

**Memories of RLJ**

**Compilation of emails from November 2009**

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Gilles Gauthier  
Roger Ruess  
Lars Ericson  
Marianne Douglas  
Evan Cooch  
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Kathy Martin  
Terry Carleton  
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**From Maarten Loonen <m.j.j.e.loonen@rug.nl>:**

In the mid seventies my mentor, Rudi Drent started to study geese on Schiermonnikoog and Spitsbergen. He was fascinated by energy expenditure in free living birds and discovered with his students unique opportunities to study energy intake in geese. Foraging behaviour and food intake could be measured in the field by detailed observations of bird and plants. We started to mark both geese and grass leaves with rings to follow their individual history.

For some years, they thought they were the only ones studying plant-animal interaction by measuring individual leaves of food plants. However, during a visit to a goose conference in Quebec in the early eighties, Rudi met a scientist doing similar detailed measurements and who was able to translate millimetres leaf elongation to feeding opportunities for birds. This other person was Bob Jefferies. Bob was studying the same detail but approached it from another perspective. Bob was the botanist, discussing nutrient dynamics in the soil, while Rudi was the ornithologist discussing nutrient dynamics in birds. These different perspectives developed into a stimulating scientific cooperation between the two.

I was the first person to benefit from this cooperation. As a guest of Fred Cooke I got the opportunity to study foraging behaviour of snow geese at La Pérouse Bay in 1985 and 1986. I was a young naïve master student trying to study geese and vegetation in detail. Though I stayed many days and nights on the grazing flats with the geese in Randy's tower, I met many people in the base camp which are still important colleagues in goose science today. Students were Dawn Bazely, Evan Cooch and David Hik. Supervisors were Rocky Rockwell and Bob Jefferies.

In the following years, the Snow Goose study at La Perouse Bay developed into the hottest study in plant-geese interactions. The first stories were showing how grazing geese were able to stimulate plant production and to enable the geese to harvest more food than would have been present without their grazing. Later stories showed how grubbing geese caused habitat destruction and changed the vegetated areas to a desert where a salty crust made vegetation recovery impossible.

During a sabbatical, Bob came to our study area in Schiermonnikoog and developed together with Jan Bakker and Rudi Drent new studies on plants and geese. In this system, studies focussed on interactions between Brent- and Barnacle Geese and the effect of cattle grazing and vegetation succession on goose feeding areas. Bobs presence as visiting professor grew into a highly appreciated tradition.

After my Canadian experience I had started my own project on Spitsbergen were I continued the studies started by Rudi Drent and Jouke Prop . The far reaching consequences of the increased goose numbers on the Hudon Bay lowlands allowed us to obtain a research grant, to study similar plant-geese interaction on the high arctic tundra of Spitsbergen. With an international European team, we tried to determine the chances for parallel detrimental effects of increased goose numbers on the vegetation. The project called FRAGILE, never brought Bob to our study sites but Bob always visited our annual workshops to discuss plans and progress. We mimicked overgrazing

and discovered grubbing geese in the ecosystem. Our study showed how the tundra changed under goose grazing. It had important consequences for goose utilisation but in contrary to the Hudson Bay story, the effects were reversible as soon as goose grazing stopped.

With his regular visits to the Netherlands Bob Jefferies has been able to support our science. His influence on our studies on plant goose interactions in Schiermonnikoog, Spitsbergen and Rusia are far bigger than visible in our scientific papers. Bob's personal interest and carefully formulated advice has been a constant valuable guidance. With great admiration for his scientific accomplishments and support, we will miss him deeply.

On behalf of many students and scientist in the Netherlands and Europe,  
Maarten Loonen

**From Gilles Gauthier <Gilles.Gauthier@bio.ulaval.ca>:**

I have known Bob for almost 30 years. We met at the first scientific meeting that I ever attended as a MSc student, the 4th arctic goose conference organized by Fred Cooke at Queen's university in 1980. Already at that time, I was impressed by the quality of his work and the one of his students.

Bob's work has been major source of inspiration for my own research. When I initiated my long-term research program on greater snow geese on Bylot Island in 1989, one of my first goals was to test some of the ideas that Bob had developed on the response of arctic plants to goose grazing. Thus, Bob has essentially set the path for a large portion of the research that I have conducted up there.

Bob was certainly one of the most competent researchers that I have ever seen. He was skilled in all aspects of the job. His writing was excellent and his editing skills truly outstanding (I can certainly testify of that since he has reviewed several of my papers over the years!). He was a remarkable lecturer and I have always enjoyed listening to his talks. His research was original and innovative, he was full of new ideas, and his approach was always rigorous and flawless. His breadth of knowledge was amazing and he seemed to always be on top of the literature. His sense of organization was dazzling; every time I contacted him, he was quick to reply and he never missed a deadline, even for dreadful tasks (such as writing up progress report for the IPY annual reporting!). I also admired his ability to develop collaborations with so many people, both in Canada and abroad, and to attract and supervise so many good graduate students.

