



Robert (Bob) Stuart Edgar  
September 15, 1930 - February 1, 2016

Dear Kresge faculty, staff, and students,

I write to you with sad news: Robert Edgar, the founding provost of Kresge, a pioneering genetic researcher and member of the National Academy of Sciences, died on the 1st of February [2016]. Edgar earned his bachelor's degree at McGill University in Montreal and Ph.D. in biology at the University of Rochester. While on the faculty at the California Institute of Technology, Edgar received the Molecular Biology Award from the National Academy of Sciences for pioneering research on "bacteriophage T4", a virus that infects E. Coli bacteria.

In 1969, Professor Edgar came to UC Santa Cruz, and in 1971 he became the founding provost of Kresge College. Early in his work at UCSC, Edgar focused on undergraduate education, and fostered innovations in teaching, and the cultivation of egalitarian and participatory principles. In a 1970 memo on his founding vision for the college, Edgar described Kresge (then called College Six) as an experiment in "participatory, consensual, democracy," and argued that the new community should test the premise that "people are creatively alive to the extent that they perceive themselves as freely responsible for shaping their own destinies."

As a biologist, Edgar played leading roles both in virology and in the important use of the worm *Caenorhabditis elegans* as a model system for the study genetic factors in the death of cells (John Sulston, 2002 Nobel Laureate Lecture). Edgar was also a key participant in then-Chancellor Robert Sinnheiser's 1985 workshop at UCSC, that established the feasibility of sequencing the human genome, and planted the seed for what later became the International Human Genome Project.

Edgar is survived by his partner of 40 years, Carol Proudfoot-Edgar; his two sons, Bruce and Chris Edgar; and two grandsons, Nico and Noah. His full obituary can be found [here](#). Details about a memorial service will be sent in the coming weeks.

Ben Leeds Carson  
Kresge Provost

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(Santa Cruz Sentinel)

Robert (Bob) Stuart Edgar

September 15, 1930 - February 1, 2016

Resident of Santa Cruz

With his loved ones at his side, Robert (Bob) Edgar died peacefully in his Santa Cruz home on Monday, February 1. He was 85 years old. His wife, his oldest son, Bruce, and his youngest son, Chris, and Chris's wife, Amy, were by his side.

Representing his spiritual path, his good friend Cheryl was also present. Supported by his family and friends, he left this world in profound peace.

Bob had two professional passions in his life: the study of Genetics and creating models for learning that focused on teamwork. His life work was about integrating "living and learning together."

Bob received his Ph.D. in Genetics from Rochester University. In 1957 he moved to Pasadena, California with his first wife, Lois Glass Edgar, to work at Cal Tech with Max Delbruck, a renowned early molecular biologist. Bob soon became a research professor at Cal Tech and made seminal discoveries in the field of genome structure and function - using the bacterial virus, T4. During this period, Bob also co-authored a college genetics textbook that became the most widely used textbook of that time. He did pioneering research in molecular biology; in the genetics and self-assembly of viruses; and in the genetics of a tiny worm, the nematode *Caenorhabditis elegans* - helping to establish this as one of the most useful model organisms for biological research. He began publishing *The Worm Breeder's Gazette*, in which *C. elegans* researchers shared their ideas and discoveries.

Bob also had a significant role in the beginnings of the Human Genome Project as a key participant in the 1985 workshop organized by Robert Sinsheimer, the Chancellor of UCSC, to explore the feasibility of sequencing the human genome. The Santa Cruz workshop planted the seed for what later became the International Human Genome Project.

Recognition of his distinguished achievements in original research is exemplified in his appointment as a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and his election to the National Academy of Sciences.

At Cal Tech, Bob studied with psychologists Carl Rogers and John Weir, who focused on client-centered learning within a Group context. Bob saw that their models for teaching and learning would be valuable within the University environment.

In 1969, he was hired as the Founding Provost of Kresge College, UCSC, where he funneled his energies into introducing alternative methods for higher education such as student-designed curricula and students living in shared apartments. Bob's belief: "learning and living together provide maximum opportunities for education of the whole person".

Bob retired from UCSC in 1990 and, with his second wife, Carol Proudfoot, began exploring shamanism. Often had he commented that "doing science is a way to point to the Glories of Creation, of God." Though not of any specific religious persuasion, his spiritual questing was always central to him whether in a research lab, the classroom, founding a college, playing music, writing poetry or a genetics textbook.

Bob took early retirement from UCSC with thought this would allow him time to explore the broader reaches of both his desire for ecological conservation, and to explore the deeper promptings for his own spiritual growth.

His life had been characterized by his passion for Classical Music manifested both in listening to these forms and in playing various instruments. During these last 20 years, he discovered the Native American Flute and became an accomplished player of that instrument. He wrote a Handbook for others, and helped establish the first Native American Flute Association.

The larger context within which Bob lived his life was his deep Love for Nature - "for all things wild." His profound respect for the Ways of Nature was reflected in explorations of wilderness trails. Bob and Carol created gardens restoring and nurturing plant life indigenous to the Santa Cruz – California region. "All Beings need our respect" was his touchstone phrase. Bob and Carol taught their several Canine Companions to show respect to the Deer, Rabbits, Squirrels, Birds, Coyote and other creatures living within the Land surrounding their Home.

Bob is survived by his beloved partner of 40 years, Carol Proudfoot-Edgar; his two sons, Bruce and Chris Edgar, and his two grandsons, Nico and Noah (Bruce's sons). Bob's abiding love for All Beings – and their ecologies – was reflected in his charitable contributions to Nature Conservancy, the Santa Cruz Homeless Shelter, and the Santa Cruz Animal Shelter.

Any acts of charity can be made in his name to these organizations.

[\*View the online memorial for Robert \(Bob\) Stuart Edgar\*](#)

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from UCSC campus news

Robert Edgar, professor emeritus of biology at UC Santa Cruz, died peacefully in his Santa Cruz home on Monday, February 1. He was 85.

Edgar made significant contributions in two areas of molecular biology--the genetics and self-assembly of viruses and the genetics of a tiny worm, the nematode *Caenorhabditis elegans*, which Edgar helped establish as one of the most useful model organisms for biological research. He was a member of the National Academy of Sciences and a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Edgar earned his bachelor's degree at McGill University in Montreal and Ph.D. in biology at the University of Rochester. As a professor of biology at the California Institute of Technology, he did pioneering research in molecular biology, studying a

virus that infects bacteria (known as bacteriophage T4). He received the Molecular Biology Award from the National Academy of Sciences for this work in 1965. In 1970, Edgar came to UC Santa Cruz as founding provost of Kresge College. His primary focus initially was on undergraduate education and the establishment of the new college. But he also continued his research, and he became interested in *C. elegans* as a model system for studying developmental biology. He played a leading role in the community of researchers studying this important organism. Edgar also had a role in the beginnings of the Human Genome Project as a key participant in the 1985 workshop organized by Robert Sinsheimer, then chancellor of UCSC, to explore the feasibility of sequencing the human genome. The Santa Cruz workshop planted the seed for what later became the International Human Genome Project. Edgar is survived by his partner of 40 years, Carol Proudfoot-Edgar; his two sons, Bruce and Chris Edgar; and two grandsons, Nico and Noah.