David Robertshaw, emeritus professor in the College of Veterinary Medicine, was an accomplished physiologist, a dedicated teacher, and an able administrator. David enjoyed a long and successful career that carried him around the globe many times over. He died at age 85 and remained active and productive until shortly before his death. He is survived by his wife Margaret.

Born into a dairy farming family in Yorkshire, England, David was fortunate to be educated at the King Edward VI grammar school in Stafford, where he excelled academically. His agricultural background led David to the field of veterinary medicine, and he was admitted to the University of Glasgow to undertake that course of study. David graduated in 1957 with a bachelor’s degree in veterinary medicine and surgery and immediately began research in Glasgow in physiology as the first graduate student of the physician-scientist Sir James Black, who later was awarded the Nobel Prize for his work in developing beta blockers and histamine antagonists. It was during this period that David met and married his wife, Margaret MacRitchie, who was his constant companion in their peripatetic travels across the world.
Upon completion of his Ph.D. degree in 1963 David was invited to work at the East African Veterinary Research Organization in Kenya. There David developed a deep interest in thermoregulation and how animals adapt to hot climates. After a short stint back in the United Kingdom as a research scientist at the Hannah Research Institute at Ayr, Scotland, David’s experience in Africa led to another research opportunity in Kenya, this time with the Rockefeller Foundation, and later to the inaugural professorship of physiology at the newly formed University of Nairobi. Through contacts made in Africa, David was recruited to serve as Chair of Physiology at the Indiana University School of Medicine. Before long, he was induced to return to a veterinary medical environment as chair of the Physiology Department in the College of Veterinary Medicine at Colorado State University. Although David retained his love for desert animal physiology throughout his career, he also found great satisfaction in leadership positions in academia.

In 1985, Dr. Robert Phemister was appointed Dean of the College of Veterinary Medicine, joining Cornell from a similar position at Colorado State University. Dean Phemister convinced David to move once again, and in 1987 David and Margaret relocated to Ithaca, where David served as chair of the Department of Physiology in the Veterinary College, and head of the Section of Physiology in the Division of Biological Sciences. David and Margaret lived for a year on west campus where David was a resident faculty advisor in one of the freshman dormitories. David very much enjoyed that experience, and it encouraged him to devote more of his effort to undergraduate education.

After two terms and 10 years as department head, David returned to the ranks of the faculty, but soon he was drawn into academic leadership once again. David’s involvement on the Cornell committee that designed the curriculum for a new medical college in Qatar prompted him to seek further involvement with this new venture. David was appointed as the inaugural Associate Dean for Pre-medical Education at the Weill-Cornell Medical College in Doha. David and Margaret spent six memorable years in Qatar, where David made major contributions to the organization and implementation of the two-year pre-medical curriculum. He
particularly enjoyed the summer program that placed Qatari pre-
medical students in the laboratories of Cornell faculty for short-term
research experiences. Through his early experiences in Africa and
later-life work in the Middle East, David became a passionate
advocate for access to higher education for students from all
cultures. David developed strong relationships with his students that
he cultivated and cherished throughout his lifetime.

After his final retirement from Cornell, David was encouraged to
serve as a Fulbright Specialist, where he was assigned to a project in
Israel that tapped his expertise in medical education. Among many
honors he received during his career David was elected president of
the American Society of Veterinary Physiologists and
Pharmacologists (1985-86), and he received an Honorary Award for
Contributions to Physiology by the American Physiological Society
in 2002. In 2013, David was filmed for the American Physiological
Society’s Living History of Physiology series. That video recording
(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NQPLFA7nugo) captures
David’s enthusiasm for research and teaching in his own voice. It is
our hope that the video will be available for many years to come as
an inspiration to students of all levels and interests. David
Robertshaw is remembered as a gracious and thoughtful colleague.

*Written by Douglas F. Antczak, Richard E. Rawson, and Mark S.
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