



Robert L. Smith

December 10, 1933 - November 15, 2020

Robert Lloyd Smith

10 December 1935 – 15 November 2020

Bob Smith died peacefully at home on Sunday morning, November 15, 2020, just a few weeks shy of his 85th birthday.

Bob was born and raised in Chicago, in a home built by his maternal grandparents from Bohemia. He was the elder child of businessman Lloyd and school teacher Elsie. During WWII the family had a victory garden in the backyard, and his mother pickled pigs' feet and made soap. His grandmother Mary (Nana) continued to live with them because her husband had died during the 1918 influenza pandemic. Young Bobby also enjoyed the support of his mother's best friend Ruth, whom he always remembered with respect and fondness.

Bobby did well in the public school system, attending Lowell Elementary and Kelvyn Park High School where he played the tuba poorly though he deeply enjoyed listening to music. His favorite subjects were art, math, and science. Bob was inducted into the National Honor Society in May 1952 and earned prizes at the Chicago Student Science Fair for his cloud chamber and his exhibit on chromatography. An article in a 1953 issue of the Panther, the Kelvyn Park newspaper, notes that "Bob's friendly smile and delightful personality makes a combination that is hard to beat." Bob was one of the top ten students in his graduating class of about 200; eight of the others were girls. Childhood summers were spent joyfully swimming and playing on the beach at the family's summer home in Dune Acres. During his high school years, Bob attended Summer Naval School at Culver Academy in Indiana; he enjoyed the sailing but not the military life-style.

Bob left Chicago in 1953 to attend Reed College, which had recently been featured in The Saturday Evening Post. There he enjoyed studying physics with his fellow students in the so-called Rumford Society, several of whom became life-long friends: Larry, Gene, Chris and Peter. Bob also enjoyed learning about the humanities, particularly from world-class

calligrapher and humanist Lloyd Reynolds who was one of the few Reed professors interested in synthesis rather than analysis. In his senior year at Reed, his physics professor was disappointed that Bob chose to take Reynold's Graphic Arts Workshop rather than an extra physics course. Bob loved calligraphy and he adopted italic handwriting for everyday use throughout his long teaching career. In later years he was a member of the Goose Quill Guild in Corvallis, studied calligraphy with OSU Art Professor Allen Q Wong, and wrote out wedding and birth announcements for his family.

It was at Reed that Bob met his first wife Sheila. They were married in 1958 while Bob was a graduate student in modern physics at the University of Oregon. His career took an unexpected turn as a result of academic politics: his studies at U of O were interrupted because his thesis advisor was given notice to leave although the preceding department chairman had given him a firm promise of tenure and promotion. Bob and his fellow students were cast adrift, and eventually found their way to Oregon State University where Professor Wayne Burt was just beginning a new program in oceanography. Thanks to a very competent young secretary Bob signed on as the first graduate student in physical oceanography in the fall of 1960.

Bob's thesis advisor at OSU was June Grace Pattullo, who had studied with Walter Munk at Scripps Institution of Oceanography in La Jolla, California, and she was the first woman in the U.S. to get a PhD in physical oceanography. June was an excellent mentor and she encouraged her students to collaborate not only with each other, but also with colleagues in other disciplines and other institutions. Her senior students Curt Collins, Bob Smith, and Chris Mooers got along very well together, and their work focused on the local ocean off Newport; together they undertook pioneering measurements of the currents over the continental shelf as well as seasonal monitoring of coastal upwelling and downwelling; they all became internationally known leaders in coastal oceanography.

After completing his PhD in 1964, Bob took a NATO Postdoctoral Fellowship at National Institute of Oceanography in England before returning to Corvallis as an assistant professor. After a few years he felt the need to spread his wings further afield, and he took leave from OSU in 1969 to serve as scientific officer with the Office of Naval Research, travelling around the country for site visits at various oceanographic institutions to evaluate their research programs and proposals. Two years was enough to convince him that the collaborative spirit at Oregon State in Corvallis suited him far better than the narrow focus or internal competition he observed elsewhere, and so he was content to return to OSU in 1971.

