

Reported Death



**Robert E. "Dr. Bob" Gough
(1949–2011)**

How do you report the death of a good friend who was indeed a "Renaissance man"—who lived his life with gusto, dearly loved his wife, kids, and grandkids, and impacted the lives of countless individuals who he came in touch with through his lifelong passions for horticulture, writing, and teaching.

Dr. Bob died on Sept. 14, 2011, after valiantly battling cancer, an enemy that "gave no quarter" as Bob and I used to talk about it in military terms. It was a rough three-year struggle in which Bob never let up in his determination to defeat this enemy but it wasn't to be so. Military history, and especially Civil War history, was one of Bob's passions and we used to discuss numerous military campaigns and the colorful and sometimes controversial personnel involved in those actions over a bit of "light refreshment" at many an ASHS meeting.

Born in Wakefield, RI, in 1949, Bob attended the University of Rhode Island (URI), where he graduated with a BA in English in 1970. This is part of why I call him a Renaissance man! He graduated in just three years with five additional minors: psychology, agriculture, music, history, and Latin. Bob then enrolled in the master's program in the English department and completed all his coursework and a rough draft of his thesis, a translation of the Welsh chronicle of Nennius from medieval Latin to modern English.

If you ever talked to Bob for any length of time, you learned of his love for the spoken and written word. He loved the study of languages and took courses in Anglo Saxon and Middle English, as well as five years of classical Latin, so that he could read the ancient works in their original languages. He studied German, Spanish, and French and taught himself Old Norse so that he could read the *Islengdinga* and *Graenlendinga* sagas in Old Norse. Later he taught himself Italian and Welsh.

After reading these paragraphs, you would be sure Bob would end up at Harvard University in some room piled high with books and teaching medieval English literature. But this was not to be. Near the completion of his master's degree, Bob looked around and asked the question that many students do: "What do I do with a master's degree in English?" Bob then followed his heart and pursued a MS in agriculture, studying pomology. He obtained his first job as a county agent in Fairfax County, Virginia, in 1973. It was at this time that Bob married his first wife, Coralie Greene.

Bob returned to URI in 1974 to work on his PhD in the Department of Botany. His thesis was on the ontogeny of flower bud development in highbush blueberries. In 1976 Bob was appointed instructor in the Department of Plant Sciences. He received his PhD in 1977 and was appointed assistant professor. About this time he co-founded the Rhode Island Master Gardener program, which continues to this day, and remained an interest of Bob's throughout his career.

Dr. Bob became a tenured associate professor of horticulture in 1983. This is where he realized his lifelong passion for teaching. He served as Extension specialist of fruit and vegetables for Rhode Island and regional Extension specialist for highbush blueberries for New England. It was during this period that he realized that, politically, agriculture as he knew it was fading fast in Rhode Island and in New England in general and, as he would say, "they made a big mistake."

In 1988, the "Renaissance man" left URI and opened a hunting lodge in northern Maine. He became an outfitter and received his professional guide license in 1988, serving as vice-president of the Maine Professional Guides Association. At that time Maine's guide license-qualifying exam was the strictest in the United States, and Bob also helped a Wyoming delegation establish the criteria for that state's licensing exam, based upon Maine's standards.

In the off-season, he worked as journal editor, then senior editor, and finally assistant publisher for Haworth Press in Binghamton, NY. He also wrote articles on horticulture for many popular magazines, including *Country Journal*, *National Gardening*, *Harrowsmith*, and *Fine Gardening*.

Being a true Renaissance man, Dr. Bob tired of the lack of academic stimulation in the solitude of the Maine North Woods, and in 1996 sought and received an appointment with the Department of Plant and Soil Sciences at Montana State University, once more becoming an associate professor of horticulture and state Extension specialist. Bob's interest in Master Gardeners again surfaced with his founding of the Montana Master Gardener program. For all of his work he was promoted to professor of horticulture in 2001. From 1995 to 2005 Dr. Bob wrote weekly gardening columns for 40 newspa-

pers around Montana, South Dakota, and Wyoming, and was a regular panel member on PBS *Montana Ag Live*. He produced a daily radio program called *Dr. Bob's Northern Gardening Tips* and for two years hosted a local television gardening show. He also found time to teach several horticulture courses in the department. It was in 2001 that Bob's second wife, Patricia (Smith) passed away. In 2004 he married Cheryl Moore, who was his loving partner and co-author on his last book, *The Complete Guide to Saving Seeds*.

In 2005, Bob's wealth of teaching experience and excellent leadership qualities found him named associate dean for academic programs in the College of Agriculture at Montana State University and, sadly, it was to be his final academic position.

To say that Dr. Bob Gough loved to write would be an understatement for a man who published well over 500 Extension bulletins and pamphlets, more than 40 refereed scientific journal articles, and articles in numerous scientific proceedings. I knew Bob in his role as associate editor of the *Journal* and *HortScience* publications of ASHS from 1985 to 1989. He was also founding editor of the *Journal of Tree Fruit Production*, *Journal of Small Fruit Production*, and *Journal of Vegetable Crops Production* (now published by Taylor and Francis Co.) and from 1995 to 2002 he served as editor of the *Journal of the North American Colleges and Teachers of Agriculture*.

Dr. Bob was named a Fellow of ASHS and NACTA Teaching Fellow; he published more than 17 horticulture books. The last five books, including the one mentioned above, were co-authored with his wife, Cheryl, and most recently he was enjoying writing "Ask Dr. Bob" feature article for *Zone 4 Magazine*.

I personally will remember Dr. Bob Gough for his wit, charm, and seemingly endless knowledge about a multitude of subjects from literature, Civil War history, or horticulture subjects from A to Z. He was equally at home in small group settings, in front of a classroom full of energetic students, under the harsh lights of a television camera, in the pages of one of his many books, or in the quiet of the North Woods of Maine. His last book, *The Complete Guide to Saving Seeds*, for the home gardener, was recently highlighted on the Martha Stewart television show, which just proves that Dr. Bob lives on, and will continue to touch the lives of countless unnamed folks through his creative and energetic spirit.

Dr. Bob, you will be missed by your family, friends, and colleagues but we thank you for allowing us to share some of the ride of life with you.

You were indeed a Renaissance man!

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