



Robert Cooper Byrne, Jr.

December 29, 1937 - February 10, 2024

Princeton - Robert Cooper Byrne Jr, 86, was born on December 29, 1937, in Northampton, Massachusetts. He peacefully resided in Princeton, Illinois until his passing on Saturday, February 10, 2024.

Bob was born in Northampton, MA to the late, Robert and Ethel (Redman) Byrne Sr., In his early life his personal experiences shaped him into the remarkable individual he became. His thirst for knowledge and desire to make a positive impact led him to pursue higher education. He married Pamela "Pam" on August 17, 1990.

He graduated from Smith Academy HS in 1955, followed by Mt. Hermon School in 1956. He then embarked on a journey of academic excellence, earning a Bachelor of Science degree from Union College in 1960. Bob's pursuit of knowledge continued as he obtained a Master of Arts in Science from the University of Connecticut 1967, followed by a Master of Science in Chemistry from the same university in 1970. His dedication to education was further exemplified by receiving three National Science Foundation grants to support his studies.

Bob's career was marked by his passion for teaching and his impact on the field of chemistry. He began his teaching journey as a high school chemistry teacher in Danielson, CT, where he dedicated four years from 1963 to 1967.

In 1970, he joined the faculty of Illinois Valley Community College, where he taught chemistry for 31 years until his retirement in 2001. During his tenure at IVCC, Bob initiated the Rivers Project, a groundbreaking endeavor that provided students with unique opportunities to explore and understand the importance of rivers in our ecosystem.

His professional achievements were widely recognized, highlighting his dedication to teaching excellence. In 1997, he received the prestigious Catalyst Award for his exceptional teaching skills and commitment to his students' success. Bob's contributions to the field of chemistry earned him the esteemed status of an emeritus member of the American Chemical Society, a testament to his long-standing commitment to the scientific community for over 50 years.

Bob had a passion for community service extended beyond the classroom. He actively served as a weather observer for the Community Collaborative Rain, Hail, and Snow Network since 2012, providing crucial data to enhance meteorological understanding. He also worked as a Co-op Observer for the National Weather Service, furthering his commitment to weather reporting. Bob was a dedicated member and served as the President of the Optimist Club, where he worked to make a positive difference in the lives of others. Additionally, he generously donated his time and resources to support the Hatfield Historical Society and the Dixon Waterfowl Refuge, demonstrating his commitment to preserving history and conserving natural habitats.

Beyond his professional and charitable endeavors, Bob had a zest for life and a wide range of interests. He found joy in skiing, biking, and fly fishing, relishing the beauty of the outdoors. A die-hard fan of the Red Sox, Bob dedicated countless hours supporting his favorite team. His green thumb was evident in his love for gardening, where he cultivated organic fruits and vegetables. Not only did he ensure his friends and family had access to fresh

produce, but he also participated in local fairs, winning numerous awards for his outstanding harvest. Additionally, Bob was renowned for his famous fudge recipe, cherished by friends and family across the United States and even in Australia. His sweet tooth went beyond his delicious home-made fudge...he loved all ice cream, Chocolate Ecstasy being his favorite. He was also a big fan of all sweets, especially M&M's.

Bob loved his dogs and their loving companionship was a two-way street. He thrived on fun competition, often playing games, cards and Wordle with his family and friends.

A private memorial service and burial will be at a later date in Hatfield, Massachusetts.

Bob is survived by his loving wife of 33 plus years, Pamela Byrne of Princeton, IL, his daughter, Roxy Cooper Lee. He will be deeply missed by his brothers, Richard Byrne, David Byrne, and William Byrne. Bob's memory will also be cherished by his grandchildren, Jackson Mayne Smeeton and Makenzie Cooper Smeeton.

Preceding Bob are his parents, Robert and Ethel Byrne.

In lieu of flowers memorials may be directed to the IVCC Foundation <https://www.ivcc.edu/givetoivcc/> designation of scholarships or campus beautification or the Bureau County Senior Center <https://www.bcseniorcenter.com/contact-us>

Online condolences may be directed to www.norbergfh.com

Arrangements by Norberg Memorial Home, Inc. & Monuments

Tribute Wall

RL

“ Sorry, to hear that Prof. Bob Byrne passed away. I remembered when he used to call the American Chemical Society Student Communities Office (formerly the ACS Student Affiliates Office) regarding his student membership and submitting his ACS Student Chapter Report. I really enjoyed assisting Bob whenever he called, he was a nice man. Thanks, Robin Lindsey (ACS)

Robin Lindsey - April 15, 2024 at 03:29 PM

GO

“ I attended Smith Academy but Bob Byrne graduated before me. He was six years older. I was friends with Billy and David. A wonderful family filled with achievers. All my best to his wife Patricia, his daughter, and his grandchildren, and his surviving brothers. Rest in peace Bob.

George Osley - February 24, 2024 at 11:31 AM

TG

“ I very much enjoyed getting to know Bob during my visits talking about weather, his family, and his garden. He was a dedicated NWS weather observer and was very accurate and timely taking his observations. My condolences to the family and he will be dearly missed.

-Tim Gross
Meteorologist - NWS Quad Cities

Tim Gross - February 22, 2024 at 11:14 AM

BH

“ I have such fond memories of Mr. Byrne as my Chemistry instructor and Chemistry lab leader. He was always so patient with his students and his passion for learning was contagious. Whether it was him helping us workers in the Chemistry lab or getting us ready to go to San Diego for the American Chemical Society Conference, he did so with great love and humor. Thank you Mr. Byrne for being such a positive person in so many lives! God bless you and may you rest in peace! Brenda (Beenenga) Hartman

Brenda (Beenenga) Hartman - February 18, 2024 at 06:47 PM

RK

“ Bob was a valuable colleague who devoted his time to his students, science, and nature. He was dedicated, professional, and just so pleasant to be around. Our campus--and the land and water around it--is much improved for his having been here. I miss him and his conversations.

Kim Radek-Hall

RADEK, KIM - February 13, 2024 at 12:25 PM

RG

“ Bob was a former Chemistry teacher of mine at IVCC. He later became a colleague when I was hired as a full-time faculty member and then was one of the faculty in the Natural Sciences division when I became the chair. Bob was a valued member of the chemistry department and did award winning work as the faculty advisor of the IVCC Chem Club student organization. He had great professional relationships with his students, both inside and outside of the classroom. Thank you for everything, Bob. Rest in peace.

Ron Groleau

Ron Groleau - February 13, 2024 at 10:42 AM

VK

“ Vickie K. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Robert Cooper Byrne, Jr..

Vickie K. - February 12, 2024 at 08:13 PM

MP

“ I enjoyed taking students of all ages on "river" testing excursions. Whether to the Little Vermilion River, the campus pond, or Mattheissen Park; Bob was always a mix of entertaining and educating.

Mike Phillips - February 12, 2024 at 05:16 PM