When I first started to think about a project for the IPY program, Bob was on the top of my list among potential researchers that I was going to contact for collaborators. When I invited him to join our IPY project ArcitcWOLVES, he was immediately very enthusiast about it. My decision to invite him was one of the best moves that I made since Bob's contribution to our IPY project was colossal since the start. His ideas

were very influential in the planning and writing up of our original proposals. He actively participated to all the project meetings that we had, often leading discussions and at times bringing us back on course when things were getting off track. More than once, we all appreciated his wisdom (and his wit!). I often relied on his advice when some difficult decisions had to be made and I was never disappointed. He certainly deserves a good part of the credit for the success of our project thus far.

Above all, Bob was a true gentleman, always respectful of other's ideas. He was a very open person, generous of his time, whether you were a renowned researcher or a young graduate student. When you talked to him, you always felt at ease. He was a hard working person but who also took the time to appreciate the small pleasures of life, whether they were having good meal, finding a nice restaurant or ordering a great bottle of wine! I will keep a fond memory of him bringing me to small shops in downtown Toronto to find the freshest fruits or vegetables in town when I visited him.

He will be missed by all who knew him.

I look forward to seeing you in Toronto on Monday.

Gilles

**From Roger Ruess <rwruess@alaska.edu>:**

Thanks for allowing me to submit some thoughts about Bob – I was stunned and saddened to hear about his death – he was real scholar and an absolutely delightful person to be around.

I first met Bob when he gave a talk at Syracuse University, where I was a post-doc working with Sam McNaughton. We met up in a pub that evening and talked for several hours about grazing systems. I remember being struck by his keen insight into experimental designs linking plant ecophysiology, soil microbial processes and ecosystem function. Bob was not only passionate about his own work, but was genuinely interested in my ideas, and generously offered suggestions about my experiments. He invited me to come to LPB that summer to follow-up on my ammonia volatilization work in the Serengeti.

When we walked out to the subspath swards east of camp that first morning at LBP, David's experiments were a serious "oh my god" moment for me, and I fondly remember smiling with Bob over my excitement – he knew that I then realized the potential goose grazing systems offered to address questions of feedback dynamics. Geese have huge impacts on their environment, their growth is highly sensitive to changes they themselves impose on their food resources, and the life-history consequences of their grazing behavior can be quantified. That visit to LPB changed my career.

I'm sure you all have enough camp stories to fill an entire evening – so I don't need to offer up any. However, I hope someone mentions Bob's quiet, amused awareness of

all the interpersonal comings and goings – perhaps in special reference to tower stints. One memory I have is of Bob spending nights in the "lab" working on a manuscript – yellow legal pad, pencil, perfect penmanship and no cross-outs – wow, what a scholar!! I can do that now but not without Bill Gates and Endnote.

I visited Bob and David a number of times in Toronto over the following year as we worked on a manuscript - always enjoying Bob and Sue's warm hospitality (and their good coffee!) What a joy it was to work with Bob and David on data analysis and to discuss and develop the ideas we presented in that paper!

Ten or so years later, Bob visited Alaska, and came out to our house one night for dinner. It was wonderful to talk with him again about our various research projects – it was as if we had only parted company the week before. Its hard for me to adequately describe the unique blend of Bob's exceptional scientific talents and his tremendous personal character – but everyone who knew Bob understands what I'm trying to say and what a wonderful joy it was to be in his presence. I'm very fortunate to have had the opportunity, if only briefly, to have known and worked with him – he was a very special person.

cheers to all  
Roger

**From Lars Ericson <lars.ericson@emg.umu.se>:**

Dear David Hik

I have been informed that you will speak about Bob Jefferies scientific legacy early next week. I assume that you have been contacted by a broad number of colleagues all over the world all stressing his scientific achievements and importance not only for Arctic ecology, but for ecology in general and its important implications for society. Although he was well aware of that, I would like to add that Bob's generosity, humble attitude, open mind and curiosity made him a remarkable person. He showed a scientific honesty that is not too common. He will be missed by many colleagues all over the world.

Kind regards,

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**From Marianne Douglas <marianne.douglas@ualberta.ca>:**

I will definitely be at Bob's memorial. I will think about his scientific legacy more, but I think that you could say that his greater, overall perspectives and contributions to big reports such as IPCC (and ACIA?) are testimony to his breadth of knowledge. His contributions to courses such as the EAS234 Environmental Biology course (and the first year biology course) taught hundreds of students as to the value of ecosystem approach. How connected the different spheres of study were. It was not enough to be just a biologist. One needed to understand the geology, climate etc. And that, I think is a great contribution.

