



Dr. Robert (Bob) Cassens

June 10, 1937 - December 26, 2024

Dr. Robert (Bob) Cassens, a distinguished Professor Emeritus at the University of Wisconsin, passed away peacefully at the age of 87 on December 26, 2024 in Chicago, Illinois. He was preceded in death by his wife of 52 years, Dessa Trautwein Cassens in 2013. Robert is survived by two children, Martha Elise Cassens of Chicago, Illinois, Martin Edward Cassens (Kristen Luoma Cassens) and one granddaughter Madelyn Grace Cassens of Girdwood, Alaska, and one brother Daniel Cassens (Victoria Cassens) of West Lafayette, Indiana.

Born on June 10, 1937, in Morrison, Illinois, Robert's formative years were spent on the family livestock and grain farm, where he developed a profound appreciation for agriculture and animal science. His parents, Ludwig "Mike" and Ethel Cassens, nurtured his innate curiosity and work ethic, encouraging him to pursue higher education and scientific exploration. Robert attended Dixon High School where he excelled in 4-H and Future Farmers of America (FFA) and participated in church baseball. During high school he met his wife, Dessa. He valued a sense of family throughout his life, often welcoming friends, and students into his home.

Robert's academic journey began at the University of Illinois, where he earned his Bachelor of Science in Animal Science. He then pursued advanced studies at the University of Wisconsin, obtaining both his M.S. and Ph.D. in Biochemistry/Muscle Biology.

Dr. Cassens had a distinguished career spanning four decades as a Professor

in the Department of Meat and Animal Science at the University of Wisconsin. He served as Department Chair from 1980 to 1985 and continued his contributions to the field as Professor Emeritus after retirement. His scholarly influence extended through additional appointments at renowned institutions, including the Marine Biological Laboratory in Woods Hole, MA; the CSIRO Division of Food Preservation in North Ryde, Australia; the Oregon Regional Primate Research Center; and the University of Connecticut. His work at these institutions further cemented his reputation as a world-renowned expert in muscle biology and meat science.

Robert published over 320 peer-reviewed scientific articles, edited three books, and authored two books. He supervised 25 Ph.D. candidates and 35 post doctorate fellows representing 17 countries. Dr. Cassens established a groundbreaking international research program to advance meat quality food safety, PSE, muscle biochemistry, Vitamin E and extensive work on nitrite cured meat which resulted in industry improvement and Impacted USDA regulatory decisions. His extraordinary contributions to the fields of muscle biology and meat science have left an enduring legacy in the academic and scientific communities worldwide.

Throughout his distinguished career, Dr. Cassens actively participated and held offices in numerous professional societies including the Institute of Food Technologists (IFT), the American Society of Animal Science (ASAS), the American Meat Science Association (AMSA), the International Congress of Meat Science and Technology (ICOMST), the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), and the American Meat Institute (AMI). He was inducted into the Wisconsin Meat Industry Hall of Fame and honored as a Fellow by several prestigious organizations, including IFT, ASAS, and AAAS. Dr. Cassens received numerous prestigious awards including the IFT Award for Research, Babcock-Hart Award, and the Nicholas Appert Award; the ASAS Award for Muscle Research; the AMSA Award for Meats Research, Signal Service Award, Meat Processing Award, R.C. Pollock Award, International Award, and the AMI Industry Achievement Award. The "Robert G. Cassens

Meat Science Award” (AMSA Mentor Recognition Award) was established in 2014 and honored Dr. Cassens’ notoriety as an international researcher and scholar who mentored generations of meat scientists in muscle biology and meat science research and education for the benefit of academia and industry.

These accolades recognized his exceptional contributions to science, education, and the meat industry. Those who worked with Robert Cassens considered it a special privilege. Bob Cassens went from a farm kid from Illinois to become an internationally recognized meat scientist.

Robert enjoyed attending church, gardening, antiquing, dancing, fishing, and hunting. He was an active member of GYRO, the Pelican Isle Yacht Club, and Pewter Collectors Club of America and Europe. Robert especially loved spending time with Dessa and their family. They delighted in traveling the world, visiting friends, researching genealogy records of family, farms, homes, and churches. After years of research, Robert authored books on his family history, *My Ostfriesian Ancestors in Whiteside County, Illinois*, and Dessa’s family history, *Elbridge Gerry Brewster And Edee Butterfield Keyes Brewster Letters: The Joys and Trials of a Pioneering Family from Maine to Illinois, 1820 to 1906*, and subsequently.

Funeral services will be held on January 6th, 2024, at 11:00 AM, with visitation starting prior to the service at Sugar Grove Church in Dixon, IL, with Pastor Anthony Windau officiating. Burial will follow in Palmyra Cemetery. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Salvation Army or Alzheimer’s Association.

