



## IN MEMORIAM

Robert D. Raabe  
Professor Emeritus of Plant Pathology  
UC Berkeley  
1924-2013

Robert (Bob) Raabe received his BS and PhD degrees at the University of Wisconsin in plant sciences and plant pathology, respectively. After a one- year post- doctoral fellowship he joined the Department of Plant Pathology, Berkeley in 1952 as an instructor and Junior Plant Pathologist. He in time advanced to Full Professor. His record of public service and investigating plant diseases, especially on ornamentals, was extraordinary. He authored over 450 publications helpful to the public and horticultural industry. He gave thousands of lectures during his time and was a living legend to his diversified clientele and followers.

Bob was born in Waukesha, Wisconsin, on May 8, 1924 and died June 10, 2013 at the age of 89. He had a love for plants from boyhood. He spent several years in the Navy before entering the University of Wisconsin where he pursued his botanical interests. His career was devoted to applied research, teaching, and public outreach. He was tireless in serving the public and the ornamental industry that included such entities as nurseries, backyard gardeners, public parks, and garden clubs. Throughout his career, he received up to a dozen calls a day from his extensive clientele with questions about plants or to diagnose the cause for an atypical plant symptom. He was a premier diagnostician of plant diseases in California because of exceptionally wide experience with so many species of plants and their diseases. He was an associate of the UC Berkeley Botanical Garden and advisor for years. He also participated in the series of Master Gardener training videos.

His University teaching included the highly rated basic course on plant pathology that he taught for 37 years. He also designed and taught a course on urban gardening for 22 years that included a modern ecosystem approach as well as alternatives to the use of pesticides. In addition, Bob taught extensively in the Landscape Horticulture Program at Merritt College, Oakland.

Bob was well known for the hugely popular “Plant Disease Clinic” that he started at the Plant Pathology greenhouse in the 1980s and expanded at the Botanical Garden in about 1991. It continues to operate and is still held on the first Saturday of each month. It always attracted large numbers of amateur and professional gardeners who came to have him diagnose the cause of a sick plant and provide advice for cures. If it were outside his field of expertise, he would consult with others and then contact the interested person. Even after his retirement in 1994, he still wrote a quarterly column for the Botanical Garden. There was no one else in the state that had the background and experience to do all these different tasks. His importance to horticulture is exemplified by an article entitled “A Salute to Robert Raabe” in the 2006 issue of Pacific Horticulture a quarterly journal for which he wrote the highly popular “Laboratory Report” since 1989. He was not just a plant pathologist but also an all around plant expert and enthusiastic horticulturist.

A few quotes collected over the years exemplify his importance to the public garden clubs and the ornamental and horticultural industries: “Bob’s enthusiasm for plant pathology was infectious”. “He made learning about plant pathology FUN”; “He is a captivating speaker”. “He seems to communicate with plants”. “I learned so much listening to him online.” “I could never repay his generosity”. These commentaries and the great respect that so many different groups had for Bob were the result of his directing and applying research to solving disease problems in the field. He was always available to assist those in need.

Bob was a true renaissance man; few can match his versatility of talents and interests. He belonged to a folk dance group from 1954 to his death, including a short stint as a dance teacher. He also sang with many groups such as community choirs and the UC Monks Men’s Chorus. He was a dance performer and singer in various musical theatrical groups such as the San Francisco Lamplighters Music Theatre that specializes in light opera, particularly Gilbert and Sullivan, as well as the Piedmont Light Opera Theater and the California Revels. He also enjoyed singing with barbershop quartets. He delighted in playing Santa Claus at every opportunity and there were many.

His daughter Barbara MacLean, son- in- law Jim MacLean, and granddaughter Kaitlin survive Bob. He was preceded in death by his wife Phyllis and son Jeff.

Milton N. Schroth  
William Z. Lidicker  
Albert R. Weinhold