Science Societies

In Memoriam

May 6, 2024



Robert John “Bob” Kremer

ASA Fellow and 51‑yr member, Robert John “Bob” Kremer, passed away on Mar. 1, 2024, at age 73. Dr. Kremer was the oldest of seven children raised on a diversified crop and livestock farm in Frankenstein, MO. He graduated from the University of Missouri (MU) in 1972 with a B.S. in Agronomy, after which he was drafted into the Army and served during the Vietnam War at the U.S. Army Biological Warfare Laboratory in Fort Detrick, MD. There, he met his wife Maureen (Mo) Brandon. Kremer returned to MU to complete his M.S. degree in Soil Science in 1975 under Dr. George H. Wagner. He went on to obtain a Ph.D. in Soil Microbiology from Mississippi State University in 1981.

In 1983, Kremer joined the USDA‑ARS where he served the Copping Systems and Water Quality Research Unit in Columbia, MO for 32 years. He retired from ARS in 2014 but remained active in research and teaching as Adjunct (Assistant—Full) Professor in the School of Natural Resources at MU. In that role, he enthusiastically taught several courses and contributed to more than 100 post‑graduate degrees. He supervised five postdocs, eight visiting scientists from around the world, and countless student interns.

Kremer was passionate about regenerative agriculture and the role of the soil microbiome in crop production and biological control of weeds. His 60+ invited presentations on the soil microbiome took him far and wide, and his innovative work resulted in 170 peer‑reviewed publications, two books, 27 book chapters, and 61 trade

articles.

Kremer was equally passionate about the students he worked with. Known as “Dr. Bob,” his welcoming personality fostered an inclusive environment where students thrived. He was a great colleague and mentor and will be missed by all who had the privilege to work with him.

M. Ali Tabatabai



M. Ali Tabatabai

SSSA and ASA Fellow M. Ali Tabatabai, a 58□ year member of each Society, passed away on Feb. 15, 2024. He was Professor Emeritus after a long career as a soil chemist/biochemist at Iowa State University. He was born the fourth of eight children on Feb. 25, 1934, to Abdul Hussein and Amina Sami Tabatabai in Karbala, Iraq where he grew up. Dr. Tabatabai studied Agricultural Sciences (B.S., 1958) at the Agricultural University of Abu Ghraib in Bagdad. He obtained his master’s degree from Oklahoma State University in 1960, and he was awarded his Ph.D. in 1965 in Soil Chemistry and Biochemistry from Iowa State University.

Throughout his long career at Iowa State University, Tabatabai developed numerous soil enzyme assays, many of which are used today for soil health assessments. He published numerous manuscripts and book chapters on soil chemistry, biochemistry, and nutrient cycling. According to Google Scholar, Tabatabai’s work has an *h*□index of 91 and >38,000 citations. He received a lifetime achievement award at the “Enzymes in the Environment” International Conference in Prague, Czech Republic, in 2003.

Tabatabai mentored many graduate students, visiting scholars, and post-doctoral scholars. He was a model scientist who demanded high quality work. His mentees include many who made successful careers in soil science and are current members of SSSA, ASA, and CSSA. It was a tradition for his mentees to gather at the ASA, CSSA and SSSA Annual Meeting for a meal of fellowship and reminiscing. In 2013, his graduate students highlighted his career and impact in soil enzymology at a symposium titled, "The History and Future of Soil Enzymology," at the Societies' Annual Meeting in Tampa, FL (https://bit.ly/43BySg1).

Tabatabai continued to be active after retirement. His legacy will be remembered by his students and colleagues, who honor his mentorship and pioneering role in soil science. The M. Ali Tabatabai Memorial Scholarship was created in his memory to support students at the Agronomy Department of Iowa State University: www.foundation.iastate.edu/Tabatabai. He is survived by his wife of 61 years, Dr. Louisa Tabatabai, three children, and nine grandchildren.

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