Marianne

**From Evan Cooch <evan.cooch@cornell.edu>:**

I first met Bob Jefferies in the summer of 1986 my first field season at La Perouse Bay. Bob wasn't 'in camp' when I arrived in late April that year, but I remember vividly the first time I heard his voice on the radio. Beyond the usual banter, and some discussions between Rockwell and Bob concerning the logistics of his arrival into camp, the most notable thing about the conversation was the amount of time Bob spent discussing (or, rather) reporting, on...the weather. All of us huddled together listening to the radio (I think it was slightly above freezing at the time, with a steady drizzle of rain) were somewhat bemused with the depth of detail in Bob's report - pointing out what seemed patently obvious to us in camp. The weather with lousy, with more of the same forecast.

It was only later that I realized that Bob's interest in the weather would extend far beyond a never-ending source of amusement to everyone in camp (probably even to Bob himself, for I suspect he knew we found great amusement in his 'gloom and doom' forecasts - the worse the forecast, the more Bob seemed to enjoy himself. The advent of the Internet, and the increased access Bob had to multiple weather forecasts and databases, only exacerbated things!). In fact, at the risk of a cheap analogy, Bob embodied that singularity in weather systems - that calm nexus point between change, chaos, and both the pleasures and annoyances of life in a remote Arctic field camp - Bob was the eye in the annual storm that was the field season at La Perouse Bay. With the motley crew collected annually around him - the goose biologists looking with disdain at the plant people who seemed warm and dry in the botany lab, the plant biologists agonizing over yet another tray of 'green stuff' to sort, dry, and weigh, watching with palpable envy while the goose biologists went out and 'had fun' in the field, all the personal dramas, the strong personalities, the successes, the failures, the small and large crises, Bob provided a moderating eye in the centre of the maelstrom - in some years, the only calm point, it seemed. He was a scientist, with dignity, and a focus that was not generally affected by the storm that frequently broke around him. He found comfort in ritual (you always knew the time because Bob would always appear at the moment the CBC would broadcast the news on the camp radio), which was not simply a quaint vestige of his more refined upbringing, but

rather a palliative which, as some of us grew older, and wiser, learned to recognize for the inclusive value it brought to our efforts. Bob was at once the calming influence - in camp, and in our science - he never lost sight of the science, the big picture, and not once can I recall him ever being anything other than a true gentleman and scholar.

It is, I suppose ironic, and perhaps entirely appropriate in some larger sense, that Bob's more recent contributions to our understanding of ecosystems in the Arctic were focussed broadly on the effects of climate change - weather, if you will. The ultimate 'weatherman' taking his place on the global stage. I count it as one of the privileges of my professional life that I had the chance to learn from Bob Jefferies. I choose the word 'learn' intentionally, since it makes explicit the intellectual debt I - and many - owe to Bob Jefferies. I shall think of Bob whenever I look at grass. I shall think of Bob whenever I have a 'spot of tea'. And I shall think of Bob whenever I hear a weather report.

Evan

**From Terry Callaghan <terry\_callaghan@btinternet.com>:**

Hi Dave,

Yes, I am happy to say I knew him. He was a gentleman and a good ecologist. He was very kind and constructive and extremely helpful. We last worked together when he was a review editor on the IPCC 2007 WG II report and we met in Cape Town. As always, it was good to meet. His greatest recent contribution to ecology was his group's work on snow geese and cascading ecological effects which I teach and cite often.

I do not know his wife Sue, but if you have chance, please pass on my condolences and let her know that I valued working with both the scientist and the man.

Best wishes,

Terry

**From Kathy Martin <kathy.martin@ubc.ca>:**

Hi Dave,

I guess the main things I remember about Bob is his demeanour and unfailing civility... He was a driven and truly excellent scientist but he always seemed to get to his objectives while really being very pleasant about it. That was a gift and a true role model for the scientific community, given how awfully obsessed many of us are. I often wondered if Sue had a lot influence on this?

Do you remember the naming issue for Nunavut awhile ago, where the people voted and for some considerable time, the top name on the list for the Territory was BOB? I think I was on sabbatical in Europe at the time. It was kind of amusing, but I was kind of favorably disposed to that name for the territory because it brought up memories of Bob Jeffries!!

Please give best wishes to Sue and the family from Pteam Ptarmi!!

Let me know how the event goes.

Kathy

**From Terry Carleton <terry.carleton@utoronto.ca>:**

Hi Dave,

Thanks for your e-mail and glad to learn that you will be coming to speak about Bob's life. I was a little disappointed at not being chosen to speak - I knew Bob since 1974 - but was gladdened by your message as a couple of my favourites might now get to be recited. Most of my contact with Bob was with joint teaching, especially in the field, although we did publish a few papers together in later years.

