

Robert G. Wetzel, in memoriam



Photo taken from RG Wetzel cv
published in the internet

Bob Wetzel died from cancer at his home on April 18, 2005, at the age of 68. It is hard to write about somebody admired and respected, both professionally and personally. Bob Wetzel has left a tremendous void in our hearts. The complete personality of this enthusiastic man, committed to excellence, was reflected in the many facets of science he touched in the near 30 books and 400+ publications, as well as in the wonderful paintings he created in his spare time (I was always intrigued how could he find spare hours), his select musical taste, or his love for flowers, wild blossoms included. Bob used to smile with his eyes as well. He was kind, although demanding. His lab was exemplar in the sense that it was very well equipped and there was always this productive atmosphere created by him, showing up often to help and see how things were going. His habit of calling meetings to discuss work to his home (with total connivance of Carol, his wife, who would prepare delightful brownies and “disappear” for the whole evening, allowing us to discuss for hours experimental designs or the latest papers on several ongoing research topics) was motivating and much more relaxing than if the meetings were held in the department. Extremely careful in preparing his talks in conferences or his classes, advising students and young colleagues and always helping in both their personal and scientific lives; when writing his masterpiece text book (“the book” for many of us) he was thoroughly looking for bibliography and concerned about citing young scientists having done good, sound work because this would help and encourage them. His permanent concern for helping young scientists full of value but scarce in resources is reflected by the request of his family: In lieu of flowers, friends and colleagues should make donations to the Robert G. Wetzel Memorial Fund, in care of SIL through Ms. Denise Johnson, SIL Administrative Assistant, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, School of Public Health, Department of Environmental Sciences & Engineering, CB # 7431, 124 Rosenau Hall, Chapel Hill, NC 27599-7431. Contributions are still being accepted.

Bob was always inspiring by example. It is hard to believe we will not meet him at the corner anymore, when attending professional meetings. Truly, he will never be gone; he will always be among us and very much present in our minds and words – he simply cannot leave!

*M. J. Boavida
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