Bob was a leader in the NSF-funded Coastal Upwelling Experiment (CUE) in 1972-1973

off Oregon, and follow-on experiments off Northwest Africa and Peru, with colleagues Jim O'Brien (Florida State), David Halpern (NOAA), Richard Barber (Duke), Ekki Mittelstaedt (Hamburg) and many others. He worked closely with OSU's John Allen in CODE and SuperCODE off California. Bob was vital in OSU's participation and leadership roles in the many large-group, collaborative observing programs that followed, and he helped foster the tone for collaborative research in OSU's Oceanography for many years. Bob was named a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in 1990, and he served as editor of *Progress in Oceanography* from 1984 to 2002. He very much enjoyed sabbatical studies in Germany, Wales, and especially at CSIRO in Hobart, Tasmania. Bob was advisor, mentor and good friends to many students, postdocs, and technicians, and he treated them all with fond respect, regardless of age, gender or position. Bob was always a terrifically collegial scientist and a great host, and he will be greatly missed by his many colleagues in Corvallis and throughout the world.

Beyond oceanography, Bob enjoyed the good things in life: swimming, walking, wine, food, art, music, Shakespeare, religion, history, and of course his grandchildren. His friendly good nature extended into all these areas. He invited his winemaking friend David Lett of Eyrie Vineyards to come to sea on the RV *Wecoma*, and he purchased a vintage bottle of pinot noir to give to each grandchild on their 21st birthday. He enjoyed hosting small dinner parties at home, always telling the guests not to bring wine because he had too many bottles in the basement. Reed College remained important to Bob, and he was very pleased to have one son and one grand-daughter become Reed alumni. He loved the Oregon Bach Festival in Eugene, and was especially inspired by the major Bach choral works conducted by Helmuth Rilling and Matthew Halls. He was a member of St Mary's Catholic Church in Corvallis and was friends with the monks at the Benedictine Abbey in Mt Angel and the Trappist Abbey in Carlton, Oregon. In recent years Bob's weekly round of meeting with friends (for water exercise or coffee or beer or bible study) grew more and more important. And then, in March 2020, all of those activities ended abruptly, and his joy began to fade.

Bob is survived by his second wife Jane, his children Suzanne, Sean and Colin, his children-in-law, and his grandchildren Ella, Adriana, Anna, Celine, Teilo and Kayna, and his many friends in Corvallis, Eugene, and the wider world. We will all miss him deeply for many years to come.

Please share your thoughts and memories for the family at www.demossturidan.com

Comments



“ Of all my colleagues at Oregon State, Bob and Jane were my dearest friends and I will always remember them. After getting my PhD in Corvallis I did a two-year stint in Peru as liaison officer for the Coastal Upwelling (CUEA) project around 1975-1977 where Bob was a frequent visitor between cruises. This photo was taken on my back porch, probably in the late 1970s.

David Enfield -- January 5th 2021



David Enfield - January 05 at 10:47 AM



“ Dear Jane and Family, I was so saddened to see Bob's obituary in the paper. Thank you for sharing the fascinating details of his life with us. I send you my condolences.

As I have told my friends many times, one of the bonuses of working on the GLOBEC project was getting to know Jane and Bob. They were so easy to work with, so pleasant to be around, even when they could not sleep at night because the fog horn was blaring outside their stateroom!

Bob always had a smile on his face and a twinkle in his eyes. I can still hear his laugh.

I shall miss Sweet Old Bob.

May your memories and the love of your friends and family bring you comfort.

Julie Arrington

Julie Arrington - December 03, 2020 at 11:13 PM



“ I didn't know Bob well, but I always enjoyed seeing and talking with him. It was a pleasure to meet him on campus, and when he and Jane came to our home to collect photos for the 50th Oceanography Anniversary, we had a great time talking and trading memories of "the old days". I'm sorry I won't be talking with him again.