Soon after I started in the Botany Dept. (1977) I joined Tom Hutchinson and Bob in teaching the Grand Bend field trip, as part of the second year plant ecology course. This was a weekend away in September, studying sand dune vegetation/soil succession in the Pinery Provincial Park on Lake Huron. Rain was forecast but neither Tom nor Bob had come prepared for bad weather. So, as the rain started on the Saturday morning before we left for field work, each bought an el cheapo polythene rainsuit - in a becoming shade of mud brown - at the local variety store in Grand Bend. The rain grew progressively heavier as the day progressed, while we collected quadrat data. In addition, fierce winds swept in from the lake and the polythene suits didn't withstand the onslaught. Added to this was the grabbing and tearing by woody shrubs and small trees. At the end of the day I got to the shelter of the rented bus (a good old yellow cheesecan) ahead of Tom and Bob. I can remember watching Bob as he climbed aboard, wearing a huge smile and laughing at his own predicament. He was soaked and the tattered remains of the rain suit were hanging off of him in long brown strips. He reminded me of someone who had fallen into the sea along some stretch of rocky shoreline and had managed to crawl back onshore covered in strips of Laminaria seaweed . At that moment he showed the true mark of a dedicated sea-shore ecologist!

The arctic ecology course at NSC Churchill has left many memories but one that sticks in my mind was, toward the end of the course, when Bob was introducing the ballot system for deciding which students would go first in giving presentations from their mini research projects. Obviously, no student wanted to go first as they would have the least amount of time to prepare, hence the ballot system. Now Bob had been regarded by the students, up to that point, as the staid and gentlemanly senior professor who had kept the course on an even keel. However, in explaining the balloting, Bob likened it to the system used at the La Perouse Bay research camp in deciding who would empty the "shitter" (exact wording). Tongue in cheek, he reminded the students of his earlier lecture on periglacial phenomena. He then explained that the contents of the "shitter", an old oil drum, had to be broadcast out over the surface of the salt marsh, downstream of the camp, as they could not be buried in a permafrost zone and would never otherwise decompose. Those undergraduates not familiar with these more intimate aspects of arctic research camp life (that is, most) were clearly mortified at the prospect. Needless to say, however, they soon rallied and adopted a new expression for he, or she, who "draws the short straw".

The annual Christmas party was always a big event when the Botany Department occupied its original building on Queen's Park Circle. In addition to the party frequently being in fancy dress (transl. "costume party"), there was much creativity put into devising and performing "entertainments". One group, including Bob, Tom Hutchinson and Spencer, put on a spoof graduate oral exam in the format of a TV game show. Bob came on as the game show host (exam chair) dressed in a dark blue jacket covered in reflective sequins and a set of mannerisms poised somewhere between Ted Baxter (for those who can remember) and Bruce Forsyth (from over the pond - "I'm in charge!"). He presided over a session more reminiscent of the Mad Hatter's Tea Party than a graduate exam to the amusement of all.

That's probably enough for a selection, Dave.

By the way, I've not yet learned of a time and a place for the celebration. Do you know the details yet?

Cheers,  
Terry

**From Fred Cooke <f.cooke1@btopenworld.com>:**

Good to hear from you after so many years. Yes you've found the right email address. I've just sent a donation of \$1000 to Bird Studies Canada in memory of Bob, so your timing is most apposite.

So I'll try to answer your questions, although my memory is not what it was. Fortunately I have my diaries and have been checking some facts.

As you probably remember my own background was as a botanist so I had always been interested in the goose vegetation interactions. Dave Ealey in around 1972 did extensive vegetation transects across the salt marsh. I can't quite remember when I

first asked Martin Lewis, from York U. to join the team but it was around 1975. Martin was definitely in camp in 1976 and 1977 and I have a note in my diary in 1976 saying "some puccinellia on drier areas with considerable dead roots below -overgrazing?" (Actually it was probably the salination which Bob elucidated) Martin Lewis was leading the botanical investigations for a few years but he was increasingly becoming an alcoholic and became a problem in camp, even using our scientific alcohol. When it was clear that he could no longer cope (He left York U soon after and was said to be on skid row) he recommended to me a recent arrival to U of T from UEA called Bob Jefferies. I was most happy with his suggestion and so I asked Bob if he would come to LPB and check it out. I was delighted that he accepted my offer and came up to LPB to look around.

Martin and I taught an Arctic ecology course at CNSC in 1978. In that year too Bob first came into camp, but it coincided with my teaching the course in town and we only overlapped briefly on the esker. My diary of 14 July 1978 states "2 bears seen; a.m. back from LPB ...Arne \_\_\_\_ and Bob Jeffreys (sic) came to LPB." Fortunately Bob agreed to join our team as a result of that visit.

At first Bob was rather cautious about accepting our views of over-grazing, preferring to think of natural successional processes, but went on collecting data in his methodical way. Over time he came up with a much more complex set of factors affecting the salt marsh, and that is a story that I'm sure I don't need to explain to you. One thing I always remember during a typical LPB field season was that the goose biologists stayed the same size as when they entered the camp, whereas the botanists always put on weight due to their more sedentary life style, Bob being the only exception.

