



## Rev. Dr. Robert "Bob" Tollefson

April 6, 1927 - September 6, 2018

Rev. Dr. Robert "Bob" Tollefson, age 91, of Storm Lake, Iowa died on Thursday, September 6, 2018 at Methodist Manor Retirement Community in Storm Lake.

A Celebration of Life Service will be held on Monday, September 17, 2018 at 11:00 a.m. at the Schaller Memorial Chapel on the campus of Buena Vista University in Storm Lake, Iowa.

Robert John Tollefson was born on April 6, 1927 in Grantsburg, WI to Herbert and Karn Tollefson. He died on September 6, 2018 at the age of 91. Raised in Cloverton, MN, he graduated from high school in 1944. He served in the US Navy from 1945-46 and was in the Naval Reserves through 1956. Robert had degrees from Michigan Tech in Electrical Engineering, a Bachelor of Divinity and Master of Theology degrees from Princeton Seminary, and a PhD from the University of Iowa. Ordained in 1955 as a Minister in the Presbyterian Church, he first served small parishes, then worked on his doctorate in 17th Century British Thought with a minor in History, in order to teach.

Bob married Barbara Jean Phillips on August 29, 1950. He is preceded in death by his wife Barbara in 2009, his parents, his sister Rose and his nephew Larry Peterson. He is survived by his children: Rebecca Tollefson, Columbus, OH; Elizabeth Goudschaal (Roger) Tripoli, IA; Priscilla Robinson

(Dan) Storm Lake, IA; and Jeff Tollefson (Kristie) Alta, IA; grandchildren: Sara (Terry) Blessing, Grant Goudschaal, Alan Robinson and Dustin Robinson; 3 great-granddaughters – Aria, Edith and Ada; and nieces Karen Erickson and Quinita Kase. Family stretched beyond the biological bonds to embrace step-children, a former foster daughter, her daughter and granddaughter.

His walk with God began in the Navy. A sailor noticed a Gideon New Testament in his pocket and invited him to join a Bible study. Bible study, memorizing scripture, Navigators, Youth for Christ and seminary grounded him in his love of Jesus.

Robert taught religion and philosophy at Buena Vista (College) from 1960-1992 and then retired as professor emeritus of religion and philosophy. Upon his retirement, his children, the community of Buena Vista University, Prospect Hill Presbytery and many friends established a Tollefson Reformed Lecture Series. Many outstanding scholars participated through many years. A year sabbatical in the late 1970's took him, Barbara, Priscilla and Jeff to Cambridge, England where he was a visiting scholar. With retirement, he and Barbara then had the opportunity to serve at Sheldon Jackson College, Sitka, Alaska, for 5 academic years. Bob was a visiting scholar and Barbara worked in the library.

Bob was active in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) at all levels. In the Storm Lake community he was a hospital trustee, BV County Peace Network, local area Arts Council, Advisory Council on Environmental Concerns, local public schools Citizens Advisory Council and Curriculum Committee, and Kiwanis – as a local and regional officer and member of international committees. He was a member of the American Academy of Religion; American Society of Church History; Society for the History of Technology; the Institute of Society, Ethics and the Life Sciences; Humanities and Technological Association; and National Association for Science, Technology, and Society. He was listed as

an outstanding educator, was the recipient of several other professional honors and awards, wrote reviews of books and articles and was a prolific reader. The Order of Cumberland and Tollefson was established in 1994 in honor of these two professors, who taught at BV for over 30 years and during tenures of three presidents. The recognition goes to professors with exceptional service to the University.

Bob yearned for a world at peace, respect and acceptance of all people. He loved to garden. He developed a deep concern for the social and environmental problems of the global village. He had an uncanny ability to prick the tranquility of undisturbed souls. He was committed to excellence, to the development of the whole person, discuss Biblical materials and awaken in students a sense of feeling and better understanding of the global village.

In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to the Robert Tollefson Memorial Fund and sent to 510 Angier Drive, Storm Lake, Iowa 50588. The Tollefson family wishes to thank you for your support and love.

# Tribute Wall



“ *Fratzke & Jensen Funeral Home created a Tribute Video in memory of Rev. Dr. Robert "Bob" Tollefson*



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**Fratzke & Jensen Funeral Home** - September 14, 2018 at 11:58 AM

PA

“ *What a wonderful man! He spent time with my son, Nick while participating in Kiwanis and attended all their meetings. He was so pleasant to talk with! I am sure his family will deeply miss him. With our deepest sympathy. May God bring you all peace...*

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**Pat Allen** - September 18, 2018 at 10:52 AM

FM

“ *Susan and I are very sorry about Bob's passing. He was a stimulating conversationalist and a life-long learner. We shared a love for BVU basketball with Bob and Barb. It is most fitting that The Order of Cumberland and Tollefson is named for Bob and his long-time colleague Bill Cumberland.*

