



Robert "Bob" Leslie Ross

May 29, 1928 - November 30, 2023

CEDAR FALLS – Robert Leslie Ross, 95, died on Thursday, November 30, 2023, at MercyOne Cedar Falls.

He was born on May 29, 1928, the son of Leslie O. and Margaret C. (Mitchell) Ross, and grew up in the wonderful town of Sidney, Iowa. He received his BA from Iowa State Teachers College in Cedar Falls and served in the Army during the Korean War. Following military service he taught Social Studies at high schools in Humeston, Algona, and Davenport, IA. He then earned his MA from Columbia University in New York and his PhD at Michigan State.

On August 31, 1957, he was united in marriage to Mary Ellen Sawyer in Hawarden, IA. He was a professor in political science at the University of Northern Iowa from 1962 until his retirement and was Head of the Political Science Dept. for many years. Locally he was an active supporter of the Democratic party, serving terms on Black Hawk Co. Democratic Central Committee and

IA Democratic State Central Committee.

He co-founded the Waterloo Sharks swimming program and enthusiastically supported the swimming achievements of his children. He was a lifelong member of Presbyterian and Methodist churches. He served for a time on the City of Waterloo Human Rights Commission and in 2004 received the Human Rights Commissioner Award. He co-founded the Sidney IA Music Endowment Committee of Sidney Alumni and Friends, Inc. He had lifelong interests in politics, music, history, religion, and sports.

Bob is survived by children, Rebecca Ross of Gaithersburg, MD, Brian (Jean Coleman) Ross of Duluth, MN, David (Michelle) Ross of Des Moines, Teri (Mike Stewart) Ross of Naperville, IL, and Dan (Erica) Ross of Golden, CO; and 10 grandchildren.

He was preceded in death by his wife, Mary; two sisters, Betty Roberts and Mary Ellen Greedy; and son-in-law, William Mitchell.

A Memorial Service will be held at St. Tim's Methodist Church, 3220 Terrace Dr., Cedar Falls, IA on January 15 at 1pm with visitation at noon.

In lieu of flowers, memorials may be directed to Illinois Legal Aid Online, Chicago, IL, St. Tim's Methodist Church, Cedar Falls, IA, or Fremont County Historical Society,

Sidney, IA.

Previous Events

Visitation

JAN 15. 12:00 PM (CT)

St. Timothys United Methodist Church
3220 Terrace Drive
Cedar Falls, IA 50613
(319) 266-0464
<http://sttims-umc.org>

Family Directed Memorial Service

JAN 15. 1:00 PM (CT)

St. Timothys United Methodist Church
3220 Terrace Drive
Cedar Falls, IA 50613
(319) 266-0464
<http://sttims-umc.org>

Tribute Wall

JD

“ *Dr. Ross was a good man and a great teacher.*

I majored in political science at UNI. Dr. Ross was my advisor. I recall vividly when I visited his office one afternoon in October 1973. I asked for his advice about what I might do after I graduated. He said: "Have you ever thought of the Foreign Service?" I'd never heard of it.

Eleven months later I was in Washington, DC being sworn in as a Foreign Service Officer. Thirty-eight years later I retired from the Foreign Service. It was a wonderful career and all due to the eight words Dr. Ross said that afternoon.

I'm honored that we remained in touch through the years.

*John Dinger
United States Ambassador, Retired*

John Dinger - December 05, 2023 at 05:05 PM

DR

Thank you, John! Dad greatly valued your friendship.

David Ross - January 06, 2024 at 04:33 PM

JE

I was very sad that I missed attending Bob's service in Cedar Falls yesterday. An unreliable car battery and a snowed in driveway worked against me.

I first met "Dr. Ross" in the Fall semester of 1974, at a Political Science department "meet and greet" event in the Maucker Union. We talked about a major in Poli Sci. I appreciated his warm and friendly approach, and his willingness to answer my questions I left the event planning to complete the paperwork and become an official major.

I enrolled in every course Bob ever taught at UNI. He was a great blend of a knowledgeable and rigorous professor leavened with warmness and decency. It didn't take long for me to admire and like Bob! And yes, my favorite UNI professor!