Bob was surely one of the world's leading ecologists along with Tony Sinclair and Rudi Drent in understanding animal - plant grazing interactions. His reliance on slow and carefully collected data and his cautious approach to new ideas has meant that his ideas were well backed by facts. Working with the La Perouse Goose team he and the rest of the team have provided a classical study of these interactions and allowed a major ecological disaster in an inaccessible part of the world to be brought to world-wide attention. Sadly finding the solutions has been even more elusive than elucidating the problem.

Fortunately, but by chance, I heard that Sue and Bob were visiting UEA last year and so I made arrangements for Sylvia and me to have lunch with them. It was a very pleasant occasion. As usual Sue was bubbly and Bob wasn't! I didn't realize it would be the last time I would see Bob.

Unfortunately because of the distance, we won't be able to come to the celebration. I did meet up with some of the goose biologists at the Duck meeting in Toronto this August but most of the key players were not there. Ken Abraham's father had just died so he pulled out at the last minute but I had a good talk with Ray Alisauskas.

Fred

**From: Alan Walker <[s8871454@unsw.edu.au](mailto:s8871454@unsw.edu.au)>**

Bob Jefferies and I met more than 40 years ago when we were colleagues in Biological Sciences at the new University of East Anglia and near neighbours in the village of Drayton. We had many contacts since, held together by the friendship and unstinting hospitality of Sue and Bob and importantly by Bob's long-held belief in the role of quantification in bringing ecology out of anecdote and narrative. It was an honour to be invited on several occasions to join him in aspects of this venture. We modelled the ecosystem as a web of nitrogen movements. Lately with the late Jack Dainty and with Kate Edwards we argued through the physical factors at play in the surprising flourishing and decline of microorganisms in seasonally frozen soil.

Both ventures showed Bob at his best, his care for his many students, his deep knowledge of landscapes and their mechanisms, his willingness to rethink things challenged, his capacity for hard work, his essential, consistent generosity. And his ability as a baker of bread. I'm glad to thank Kate for bringing the latest work to publication, and I join you in celebrating Bob's life as a scientist and as a great friend to so many.

From Alan Walker FAA,  
School of Physics,  
University of New South Wales,  
Sydney, Australia.

**From Diane Srivastava <[srivast@zoology.ubc.ca](mailto:srivast@zoology.ubc.ca)>:**

I think the main thing I'd like to say is that Bob taught me everything I know about being a supervisor. First, the importance of spending time in the field with your students. As a new Masters student I was amazed that this distinguished scientist was quite happy to be on his hands and knees in the mud helping me paint dots on grass and other obscure tasks. He treated my work with importance, so I ended up treating it with importance too. I now know a lot of other faculty essentially end up subcontracting out their research while the stay in the office writing grants; Bob showed me that there is another, better way to run a research group. Second, the importance of being respectfully interested in your students' lives. Bob always let us know that he cared about what was going on with us, without being intrusive. And in the fishbowl of camp life, Bob had good advice, to not get sucked into camp politics. There was good reason why we all called him "Uncle Bob". He will be missed by all of us, for his wry sense of humour, for that famous hesitation on the radio ("ah, Nester One, ah, um...this is Nester Two), all those adages, like "a change is as good as a rest", and his famous Yorkshire Pudding.

Hope this helps your speech, hope it isn't too late. If you end up writing down what you are going to say, I'd be very interested to read it.

Diane

**From Jennie McLaren <jmclaren@interchange.ubc.ca>:**

Bob has such a strong reputation with scientists around the world. His name and the fact that I've worked for him has opened a lot of doors for me. Both with other northern researchers, but also with a wide range of ecologists--I can't tell you how many times I've heard the phrase "Oh! You've worked with Bob Jefferies" while I've been looking for positions. Attending meetings for the past few years I've realized that Bob has had an impact on such a wide group of scientists, that having worked with (or collaborated with) Bob becomes a way to connect with people at meetings. At ESA we'll often end up with big gatherings of Bob's former students, even ones that didn't overlap in his lab. Especially when you're new to the big meetings it can be quite intimidating, but even if Bob himself wasn't there, if you had a Bob connection, you had a network of people at the meeting.

Bob created an environment for his students that encouraged exploration and discussion. One thing Bob taught me was to try and avoid tunnel vision around a hypothesis I might have come up with at the beginning of an experiment, and perhaps being open to different interpretations of data. He was great at sitting down with a graph and coming up with a story around it. I went to his office during my master's with my data and the statement "the experiment didn't work". I couldn't see any way to interpret the data, and was ready to just assume that I had done something wrong and drop the experiment. I left an hour later actually excited about the data set, with a plan to go north for a 3rd field season to specifically sample that experiment, and it ended up becoming a major part of my story.

He also instilled a love for the north in many of his students. After 1 season working in the north with Bob I was hooked, and just finished my 10th northern field season. Although he was realistic about some of the difficulties with working in the north, he helped his students get past those challenges and even see them as opportunities.