Cemetery Details

Sugar Grove

352 Timbercreek Rd
Dixon, IL 61021

Previous Events

Visitation

JAN 6. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (CT)

Sugar Grove Church
352 Timbercreek Rd
Dixon, IL 61021

Service

JAN 6. 11:00 AM (CT)

Sugar Grove Church
352 Timbercreek Rd
Dixon, IL 61021

Tribute Wall

JS

“ *Joan S. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Dr. Robert (Bob) Cassens.*

Joan S. - February 14, 2025 at 05:05 PM

TH

“ *Dear Martha,*

So sorry to hear of your father passing, he will be missed, my apologies that I could not attend today.

Just reading the many nice memories really shows the measure of the great man, who was so much to so many people.

*Thinking of you and yours,
Tom Harris*

Thomas Harris - January 06, 2025 at 06:26 PM

AS

“ *Andrzej S. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Dr. Robert (Bob) Cassens.*

Andrzej S. - January 06, 2025 at 12:55 PM

AS

“ *Andrzej Sosnicki lit a candle in memory of Robert (Bob) Cassens*



Andrzej Sosnicki - January 06, 2025 at 12:52 PM

AS

“ *Dear Martha,
We just learned about the loss of your Father. Joanna and I are so very sorry for your loss. Bob was such a great human being, a fantastic scientist and one-of-the kind mentor and friend to us and to some many others over the years. Many people's live, including ours, would not be fulfilled without Bob's help and support.*

*Please accept our sincere condolences.
Andrzej & Joanna Sosnicki*

Andrzej Sosnicki - January 06, 2025 at 12:37 PM

BF

“ *Barisas families purchased the Simply Elegant S pathiphyllum for the family of Dr. Robert (Bob) Cassens.*



Barisas families - January 06, 2025 at 09:59 AM

BF

“ *Barisas families planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Dr. Robert (Bob) Cassens.*

Barisas families - January 06, 2025 at 09:59 AM

AM

“ Dear Martha,
I am very sorry for the loss of your dad. He was such a great mentor to me in my younger years.

My heartfelt sympathy

Andy Milkowski

Andrew Milkowski - January 05, 2025 at 03:59 PM

RD

“ Martha,
I am so sorry to hear that Bob passed away. He was my major professor and a remarkable mentor so I miss him very much. He had a great influence on my scientific and personal life as he encouraged me to do a postdoc with Prof Hamm in Germany. There I met my future wife Waltraud. She has also met Bob on several occasions and she joins me in sending condolences to you and your family.

*You have our heartfelt sympathy,
Ron and Waltraud Dalrymple*

Ronald Dalrymple - January 04, 2025 at 02:16 PM



“ Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Dr. Robert (Bob) Cassens.



January 04, 2025 at 01:23 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Dr. Robert (Bob) Cassens.

January 04, 2025 at 01:23 PM



“ Martha — my family and I are thinking of you and your family during this difficult time. My parents really enjoyed meeting your parents in Chicago.

Ann Treinen - January 04, 2025 at 09:38 AM



“ Love Kristy and Mike Radnik purchased the Serene Retreat for the family of Dr. Robert (Bob) Cassens.



Love Kristy and Mike Radnik - January 03, 2025 at 11:13 PM



“ Prem S. planted a grove of 3 [Memorial Trees](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Dr. Robert (Bob) Cassens.

Prem S. - January 03, 2025 at 05:39 PM



“ Tomeka Epps purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Dr. Robert (Bob) Cassens.



Tomeka Epps - January 03, 2025 at 02:47 PM

TE

“ Tomeka Epps planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Dr. Robert (Bob) Cassens.

Tomeka Epps - January 03, 2025 at 02:47 PM



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum* was purchased for the family of Dr. Robert (Bob) Cassens.



January 03, 2025 at 10:04 AM



“ *Lavender Reflections Spray* was purchased for the family of Dr. Robert (Bob) Cassens.



January 02, 2025 at 10:27 PM

VS

“ *Martha-*

I am so sorry to hear about the passing of your father. Sending you and your family my sincere condolences.

Vicki Saczynski - January 02, 2025 at 03:37 PM

JU

“ Dear Martha,
I was so sorry to hear about the passing of your father and so grateful that I had been able to go by with you and say "hello" in November.



I first met your Dad (and Mom) when you & I became friends at West High in Madison.

Our paths crossed in many ways; both our parents were professors at the University of Wisconsin, we took French together, and we spent countless hours working on musical productions. You in the pit creating the music, and me lighting and stage-managing. Your father always enjoyed the shows and had a lasting influence on your life in so many ways.

I'll always cherish the memory of your Dad busy coordinating in the background your 50th birthday celebration at his beautiful home in Florida. Such fun.