David Stein - November 27, 2020 at 01:49 PM



“ What a delightful person! Bob was always upbeat—a very enjoyable person to see and chat with. He will certainly be missed! My condolences to Jane and the family.

Jerry Hilliard - November 27, 2020 at 01:35 PM



“ Those of us who were fortunate enough to serve with Bob on graduate student committees will miss observing his penetrating curiosity and good humor as he guided student learning. I will also miss traveling with him on our faith journey, hearing his observations about what he and Jane learned in their experiences in Carlton and Mount Angel.
Bruce Weber

Bruce Weber - November 26, 2020 at 12:43 AM



“ We frequently saw Bob and Jane at the round table at the Old World Deli on Fridays. We will miss his brightness, his laugh, his curiosity, his take on life. Our condolences to Jane and the extended family.

Will and Marilyn Koenitzer

Marilyn Koenitzer - November 25, 2020 at 12:14 PM



“ Bob was a good person to work with for 16-years.
William Gilbert

William Gilbert - November 25, 2020 at 06:17 AM



“ So sorry to hear of Bob's passing. He was such a kind and warm man with the most welcoming smile. I was always happy to see you both at the OSU Chamber Music camp concerts and Toshi loved listening to his stories. He will be greatly missed.

Toshi & Beverly Nagamoto

Beverly Nagamoto - November 24, 2020 at 11:17 PM



“ Dear Jane and family,
I'm really much saddened to hear about Bob's death. Bob was a neighbor, an OSU colleague and a stalwart and ever-cheerful companion in the AquaAerobics class. Over the years we enjoyed many good conversations about our shared interest in politics and the Middle East. I'll miss him greatly.
Jon Katz

Jonathan Katz - November 24, 2020 at 08:32 PM



“ Our condolences to all of Bob's family, especially to our friend Jane. We are in Mexico right now but our hearts are with you in Corvallis.

John and Sharon

John Vito and Sharon Bennett - November 24, 2020 at 04:16 PM



“ I met Bob at the noontime aqua aerobics Faculty Staff Fitness class held MWF in OSU's Women's Building pool. His genuine concern for all walks, his laughs and his great stories made me look forward to being the other guy in class. I especially enjoyed watching Bob dive headlong into the deep end, swim underwater for half the length of the pool and surface with a huge smile and foggy goggles. Everyone who swam in the WB pool knew how cold the water was and entered very slowly from the shallow end, not Bob.

David Cross

David Cross - November 24, 2020 at 02:37 PM



“ I was saddened to learn of Bob's passing. I went to sea with Bob on COEAS cruises many years ago and was always impressed with his professionalism and getting the job at hand done swiftly and correctly. I enjoyed Bob's wonderful smile upon seeing him in downtown Corvallis after retirement. My sincere condolences to Jane and all of Bob's family.

Pete Kalk (COEAS retired)

Pete Kalk - November 24, 2020 at 01:38 PM



“ Bob and Jane have been an inspiration to me and to so many others in oceanography. Our college at OSU is widely known as a collegial place to work, where an atmosphere of trust and appreciation prevails. I have always felt blessed by that, and I credit Bob and Jane's influence for a lot of it. I really appreciated the detailed obit; it was great to learn more about Bob's earlier life and other interests.
Bill Smyth

Bill Smyth - November 24, 2020 at 01:27 PM



“ Dear Jane and all of the family -- What a lovely, good man and what a sad loss for his family and his friends. May Bob rest in peace and may his memory continue to make our hearts smile.

Irma Canan

Irma Canan - November 24, 2020 at 01:07 PM



“ Jane, seeing you and Bob over the years, everywhere, around town, at Friends of Chamber Music last spring, was always a joy. I'm sorry you lost your dear partner not long after I saw you last. Please get in touch. Nina Lawrence

Nina Joy Lawrence - November 24, 2020 at 12:33 PM