After Bob died I wrote Sue with one of my favourite stories about Bob from when I was a student, about how he broadened my education about more than just science. Bob often talked about going to the St. Lawrence Market on Saturday mornings. I started going with another student Nile, and we would tell him proudly that we were there before 8am on Saturday morning (to which he would respond that all the good stuff was gone by 6). He offered to take Nile and I one Saturday morning and show us "Bob's version of St. Lawrence Market". Picked us up at 7 (to let us sleep in), and took us through all the sections, telling us who to buy apples from in which month, where the reliable sushi grade fish would be, and even recommending a salt that he said would 'make everything taste better, even salad'. Although it's not a memory of Bob as a scientist, it's one of my favourites. As a supervisor, he really took an interest in his students and watched out for him, which is one of the reasons that they all loved him. And rather than the theories or specific techniques I learned from him, I think it's these types of lessons that are going to be the most influential on me as I start my own lab.

Jennie

**From Deb Wilson <WilsonD@landcareresearch.co.nz>:**

Bob was a very generous supervisor. The students in his lab were part of a team, and were never left to sink or swim. He expected students to help each other, and he pitched in himself too, cheerfully staying up late to help in the lab or get a thesis printed.

In my own dealings with students, remembering Bob's generosity and trying to emulate it, I realise how difficult it is to find the time to stay involved with the daily tasks and problems of students' research. But Bob loved to really 'do' the science: building fences, collecting goose dropping, mixing chemicals, and washing glassware. It was not his way to direct students to do the dirty work from an ivory tower.

He was also generous with authorship and that is something else I try to emulate.

Here in New Zealand, I often hear references to Bob's research, and I often tell people about it too. For example, grazing lawns are maintained by marsupials in Australia, and possibly by waterfowl and rabbits in New Zealand - Bob's research is directly relevant to these ecosystems.

When I think of Bob in the field, I think of his eyes lighting up with enthusiasm as he talks about an unusual plant, an approaching storm, a rock exfoliated by ice, or a much-needed afternoon cup of tea.

Hope some of these are helpful. Wish I could be there. Thanks for the family photo - the girls certainly are growing up! I must find one of me and Graham to send you... But am off this pm to join a student in the field, assessing predator presence on islands in a braided river bed. Rare enough that I get to do this these days.

Deb

**From Iris Zellmer <zellmer@pflanzenphys.uni-halle.de>:**

Dear David,

I know this is a late response, but I have been sick for 2 weeks now, finally getting better. It may be too late now for any input - anyhow.

There were only 2 scientists in my life who taught me the - in my opinion - right way to look at life - and this is meant in the scientific as well as the philosophic way: Bob and Herrmann Remmert, a German ecologist whom I did my masters with on the German side.

I met Bob in Woods Hole where I took a course in marine ecology and he was flown in with his family to teach arctic ecology in the course. It was his way of talking about the land and what is happening, never staying with facts but always drawing connections, showing dependencies and relationships. He always opened the sight to see the whole, not stay with the fraction.

Later, when he enabled me to come to LPB I did not know what I was going to work on

for the summer - and it was the research for my master thesis - I felt pretty nervous about this. Finally Bob sat down with me one day and explained to me what he wanted me to do. From that moment on he TRUSTED me that I could do this. For example he let me go off and look for my experimental plots and line them out by myself. To me this was such a proof of confidence in my skills which he did not really know by that time.

So the other outstanding characteristic of him in my opinion was that he trusted people to do a good job and gave them space. This was true in scientific regard. But it was also true in a personal respect. When I had this very close encounter with the polar bear (which you chased off), Bob called every day to ask how things were. He talked to you because I was not ready to talk to him yet, still much too upset. Then one day I answered the phone and I could hear from his voice how relieved and happy he was to hear me being back to the routine. But he has had the patience and wisdom to give me this time to get over it and calm down again.

He had a very good intuition about how people feel. That made him such a good moderator in critical situations or when people got into a fight. And he would not blame then people but try to work on a solution so that all sides could keep their face straight.

So, I learned from Bob to look into nature in webs, in cascades, in connections and relations. And I learned to hold back, let people space and how good it feels if somebody trusts you even if you are a beginner. This is an extremely powerful motivation to work - not to disappoint the person who trusts you.

And he taught me that relationships work best if both sides get enough space to live and go through whatever they need to - in accompanying them mentally, being there if needed, but not if not asked for.

He taught me that the low voice can be so much more effective than the loud one - and that it is heard very well.

In this sense - please give my very best to Susan.

Have a good week and I hope that you all will have a very happy time in memorial of Bob - this is what he would have wanted for you all, I am sure. Iris

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**From Larry Flanagan <larry.flanagan@uleth.ca>:**

It was very sad to hear of Bob's passing. I sent a note to Sue this summer and heard back from her a couple of weeks ago. Unfortunately I won't be able to travel to Toronto next week for the celebration of Bob's career and life.

