

Memorial Minute for Robert Teghtsoonian
Read by Randy Frost at the April 25, 2018 Faculty Meeting

Robert Teghtsoonian was born in 1932 in Toronto to parents who emigrated to Canada as the Armenian genocide intensified following World War I. Bob earned both his bachelor's and master's degrees in psychology from the University of Toronto and a PhD. in psychology from Harvard University. Before taking a position in the Psychology Department at Smith in 1962, he taught at the University of Pennsylvania and London University in Canada.

While at Harvard, Bob met and married Martha Taylor, known to all as Mimi. Bob and Mimi were partners for almost six decades, sharing a love for good food, good wine, classical, jazz and folk music, vacations along the coast of Maine and European vacations with their son Chris. Bob and Mimi were also intellectual colleagues, collaborating on research throughout their professional careers and indulging their fondness for critical discussions with friends and colleagues. Mimi never understood Bob's enthusiasm for baseball, especially on TV. Chris did. He shared his father's passion for the Boston Red Sox spawned in Bob's youth when the Sox briefly owned a minor league affiliate, the Toronto Maple Leafs. Together, Bob and Chris edited Bob's father's memoir, *From Van to Toronto: A Life in Two Worlds*.

Although Bob did his doctoral work on verbal learning, the majority of his research career was devoted to describing fundamental and lawful relations that are shared across sensory systems. This approach employed psychophysics, a method for plotting the mathematical relation between changes in psychological experience as a function of variations in physical stimuli. Bob was proud of being a founding member of the International Society of Psychophysics.

Bob's research was guided by the spirit of psychology as a natural science, and he felt it was best done collaboratively. In addition to collaborating with Mimi, he worked with a wide variety of international colleagues. Despite the differences in our fields, he and I collaborated on several

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studies on the psychophysics of fear, and he helped me establish the scaling procedures for what has become a standard assessment device for hoarding disorder.

Bob never put himself at the center of things, and his honest interest in people and their ideas made others feel understood and secure. He had the uncanny ability to create an atmosphere for the open and unprejudiced exchange of ideas. Whatever the occasion, Bob always found the right words, the right humor, and the right wine to pair with his inimitable, welcoming smile.

Bob died on July 1, 2017. When he retired from Smith in 1997, he agreed to a celebratory gathering only if it was casual and there were no testimonials. So Bob, if you're listening, there are no apologies for this testimonial. It was long overdue and much deserved.