



Robert Zall

December 6, 1925 – October 5, 2016

Robert (Bob) Zall was our rabbi of real life offering his wisdom in a most modest fashion. Bob received his education at the University of Massachusetts, and then at Cornell University. Born in Lowell, Massachusetts, he never lost his accent or his hometown roots. Bob was a self-effacing intellectual and always demonstrated the need to be grounded in real life. Coming relatively late to academia, Bob held leadership positions in the dairy industry in New York prior to joining the Cornell Department of Food Science in 1971. Bob was the Director of Research at Crowley Foods before joining the faculty as an associate professor. Bob taught and did research at Cornell for 25 years before retiring in 1992 and being appointed to emeritus status. During his years at Cornell he taught several courses in food processing, sanitation, and waste management, and was much respected and beloved by his students. He held several patents resulting from his work, and took two sabbatical leaves to do research in England and California, and was a visiting professor at Victorian College of Agriculture & Horticulture in Australia. He belonged to a number of professional societies and committees, and was well known and liked for his extension work with New York State stakeholders.

At Cornell, Bob was our constant reminder that the field of food science extends far beyond the research laboratory and the classroom. His expertise in dairy processing and waste management lent us a view of fields well before they were trendy. Bob was a scholar publishing extensively and providing leadership, authoring a number of books that helped to define the field. “Managing Food Industry Waste” was a practicum for the food industry and a resource to students fortunate to sit in his classroom.

Moreover, to a number of ‘junior’ faculty, Bob was our champion. He recognized the need for the field to evolve and expand beyond the traditional boundaries of food science. He was our

advocate, giving of himself and standing shoulder to shoulder with us to selflessly advance our careers. He was always generous with his time and genuinely interested in the work others were doing, no matter how removed from his own area of expertise. His genuine wit and unfailing good humor were always welcome in any gathering, and Bob knew instinctively how to defuse a tense discussion or enliven a dull one with a humorous remark.

In all phases of his professional life, Bob was a consummate family man: husband, father, grandfather and great grandfather. Through sixty-six years of marriage to Mollie he shared his wisdom and his humor with his family. Family was first with Bob and long after retirement he treasured family time at the Cayuga Lake cottage. He served his country as a medic in World War II, showing his compassion as he treated not only Allied soldiers but also German soldiers. He remained a patriot to the end, with his final wish to vote in the November 2016 election.

Long after his retirement in 1992, Bob was still one of our treasured wise old owls, sharing his thoughts when asked but never pressing his opinion. He will be missed as a colleague and a friend as we look to the future but remained respectfully grounded in our historic past.

Written by Carl Batt, John Brady and Joe Regenstein