It is unfortunate but I haven't even seen Bob since about 1994 when I gave a seminar in Toronto. Time does go by fast. I always had the greatest respect for Bob and his work (I highlight a number of the great new insights developed from his work at La Perouse Bay in my Ecosystem Ecology class). My biggest personal memory was about how generous he was to his graduate students - in terms of providing resources to support their work and in the many great dinner parties and other social activities (dinner and drinks in the pub) that he initiated and normally paid for. I have very fond memories of the discussion and arguments over dinner with Peter Kotanen, Sue etc about a variety of current topics. My research was so different than others working in his lab at the time - so I missed the field work in the arctic and other events that most of the other students experienced. Despite my different focus, Bob provided so much in terms of research support, access to equipment, and funding to travel to conferences - which allowed me to follow my own research interests. I certainly greatly benefited from this support and given his other main interests he didn't need to provide me with such support. I will be forever grateful.

Cheers and best wishes,

Larry

**From Linda J. Gormezano <ljgorm@amnh.org>:**

What I got from Dr. Bob...hmmmm....a patient eagerness to help, whether it was to help figure out a plant or explain a climate related issue. He wasn't pushy, but he obviously enjoyed the opportunity to help someone see the light. He also had a professional grace when dealing with or talking about people who obviously had no idea what they were talking about. He never needed to overtly trash anyone, just flash that knowing smile which screamed, "you are a bloody idiot". I really admired that.



Susan Jefferies &lt;scjefferies@gmail.com&gt;

**(no subject)**

2 messages

john stinchcombe &lt;john.stinchcombe@utoronto.ca&gt;

Sat, Nov 7, 2009 at 11:08 PM

To: scjefferies@gmail.com

Dear Sue:

While we haven't met, I've been meaning to write you for quite awhile. I'm one of Bob's colleagues at U of T, and wanted to write to share my memories of Bob, convey my condolences, and let you know how much Bob meant to me personally and professionally. I apologize for how long it's taken me to get in touch with you— I know the last several months must have been profoundly difficult. I was further saddened to be out of town earlier this summer during the gathering at your house to celebrate Bob's life.

Many of my memories of Bob are professional and work related, but I always found that my work and professional interactions with Bob always revealed the true nature of his character— his intelligence, how he was a true gentleman in every sense of the word, and his friendly and warm demeanor. I hope you don't mind if I share these with you, as they are at the core of my relationship with Bob.

My first memories of Bob date from time at Brown University, where I was a post-doctoral fellow. I remember Bob's seminar visit to Brown, and I also remember how highly the group of marine ecologists there thought of Bob— Mark Bertness, Jon Witman, and Johanna Schmitt on the faculty, and Brian Silliman and Andrew Altieri among the graduate students spoke of Bob in reverential terms.

I was fortunate enough to get an interview in the old Botany department, and one of my fondest memories of my interview was a dinner that Bob organized at Gamelle's. We went with a large group, Bob ordered the wine for the table, and Bob, Spencer Barrett, and I chatted for much of the evening at the end of the group. While I was clearly outside the job ad, Bob and I had a wonderful conversation for the evening. At the end of the night, people were ordering port, and I decided to order a scotch. I remember being secretly pleased when Bob murmured his approval of my choice.

Later, when I got my offer from U of T, Bob was incredibly helpful in suggesting potential neighborhoods in the city, noting places that would be fun to live with small children and big dogs, and counselling me on the wisdom of timing streetcar and subway commutes after the August vacation season was over. I found from my second visit that Bob had already started treating me as a member of the community.

Bob, as I am sure you know, was always so unfailingly polite and a gentleman. I remember at one point when we were heading for a coffee, and my cell phone rang. I answered it, and was arranging some child care issues with my wife when I noticed that I couldn't find Bob! It turned out that he had been intentionally lagging behind me several strides as we walked to give me some privacy for a phone call. I've always found this to be a small, but telling gesture of consideration and politeness that is rarely matched these days.

One of my happier moments at U of T actually happened while I was back at Brown. I was visiting old friends, and attending the celebration of the retirement of Doug Morse, the former chairman there. At this point, I had been at U of T for about a year or year and a half. I was chatting with Mark Bertness, and he said to me, "I've heard you're doing great at U of T from Bob, keep up the good work!" Much like Bob's approval of a drink I had ordered at Gamelle's, Bob's approval of how I was settling into U of T meant a great deal to me.

Many of my interactions with Bob were during our co-teaching of Bio 150, a course that as you know, Bob had a hand in designing and developing. During any of our team meetings, I remember Bob speaking passionately and forcefully about the need for us to accommodate second language students. We spent many sessions debating

the obligations we had to serve these students while not creating an environment that allowed or encouraged english speaking students to skip class! I know that as a group we treated Bob's opinions with great respect.