Bob and I continued to keep in touch long after my years at UNI were over. Out of habit and respect, I always called Bob "Dr. Ross." At one of our "get togethers" once at the Maucker Union over coffee and chatter, Bob told me he thought it was time I used his first name. "We know each other pretty well," I recall him saying. And so it began (although it was not always easy) and I started using "Bob."

I eventually went to graduate school (M.A. and Ph.D) with Bob's encouragement and support. Bob was instrumental in a Merchant Scholarship I received from UNI to support my graduate school education. When I needed to find a topic for my M.A. Thesis at South Carolina, a Christmas holiday visit with Bob came with his suggestion of a project on a influential interparty group (The Iowa Democratic Conference) that played an important role in Iowa Democratic Party politics in the 1960-70s. It was an interesting project, I always looked forward to my talks with Bob as my research and writing came together.

For my Dissertation ("Partisanship in the Iowa Legislature"), Bob was always available for chats and suggestions about my research. I recall him fondly telling me often "Jon, you need to have a theoretical structure to rely on," and he was always right. "Theory matters" is a lesson from Bob I have never forgotten.

I lost track of all the meetings Bob and I had over the years since I left UNI and became a full-time political science professor. Rarely did a week go by that I did not think (or employ) the many lessons learned from the presence of Bob in my personal and professional life.

In recent years, Bob was very interested in my current project (a book on the seminal 1965 session of the Iowa General Assembly), offering

his own ideas and personal recollections of this exciting and important time in Iowa history. At one of our meetings at his cozy home (Shooting Star Way in Cedar Falls), I turned the tables on Bob and got him to agree to an interview about his life. Generous, warm, revealing, and very interesting!

I count as nothing but a blessing--and with much joy, my years of friendship with Bob Ross. I will always be grateful for our time together and the key role he played in my education, strong interest in politics and government, and my life. I will miss Bob dearly and always admire how he seamlessly he blended family, religion, friends, basic decency, and of course, political science into his life and his influence on mine. Thank you Bob for your friendship, never-ending interest in your students, and making the world we live in a better place.

*Jon Euchner
Des Moines, IA
B.A. Political Science, UNI (1977)*

Jon Euchner - January 16, 2024 at 09:55 AM

PA

“ *When I first arrived Waterloo in 1986 to teach at the University of Northern Iowa, Bob Ross picked me up from the Greyhound Bus Terminal and took me to his house to meet the rest of his lovely family. I stayed with Bob and his charming wife, Mary, until I found an apartment in Cedar Falls. Their house was a charming and lovely home. I particularly enjoyed the Sunday evening family tradition of eating popcorns. I have fond memories of Bob and Mary. Both Bob and Mary are greatly missed.*

*Pita Ogaba Agbese
Political Science Department,
University of Northern Iowa*

Pita Ogaba Agbese - December 03, 2023 at 09:48 PM

DR

Thank you, Pita. The popcorn tradition lives on!

David Ross - January 06, 2024 at 04:55 PM

LH

Both Dan and I remember and celebrate the life of Dr. Robert Ross. It seems fitting that the day chosen for this remembrance was also Iowa Presidential Caucus Day.

Dr. Ross was an instructor for both of us we each pursued our studies at UNI. He was the Department Head when Dan was a Political Science student there, and I think he was amused to find Dan categorizing "middle age" as beginning at 30 ;-). Linda was pursuing a teaching degree in Biology, and was required to take an American Government course, which Dr. Ross was teaching that semester. She found his class so interesting and engaging that she changed from pass/fail to grade, attended each class, and spent the time required to earn the grade that would positively impact her grade point average.

Dan's father, Harlan Holm, was a fellow student with Robert Ross during their undergraduate days at Iowa State Teachers College. Harlan had served in World War II, and was several years older than Bob, but they had a friendship they built during those days at ISTC that both would speak about.

Bob became a neighbor when we bought our house on Ellen Street. Harlan would ask about Bob when we would visit him in Des Moines, and Bob would ask about Harlan when he would walk his dog past our house. We would look forward to the chance of seeing him while we were outside working in our yard.

Linda Holm - January 16, 2024 at 09:08 AM

 Bill
Trabert

my favorite teacher at uni. his class literature of the modern presidency was a round table and somehow i was let into the class. if it were not for dr ross i would have never graduated. i remember he would always be in the library studying. classy guy

Bill Trabert - September 06, 2025 at 12:01 AM