



Robert Michael Kacmarek PhD, RRT, FCCM, FCCP, FARC, age 72 of Littleton, passed away at home on Thursday, April 1, 2021 surrounded by his family. He was the loving partner and fiancé to Cristina Dias.

Born in Cleveland on February 5, 1949, Robert (Bob) was the son of the late George Sr. and Irene (Horkavy) Kacmarek. Raised and educated in Chicago, Bob attended Saint Lawrence High School and graduated in 1967. He went on to attend Albert Lea College, University of Chicago, and earned his PhD in Psychology from Northwestern University where he also began his career as a registered respiratory therapist in 1973.

In 1984 at the age of 35, Bob was recruited to Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH) as Director of Respiratory Care. Under his leadership the Respiratory Care Services grew from an initial dozen therapists to the nearly hundred in the department today. He is arguably the best-known and most respected respiratory therapist in the world.

Bob's academic interest was centered on mechanical ventilation and respiratory physiology. He was among the first to test unconventional ventilation methods

including liquid ventilation, high frequency oscillation, tracheal gas insufflation, and ECMO, and he helped to define the role of inhaler drugs including bronchodilators and pulmonary vasodilators (i.e., nitric oxide). Most recently he designed ventilators to optimize and automate controlled ventilation and ventilator weaning that were successfully used at MGH during the COVID-19 pandemic. He directed an active laboratory at MGH and trained more than 50 international fellows, many of whom are now leaders in respiratory medicine in their respective countries. He published more than 300 papers in peer reviewed literature, in addition to over 50 book chapters, and edited or co-edited 20 books.

In 2002, Bob became Professor of Anaesthesia at Harvard Medical School. Bob was a great and resolute educator, spending time to teach at any level - on a 1:1 basis, in a small classroom, or in large international auditoriums. He loved academic discussions and teaching. Bob was passionate about the respiratory care department at MGH and shaped the development of hundreds of respiratory therapists, many of whom are now leading respiratory care in academic institutions as well as industry. Bob was a true leader and respected by everyone at MGH. He always led by example and challenged others around him to be the best they can be.

In an interview discussing the careers of respiratory therapists, he kindly and humbly, but decisively invites future respiratory therapists to follow his example: "Do not be afraid to take risks, to extend yourself beyond your perceived limits. Nothing will be achieved without a willingness to take that risk. If you are willing to work hard you do not have to be the smartest in the room. I am not, and for my entire career I have not been the brightest in the room but I have worked harder than anyone else in the room!" (The Coalition Chronicle August 2017)

He was the recipient of numerous awards and just recently was awarded a Lifetime Membership to the American Association for Respiratory Care (AARC), a Lifetime Achievement Award from the California State Society of Respiratory Care, as well as a statute from the California Senate.

Aside from his career, Bob enjoyed traveling, experiencing new cultures, watching football, and cooking. A beloved father and grandfather, Bob's greatest joy in life was his family. He was a dear friend and colleague and will be deeply missed by all who had the pleasure of knowing him.

In addition to his fiancé Cristina, Bob is survived by his children: Julia Kacmarek and fiancé David Lombardo of Canton, Katie (Kacmarek) Johnson and husband James of Lowell, and Callie Kacmarek of Littleton, his siblings; George Kacmarek and wife Marykay of Chicago, IL, Mark Kacmarek and wife Celine of St. Louis, MO, Jeff Kacmarek and wife Kerstin of Ann Arbor, MI, and Deborah Kacmarek of Santa Rosa, CA. Bob is also survived by his two grandchildren, Avery and Adrienne. In addition to his parents, Bob is sadly predeceased in life by his son Robert Scott.

Family and friends will gather to honor and remember Bob for a period of visitation on Saturday, April 10, 2021 from 10:30 am until 1:00 pm in the Badger Funeral Home, 347 King Street, Littleton. A graveside service will be held following the visitation at 1:30 pm at Westlawn Cemetery, 7 New Estate Road, Littleton.

To view Robert's funeral service, please use the link below:

<https://youtu.be/Ln2BliZGsrk>

In lieu of flowers, please consider a donation in Bob's memory to <https://giving.massgeneral.org/donate/robertkacmarek>