated many personal and professional relationships, and also a very healthy command of professional respect, ultimately becoming a Director within the strategy team in Wealth Management. The Director promotion achieved by Risa more than a month before her passing was a significant milestone in her career and fulfilled a personal dream of becoming a Director at a top bank by the age of 30. Of all the career positions that Risa held, her positions at CIBC were the most rewarding and fulfilling to her and she saw a successful partnership with CIBC in her future.

Risa was a woman that people would consistently take notice of and remember when doing business with her. She didn't just talk her way through her career; she also dressed the part. Risa combined a modern woman's style with the conservatism of financial institutions in a way that very few people are able to accomplish successfully. Her combination of style, poise, and ability to adapt and think on her feet made her a woman to remember on Bay Street. Many of Risa's pursuits were with career- and community-based organizations, usually with a focus on finance. Prior to Risa's position with Clairvest, she got involved with [blackandblue dance projects](#), a contemporary dance company based in Toronto. Risa enjoyed dance as a child and she used her skills in finance and business to give back as a member of their board of directors. Risa also volunteered with [The Corsage Project](#), a community-based program of the Children's Aid Foundation that "helps economically challenged disadvantaged high school students attend their prom by providing free formal-wear." Risa enjoyed combining her strong sense of style with her desire to give back to the community. Risa was introduced to the program by a friend and remained involved for several years.



On a Saturday morning in June, 2009, shortly after moving into her first owned condominium, Risa got engaged to her boyfriend, Jake Phillips. They were married on September 5th, 2010, at Eagles Nest Golf Club in the beautiful storybook wedding Risa had dreamed of as a girl. While planning the wedding, Risa and Jake got a Yorkshire Terrier that they named Reallie. Reallie was Risa's first and only pet and was a constant source of joy for her. Risa's calm demeanour in her professional life was met with a full personal life as she balanced career, family and friends. Risa's husband Jake was her sounding board, voice of reason and sometimes just someone to vent frustrations.

Travel was an essential part of Risa and Jake's personal life. Risa wanted to travel the world and bask in all it had to offer, from culture to food to poetic sights. Risa's travels included trips to Australia, Dominican Republic, Cuba, Paris, many locations in the US, Southeast Asia, honeymooning in Mexico, and an anniversary trip to Italy. Among Risa's many travel plans there are a few that

were a dream for her, the Galapagos and Africa among them. No location was too foreign; Risa was fearless when it came to travel, mirroring her passion in her professional life.

On June 14th, 2012, Risa was walking to work when she was struck by a truck. Several bystanders rushed to her aid and she was rushed to the hospital but Risa quickly succumbed to her injuries. In the days that followed there was an outpouring of support from all corners of Risa's life including family, friends, and coworkers. Even strangers felt compelled to offer condolences and they wished that they had known her.

Risa will forever be remembered as a kind, independent, humble young woman with a "work-hard, play-hard" ethic who knew how to get a job done, how to be an amazing wife, daughter, sister, and friend, and which shoes she'd look best in while doing so.

The Risa Goldberg Memorial Scholarship for Women in Capital Markets at the Rotman School of Management was established by Risa's family as a permanent expression of their love for Risa and as a fitting tribute to her life that would give back to women of similar drive, ambition, and integrity.