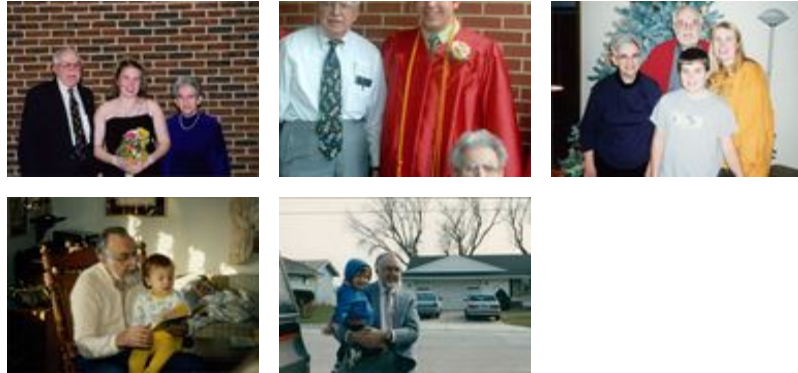
*Fred Moore  
Delray Beach, FL*

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**Fred Moore** - September 17, 2018 at 03:51 AM



“ 190 files added to the album *LifeTributes*



Fratzke & Jensen Funeral Home - September 14, 2018 at 10:49 AM

CC

*It seems there's very few words that anyone can say that will ease the loss of your father. We know how he meant to you and all of your family, and also to all that knew him. We understand the sorrow you bear and pray for you and all of yours to find a bit of peace and comfort. With deepest sympathies,  
Christine & Curt Carlson*

Christine Carlson - September 17, 2018 at 12:21 PM



“ 2 files added to the album *Memories Album*



Fratzke & Jensen Funeral Home - September 14, 2018 at 10:01 AM

SA

“ So sorry to hear of Bob’s passing. Our thoughts and prayers go out to the Tollefson Family 🙏



Skoog and Barb Anderson - September 11, 2018 at 08:22 AM

RS

“ Lite a candle in memory of Robert Tollefson and Faimly Robin Stephan



ROBIN STEPHAN - September 10, 2018 at 07:55 PM

SA

“ It is with great sadness to learn of Bob's death. We have such wonderful memories of of him. All the years at Buena Vista ,and many social gatherings with Barb and him. Our deepest condolences to his family who we love very much. With deepest sympathy,  
Manoocher and Sherry Aryanpur

Sherry Aryanpur - September 09, 2018 at 03:59 PM

LP

“ Larry And Jo Ann Pyle lit a candle in memory of Rev. Dr. Robert "Bob" Tollefson



Larry and Jo Ann Pyle - September 07, 2018 at 08:34 PM

JC

“ *Jeff And Jean Chindlund lit a candle in memory of Rev. Dr. Robert "Bob" Tollefson*



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**Jeff and Jean Chindlund** - September 07, 2018 at 07:30 PM

AA

“ *Angie Andrade lit a candle in memory of Rev. Dr. Robert "Bob" Tollefson*



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**Angie Andrade** - September 06, 2018 at 10:42 PM

JD

“ *John And Connie (Swenson) Demers lit a candle in memory of Rev. Dr. Robert "Bob" Tollefson*



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**John and Connie (Swenson) Demers** - September 06, 2018 at 09:49 PM

PG

“ A CANDLE HAS BEEN LIT IN MEMORY OF DR. BOB TOLLEFSON. LEARNED OF HIS PASSING WHEN I VISITED MM TODAY. WE KNEW HIS SON JEFF, BUT KNEW OF HIS PARENTS TOO. OUR SYMPATHY & PRAYERS TO THE FAMILY. RIP DR. BOB.

LOVE, LARY & PATTY GUNVILLE  
STORM LAKE, IOWA

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PATTY GUNVILLE - September 06, 2018 at 06:50 PM

DL

“ It was with great sadness that I learned today of Bob Tollefson's death. I knew Bob since I was ten years old. First, as a family friend, when we visited the Tollefson's to see "Bonanza" on a color TV, and later as a pastor, college professor, co-worker at Thompson and Laird, and then as a personal friend. Bob would not want me to write this but if the Presbyterian Church has a process to nominate persons for sainthood there is no doubt in my mind that he qualifies for first ballot election.

There is a recent book called "The Road to Character" by David Brooks which makes a distinction between "resume virtues" and "eulogy virtues." The point is that the former have value but are limited to job markets, bank accounts and material things. While the latter -- the "eulogy virtues" -- are what give a life true meaning and impact. Those virtues arise out of kindness, empathy, honesty, loyalty and a willingness to actually do things that make a difference for people on the other side of the planet and the person that needs help down the block. From my perspective, I know of no one who better exemplified in words and deeds all of the "eulogy virtues" than Bob Tollefson. I know of his many acts of kindness toward my mother in her declining years. He was someone that always was ready to lend aid when it was needed. Space does not allow me to list all the times he provided assistance to so many people including the many times he helped my parents. In all his interactions he demonstrated patience and grace. I can't imagine a better role model to try to fix our troubled times of sharp attacks, the unwillingness to listen and a general lack of civility.

The world was a much better place because Bob was in it. I am grateful and honored that I was able to share a small part of it with him. I send my condolences and best wishes to all of the Tollefson extended family. I share your grief but I also rejoice that the world was able to have Bob in it for 91 years.

Doug Laird

**Doug Laird** - September 06, 2018 at 02:43 PM