Many of my other interactions with Bob were along the lines of the small features and aspects of one's personality that you get to know after repeated interactions. These small details often add up to round out the portrait and image of a person you know and care about:

\* Professionally, in all my time at U of T, I very rarely saw a visitor come and give a talk involving nitrogen or phosphorous who could adequately answer a question of Bob's. While Bob's questions were unfailingly polite and civilly delivered, they often demonstrated a remarkable breadth of knowledge about topics and a depth of knowledge about some core issues that was rarely matched in the scientific community.

\* I frequently ran into Bob in the men's room of ESC, where he'd be brushing his teeth! For some odd reason, we would regularly encounter each other there, and frequently chat while Bob brushed his teeth.

\* Bob was very rarely not in ESC! I remember that everytime I locked myself out, I could count on Bob's office door being 2 inches ajar, as Bob was almost always in ESC! I still do a double take when I walk by his door and its not 2 inches ajar. I remember him frequently having a sly smile on his face when he saw students and post docs (and junior faculty?) in the building on the weekend or, better yet, on a holiday!

\* Bob's routine for a cup of coffee at Starbucks. The last day I saw Bob, he was just back from Arctic, and was trotting up the stairs of ESC with his ceramic mug in hand, just returning from Starbucks as I was departing for it. Bob and I frequently caught up after he returned from being away, but on this occasion, we were both busy and just passed each other in the stairwell. It was the last time I saw him.

I am sure that many of Bob's colleagues at the UofT can tell you how much the community of researchers, teachers, and scholars in ecology, evolution, and global change have lost with Bob's passing— and I can personally attest that the accolades about Bob's work and teaching are deserved and true. But more than the professional and scientific loss that we all feel, those of us who worked with Bob also feel a tremendous personal loss— of a great human being, a mentor, a friend, and colleague in every sense of the word.

I feel truly honored to have known Bob, to have worked and taught with Bob, and to have been his colleague and taught with him. Although we were separated by at least a generation (my parents are Bob's age), I considered him a friend.

Please let me know if there is anything, no matter how trivial, that I can do for you and your family.

Best,

John Stinchcombe

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Susan Jefferies <[scjefferies@gmail.com](mailto:scjefferies@gmail.com)>

Sun, Nov 8, 2009 at 7:24 AM

To: [westlarches@aol.com](mailto:westlarches@aol.com), Rachel Jefferies <[jefferiesrachel@hotmail.com](mailto:jefferiesrachel@hotmail.com)>, alison jefferies <[alisonjefferies@earthlink.net](mailto:alisonjefferies@earthlink.net)>

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## memories

2 messages

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**E.R.Chang <E.R.Chang@rug.nl>**

Fri, Nov 6, 2009 at 2:27 PM

To: s.c.jefferies@gmail.com

Dear Sue,

I am truly sorry for your loss. I am also sorry that it has taken so long for me to get in contact with you. I bought a card the day after that I heard about Bob's passing but it has stayed unopened in its plastic wrapping on my desk since then, like a heavy stone. I guess it has been very difficult for me to think of anything to say that might be of some comfort to you. I still find it difficult but I would like you to know that I have been thinking constantly about you and Bob during these last few months.

Bob was my true mentor and always an inspiration to me. I probably wouldn't have become an ecologist without my experiences with him at La Pérouse Bay. I feel that he had more enthusiasm and vigour at 58 than I had at 22, the first summer that I worked for him in the field. He taught me so many sundry things: how to walk in an estuary without tripping over stones or my own feet, how to bake bread under Spartan conditions, how to identify and quantify tiny grasses and sedges, how to build an enclosure to keep out hungry geese, how to look for the magic and wonder of the natural world. There are so many things that he was and could do that I still aspire to: how to combine genuine sincerity with a penetrating astuteness in human relations, how to maintain passion and drive in work while remaining an amazing person with a balanced life, how a curiosity in science also translates into a curiosity of how things work in the broader world. He was so exceptional, both as a scientist and as a human being.

I miss him deeply and I can only imagine how it is for you. Memories of him still hit me at the most random times as I go about my daily life. The way he would say, "Good God, woman," when he thought that I had made some naïve statement; the way he would make toast for high tea with marmite (he's the only one who's ever gotten me to eat that stuff), the way he would shake his fingers when he danced, the way he would type hunched over with 2 fingers at the computer, how animated he was the last time I saw you two in your spacious, warm house.

As Tanya said, I will be flying in from Kelowna on Saturday, Nov. 7th and will be returning to the Netherlands on Nov. 18th. I will see you for sure at the celebration of Bob's life and I hope that we can have some time to really talk.

Best regards,  
Esther

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**Susan Jefferies <scjefferies@gmail.com>**

Sat, Nov 7, 2009 at 7:34 AM

To: "E.R.Chang" &lt;E.R.Chang@rug.nl&gt;

Dear Esther, thank you for your beautiful letter....please do come to the house on the 8th at 6:30, almost everyone will be here, love, sue

[Quoted text hidden]

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Susan Jefferies, IAC  
Freelance Curator & Educator  
100 Walmer Rd.