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Robert Pool retires after distinguished career as viticulturist at Cornell

By Joe Ogrodnick

GENEVA, NY: Robert M. Pool, professor of viticulture in the department of horticultural sciences at the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station in Geneva, NY, has retired after serving on the Cornell University faculty for 31 years. Over the course of his distinguished career, Pool's research, extension work and teaching contributed significantly to the science and practice of viticulture, and positively influenced the wine and grape industries of New York State.

"Bob Pool has earned a highly regarded international reputation for his many contributions to viticulture," said Experiment Station director Tom Burr. "His work has been instrumental in expanding our knowledge of suitable rootstocks, scion varieties and clones as well as in the development of innovative vineyard management practices. The continuing success of the New York wine industry has been very positively impacted by the research that Bob has done throughout his career.

"Bob has conducted outstanding research, and also taught highly successful viticulture courses that are now part of Cornell's new undergraduate program in enology and viticulture," Burr went on to say. "Bob is known among the students as an effective and caring mentor."

Pool's primary research interests included: mechanization of pruning, crop level related to grape and wine quality, sustainable viticulture, vineyard floor management and weed control, cultural practices and rootstock effects on cold hardiness, interaction of disease (fungal, bacterial and viral), and vine productivity.

Pool was active in developing national grape germplasm repositories at Davis, California, and Geneva. He formed, and, for 10 years, chaired the Grape Commodity Advisory Committee to the National Plant Germplasm Committee. He served on the advisory committees of New York's regional grape extension specialists, and Cornell University's statewide fruit extension committee. He was an active participant in writing extension publications, organizing research tours and presentations, and training extension agents.

In July of 1997, Pool received the Cantarelli Prize for 1995-96 from the Italian Academy of Vine and Wine. The award was given in recognition of Pool's outstanding and original contributions to research in the mechanical regulation of crop load and fruit quality in grapes, as well as his impact on reducing production costs for the vine and wine industry.

"Bob always managed to balance industry needs with practical trials involving varieties and clones new to the region as well as other trials involving viticultural practices that could be easily implemented into area vineyards," said Dave Peterson, owner of Swedish Hill Winery. "His work on mechanical pruning and thinning

Pictures are linked to hi-res scans



Robert Pool

led to a more sustainable practice that had once been a method that appeared to be short termed and headed towards running a vineyard into the ground. His insight into practices that incorporated quality and economic reality were all-encompassing and led to solutions that helped industry survive and prosper in difficult times."

"Viticultural research has been a vital part of the New York grape industry's evolution, and Bob Pool has been a leading force in that area," said Jim Trezise, president of the New York Wine and Grape Foundation. "His projects have covered a very broad range of issues of importance to grape growers. The results of his research have been published in parts of the world well beyond New York."

Pool received his B.S. in enology in 1962 and his M.S. in food science in 1969, both from the University of California at Davis. He received his Ph.D. in pomology from Cornell University in 1974, and was hired by Cornell as an assistant professor of viticulture in 1974. He was named professor in 1988. Pool is a member of the American Society of Viticulture and Enology, International Society for Horticultural Science, and the American Society for Horticultural Sciences.

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