

Willard Bancroft Robinson

April 19, 1918 — December 28, 1997

Dr. Willard B. “Robby” Robinson, 79, was Professor Emeritus, retired head of Cornell University’s Institute of Food Science, and retired head, Department of Food Science and Technology (1967-82), New York State Agricultural Experiment Station, Geneva. Robby served as head of the Department of Food Science and Technology for 15 years until his retirement in June 1982. He was appointed head of Cornell’s Institute of Food Science in 1975 that was established to help coordinate teaching, research, and extension activities in food science in Ithaca and Geneva.

Robby was an authority on New York State wines and wine making. He organized a Wine Industry Advisory Committee that served as a vehicle for the exchange of technical information between Cornell scientists and wineries. He also organized seminars and workshops for the benefit of the wineries. He helped organize and served as chairman, Eastern Section, American Society of Enologists, and in 1974, he was awarded the American Wine Society’s Annual Award of Merit. Robby served as co-chairman of the annual New York State Fair wine tasting competition from its inception in 1978 until his retirement from Cornell. His efforts also contributed towards the New York State legislature passing a bill that permitted establishment of small (farm) wineries.

Robby was also an authority on nutrition and food safety. He was a member of a number of committees of the National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences: the Food and Nutrition Board and served as chairman of the Committee on Food Chemicals Specifications, the Food Protection Committee and served as its secretary and a member of the subcommittees on food technology, artificial sweeteners, generally recognized as safe (GRAS) additives, and chemicals used in food processing. He was a member of the panel on saccharin of the Institute of Medicine of the National Research Council.

As a consultant to the U.S. Interdepartmental Committee on Nutrition for National Development, Robby served as food technologist for nutrition surveys in Colombia, Bolivia, and Honduras. He also served as a food technology consultant in Bolivia for the Pan American Health Organization and the World Health Organization. Perhaps, because of his extensive international travel, he felt comfortable appointing several foreign-born faculty in the Department of Food Science and Technology.

Dr. Robinson was born in State College, Pennsylvania, the son of the late Clair and Helen Bancroft Robinson. He joined Cornell in 1943 after receiving his B.S. degree from Pennsylvania State University, and his M.S. and Ph.D.

degrees from the University of Illinois. He was named Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, and Professor of Chemistry in 1944, 1951, and 1955, respectively.

Dr. Robinson was a gladiolus enthusiast since boyhood and developed the color classification system used by the North American Gladiolus Society. He served as chairman of the Phelps Democratic Committee and was a member of the school board of Phelps Central School District. At the United Church of Phelps and its predecessor, the United Presbyterian Church of Phelps, he was a member of the choir, and served as Presbyterian Sunday School superintendent and ruling elder.

He is survived by his wife, Alice; five children; nine grandchildren; two siblings; and several nieces and nephews.

D.F. Splittstoesser, G.S. Stoewsand, M. Anandha Rao