

Robert W. Kime, Cornell Food Scientist, Beekeeper and Outdoorsman, Dies

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By Linda McCandless

GENEVA, NY: Robert W. Kime, 56, died unexpectedly on May 27, at Strong Memorial Hospital in Rochester, NY. A dedicated food scientist, beekeeper and outdoorsman, Kime was committed to developing value-added products using the best that New York growers have to offer-honey, apple cider, vegetables, and fruit juices.

Kime was the operations manager of Cornell University's 10,000 sq. ft. Fruit and Vegetable Processing Pilot Plant at the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station in Geneva, NY. "His expertise was valuable to scientists across the Station and to individuals in the private sector who contracted to use the pilot plant," said associate director Robert Seem. "His knowledge of post harvest fruit and vegetable processing was well known." Kime helped many fruit and vegetable growers and entrepreneurs develop and refine value-added products, particularly mead, hard cider, and fruit wine.



Bob Kime

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Kime was an innovative thinker who shared in several patents at the Experiment Station. He and food scientist Cy Lee developed an ultrafiltration method for honey that improved the sensory quality of traditional mead. Ultrafiltration has helped create major new markets for honey producers all over the world. They also obtained a patent on the utilization of honey to clarify fruit juice in processing

"Bob got as excited about the products we were creating as we did," said Chris Stamp, one of the owners of Lakewood Vineyards, in Watkins Glen, NY, remembering Kime's role in the development of Mystic Mead, utilizing ultrafiltration technology. "We finished our first test batch at the Station exactly 10 years ago, and, since then, have sold thousands and thousands of gallons of this product."

More recently, Kime was helping hard cider producers develop better products. "Bob and the Experiment Station were instrumental in helping me launch my business," said Bill Barton, owner of Bellwether Cidery, in Ithaca, NY. "He helped in terms of the apple varieties to use, the basic formulation of the blends, and how to balance the residual sugar and acid levels. He made all the difference in turning what was only a fairly average hard cider into a very good one."

'Kimey', as many at the Station knew him, was also a beekeeper and the owner of Kime Farm Honey. In the spring, he provided hives of bees to pollinate fruit trees at the Station and other area orchards and was the man to call whenever a swarm of bees or wasps proved troublesome. Harvesting wasp venom was a sideline, as was applying bee stings to arthritis sufferers, and manufacturing Kime Skin Cream—a formulation of glycerine and beeswax he sold locally.

"Bob did so much for beekeepers," said entomologist Nick Calderone, who directs Cornell's Beekeeping Program in Ithaca, NY. "He was always coming up with new ways for the industry to use bee products."

Since his untimely death Monday, thousands of bees have been swarming on the side of the barn on the Loomis Farm at the Experiment Station. "They're swarming for Bob," said Station grape specialist, Martin Goffinet.

Kime was an avid outdoorsman and naturalist. Writing about Kime in the September 1998 issue of Harper's magazine, Susan Brind Morrow, a long-time family friend, called Bob "the best wing shot in western New York." She went on to recount how she and her father sometimes stopped by his house on a Sunday afternoon when some of his friends were shooting clay pigeons. "Bob would casually, mid-sentence, pick off the ones we all missed as they came down," she said.

In the 20 years she knew him, Morrow said, "He generously gave me a sense of his own work, the focus, and great patience, and real delight of immersing oneself in the particularities of nature. Bob was someone who was always thinking. To him to think was to see," she said.

Kime was born in Waterloo, NY, on March 24, 1946. He graduated from SUNY Morrisville in 1966, and received his B.S. in 1968 at the University of Georgia in Athens. First employed at the Station in 1968, he left in 1969 to return to the University of Georgia for graduate studies, and then came back to the Station in 1970 as a research technician. In 1979, he was promoted to research support specialist. In 1995, he was appointed operations manager of the food processing pilot plant.

Kime was first vice-president of the Empire Honey Producers, a member of the Finger Lakes Beekeeper Club, Ducks Unlimited and the National Wild Turkey Federation. Among his many awards, he was named Empire State Honey Producers' Association Beekeeper of the Year in 1990. His own cherry wine had won several accolades.

Flavor chemist Terry Acree, who had worked with Kime for almost 40 years, said, "He was

the most dedicated and helpful person I have ever met. Scores of students have been patiently trained by Bob with humor, respect and impeccable clarity about the use of the tools of food processing. He never said, 'I can help you in six weeks', but he often said 'I will get it ready this weekend for you to use on Monday.' "

With his students, Acree uses Kime to illustrate the importance of observation to a trained scientist. "A number of years ago Bob poured honey in his tea and it curdled. Since he was working for Bob LaBelle on apple juice clarification at the time, Kimey poured some honey into cloudy apple juice where it settled into a crystal clear product. That led to a patent," said Acree. "How many times have people seen what Bob saw in his tea and never made the connection?"

Kime is survived by his wife, Linda Horton Kime; his daughter, Colleen Kime, of Romulus, NY; his son, Shawn (Carrie) Kime, of Geneva, NY; his mother, Dorothy Kime, of Geneva; one sister, Sandra (Ted) Robie, of Rhode Island; three brothers, Edward (Barbara) Kime, Thomas (Karen) Kime, and Richard Kime, all of Geneva; and several aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews and cousins.

Memorial contributions may be made to Mercy Flight Central, Inc., 2420 Brickyard Rd., Canandaigua, NY 14424; or to the South Seneca Ambulance, 7100 N. Main, Ovid, NY, 14521.

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