I know you and he shared many great moments together, from boating & catching BIG fish to traveling and antiques—he always seemed to be enjoying life to the fullest.

You took such good care of your dad over the past years, and I know this must be incredibly difficult and sad for you. Please know that my thoughts are with you during this challenging time.

With heartfelt sympathy,
Juliette

Juliette - January 02, 2025 at 12:57 PM



“ Country Basket Blooms was purchased for the family of Dr. Robert (Bob) Cassens.



January 02, 2025 at 11:01 AM

GB

“ Except for exchanges of Christmas cards, I haven't seen Bob or Dessa Cassens for over 50 years. During my short, on-year post-doc I was lucky to have Bob become my mentor. I found him to be a fine scientist, encouraging, kind and supportive in every way as I transitioned to an academic career, now 53 years at UC, Berkeley. Like many, I benefited tremendously for Bob's guidance and support. I am most thankful and grateful. I will miss him sincerely.

Gb,

George A. Brooks, Ph.D.

FAPS, FACSM, FECSS

Distinguished Professor

Department of Integrative Biology

University of California, Berkeley

FAPS, FACSM, FECSS

Docteur Honoris Causa

de l'Université Montpellier

George A. Brooks - January 02, 2025 at 10:36 AM

RS

“ Hello Martha, I was truly sorry to hearing of the passing of Bob. When I was a graduate student at Wisconsin in 1969 Bob was one of my major professors along with Ernie Briskey . I remember Bob as a true friend, extremely encouraging of my work and always ready for help and discussions. My true condolences to you and your family Ralph Sair,

Ralph Sair - January 01, 2025 at 12:53 PM

JH

“ Jerry H. purchased the Full Of Love Bouquet for the family of Dr. Robert (Bob) Cassens.



Jerry H. - January 01, 2025 at 09:59 AM

JH

“ Most of you remember Bob as a friend in his and your work activities but I remember Bob as a cousin at his Mom and Dads farm on Lost Nation Road. Remember the mischief Bob would do with his two dogs Buster and Butch (I think) . Remember one Sunday afternoon walking across road to cattle barn across the road. Bob saying “this dog will retrieve any thing I throw”. Well Bob threw a rock the size of his fist into the manure pile in the cattle yard. Sure enough dog took after it diving head first to retrieve the rock and brought it back! Also remember going to watch him playing softball at Dixon park in the church league. Was great times at Uncle Mikes and Aunt Dollys

jerry hinrichs - January 01, 2025 at 09:50 AM

GA

“ 3 files added to the album Robert (Bob)Cassens



Gene Allen - December 31, 2024 at 03:43 PM

GA

“ 3 files added to the album Robert Cassens



Gene Allen - December 31, 2024 at 11:33 AM

JC

“ *Dear Martha,
We were saddened to learn from Juliette of your father's passing. Our hearts go out to you and all your family. Your father will be remembered fondly and missed by so many. We will be thinking of you in Dixon, Illinois on January 6.*

In deepest sympathy,

David and Janet Caulkins

Janet & David Caulkins - December 31, 2024 at 11:30 AM

JS

“ *Joe and Annette Sebranek purchased the Country Basket Blooms for the family of Dr. Robert (Bob) Cassens.*



Joe and Annette Sebranek - December 31, 2024 at 10:41 AM

JS

“ Joe and Annette Sebranek planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Dr. Robert (Bob) Cassens.

Joe and Annette Sebranek - December 31, 2024 at 10:41 AM

BF

“ Bob was from an era where men were men - strong proactive and loved the Lord. What wonderful neighbors he and Dessa were. There were over 400 orchids re-planted in trees in our community, Bob and 2 other men were dedicated to their care and tending. Bobs knowledge along with the passion of the other two men they were like the three Amigos beautifying our surroundings. Bob was a man of honor and caring for the friends and environment he loved in his retirement years. He is absent from the body - but present with Christ as the Bible says of God's believers! So thankful to have known him - and shared part of his journey.\nBridgette Foster

Bridgette Foster - December 31, 2024 at 09:21 AM

HE

“ Dear Martha, my sincere condolences to you and your family on the loss of your father. While I have only met your father a few times in the 1980s in Madison, I remember how much you loved your father and how much you enjoyed fishing with your father. Wishing you and your family strength with dealing with the passing of your father. Love, Heiko

Heiko - December 31, 2024 at 08:32 AM

BO

“ Dear Martha,

Sally and I are very sad to hear this news. Having only had the pleasure to meet Bob once, he left a lasting impression. He was really an outstanding gentleman, father, friend and very welcoming to all that had the opportunity to meet him. He will be truly missed. We are thinking and praying for you and your family.

Bob & Sally Larkin

Bob - December 31, 2024 at 07:32 AM