



## Robert Carl Williges

March 19, 1942 - July 11, 2020

Robert Carl Williges passed away peacefully at home on July 11, 2020. Bob was a Human Factors Engineer who spent his career in academia first at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and for many years at Virginia Tech. His students inspired him, and he enjoyed following their careers after graduation. Bob was active in numerous professional organizations and served on the Army Science Board and various committees at the National Academy of Science. He had great friends who enjoyed his humor and ignored his disability. He leaves his wife Beverly, son Chris, daughter-in-law Danielle, beloved grandson Creig, and his sister Ellen. The family wants to thank all his caregivers over the past 32 years especially Mandy, Tracie, Salina, Dorothy, and Barbara. Should you choose to donate in his name please consider the ISE Excellence Fund, Virginia Tech Foundation, Office of Gift Accounting, 902 Prices Fork Road, Blacksburg, Virginia 24060. There will be no services.

# Tribute Wall

BB

“ I just learned of Bob's passing. My heartfelt sadness goes out to Bev and his family as my prayers go out to him. He was to me, as to so many, a mentor and a friend. He was always the smiling face in any crowd and I respected him greatly. I will always remember the video in my head of him "flying" down the walkway in his chair from the building in which he worked at VPI with his scarf flying behind him in the cold air and the biggest grin on his face. The world is a lesser place without him but I am sure that he watching and, when he can, helping so many that he cared for and loved over the years.

*Barry H. Beith*

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**Barry H. Beith** - July 29, 2020 at 01:35 PM

MD

“ Marilia and I were saddened to learn of Bob's passing. He was a good friend and we will miss him. What many may not know is that I first met Bob n 1961 when we moved from Savannah to Chattanooga. He and his family attended the Lutheran church we started attending. My mother and father became good friends of the Willigeses And I met Bob as he was heading off to college.that fall. While we really were not close, he did serve as an inspiration and role model to me in that none of my family had gone to college before my brother and I came along. He will be missed by all of us.

*Mike and Mariilia Deisenroth*

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**Michael Deisenroth** - July 18, 2020 at 10:20 AM

EM

“ My thoughts are with Bev, Chris and the rest of the family at what is a very sad time and a huge loss to all that knew Bob. Bob, along with Bev and Dennis Wixon were instrumental in changing my life. Bob took me on as a research assistant in my second term at Virginia Tech - way back in 1985. I not only learned an immense amount from Bob, through working with him and his teaching, but his humour, (the fish tank he got for Christmas one year and named all the fish after his grad students... I, as the only female at least got to be the pretty one but was eaten by the other fish - I think this was likely a good metaphor what it was like in the lab :-)) kindness, support and faith in me (I was definitely a risk!), lead me to a full and rewarding career in human factors and then user experience. The research I was privileged enough to be involved in via Bob, and the knowledge, skills, and ethos that was instilled in me in those two short years have lasted a lifetime and served me well. I will always remember those tough but rewarding years working with Bob as two of the best in my life, and know that everything in my career that has come after was seeded by him. I hope that I have been able to mentor and grow just a fraction of the people in the way that Bob showed me. Thank you for being the most amazing mentor.

*Elisa del Galdo Miles*

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**Elisa del Galdo Miles** - July 15, 2020 at 04:55 AM

VL

“ I am so sorry to hear of Bob's passing. He was an inspiring teacher and always very welcoming to his students. I will very fondly remember his fantastically mischievous sense of humor. To Bev and your entire family, my thoughts are with you as you deal with your loss. I hope you are comforted when remembering all the ways he made you laugh and smile.

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**Vicki R Lewis** - July 13, 2020 at 04:25 PM

JC

“ I am very sad to learn of Bob's passing, but I do have such fond memories of him as a friend and colleague over a 40-year period. He was the consummate human factors engineering professor and scientist, and in the late 1970's, I was truly fortunate to be one of those many graduate students that he taught. One of his instructional specialties was experimental design and statistical analysis as applied to human subject experimentation, and he instilled these skills in hundreds of students at Virginia Tech, and prior to that at the University of Illinois. I consider him as a pioneer in that he laid a foundation for research on human-computer interaction, and this developed into the now so-important field of human-computer interface design. He served the human factors profession for over three decades, including a stint as President of the Human Factors and Ergonomics Society and in many other roles with its scientific publications and standards committees. But most of all, I remember how Bob was such an enthusiastic and caring man, who welcomed new students with a wonderful smile and laugh, and how he provided financial support and mentorship for so many people. He also had a rare ability to make others feel important and valued, and he will be missed by all of us who learned from him, and taught with him, in ISE at Virginia Tech.

*John G. Casali*

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**John G. Casali** - July 13, 2020 at 01:23 PM

GK

“ I lived with Bob and Bev for my final year at Virginia Tech. They were just coming home after 11 months in hospitals and rehab following the car accident that left Bob paralyzed. They thought I was helping them out, but in so many ways it was the other way around. Bob had a remarkable spirit to enjoy life and rarely got down about his situation. And I had never seen college from a professor's point of view. I remember conversation at dinner one night turned to talk about how hard Bob was pushing his graduate students and how harshly he was grading them throughout the semester. And then Bev looked at him and said, "You know you're going to curve their grades and give them good grades in the end." A large, sheepish grin formed on Bob's face and he said, "Yeah, you're right. I will." and he let out one of his familiar chuckles. I loved that whole year and my many visits with Bob over the past 31 years since then.

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**Gary Kempic** - July 12, 2020 at 07:03 PM

RK

“ Gary and I met and started dating while attending VT in Blacksburg. That's when I met Bev and Bob. I will always remember Bob telling stories and making everyone in the room laugh. Gary and I moved away and started a family. Our children, Jake and Nina also attended VT. Now another generation enjoyed visits with the Williges'. I am so thankful for the laughter and the support that Bob and Bev have always shown our family. They attended dance, chorus, and theater performances whenever they could in support of my children. Bob is one of those people who constantly gave. He is a true inspiration.



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**Regina Kempic** - July 12, 2020 at 06:19 PM

DR

“ *Bob became my big brother the day my sister invited him to visit. He was always caring, compassionate and made everyone around him feel like they were the most important person on earth. I will treasure all my memories of him, his great human and humanity. He was a wonderful teacher, a loving husband and father and a devoted grandfather.*

*We are all better off for having had him in our lives.*

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**Deborah Richardson** - July 12, 2020 at 12:54 PM