

ROBERT (BOB) SCHUSTER (1927-2024)

Adapted from a Denver Post obituary



Robert (Bob) Schuster passed away in Golden, Colorado, at the age of 96, on May 17, 2024. He was born on August 29, 1927 in Chehalis, Washington.

Bob received his bachelor's degree in geology from Washington State College in 1949 and his master's degree, also in geology, from Ohio State University in 1951. Upon graduation, having an interest in the Arctic, he worked for several years with the US Army-run Arctic research laboratory. In the mid-1950s Bob returned to university and obtained master's and PhD degrees in civil engineering from Purdue University. These led to a faculty position in civil engineering at the University of Colorado, Boulder. In 1965, Bob received a fellowship from Imperial College London, UK, where he obtained a DIC (equivalent to a master's degree) in soil mechanics. Subsequently, Bob held faculty positions at the University of Colorado, at the University of Idaho in Moscow and, for a short period, at Imperial College.

In 1974, Bob joined the US Geological Survey (USGS) in Golden, Colorado. Over the following 30+ years, he became very well known for his expertise in geological hazards and their mitigation. He participated in investigations of the Teton Dam, Idaho, failure (1976) and the repercussions from the eruption of Mt. St. Helens, Washington (1980). He was also appointed to the Panama Canal Commission advisory panel on geologic hazards, an appointment that lasted 22 years. Bob's geohazard research and consulting took him from the coal-waste dams in the US Appalachian Mountains, to Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, to Central and South America, and to the Far East, Australia and New Zealand. Bob retired from the USGS in 1995 and became an international consultant.

In addition to his extensive field work, Bob passed along his knowledge and expertise by presenting many university lectures in the US, Australia and Japan. He was also a prolific writer, authoring or co-authoring over 300 articles. Bob co-edited, and contributed several chapters to, *Landslides: Investigation and Mitigation*, US Transportation Research Board's Special Report 247 (1996).

In 2007, Bob became the first recipient of the eponymous Robert Schuster Medal, created by the Canadian Geotechnical Society (CGS) and the American Society of Environmental & Engineering Geologists (AEG) to honor "A North American geologist or geotechnical engineer

who has practiced exceptional study, research and/or amelioration of geologic hazards (landslides, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions)". In his later years, as a member of the CGS, he enjoyed attending the annual Canadian Geotechnical Conference and personally presenting the Robert Schuster Medal. The last such conference Bob attended was GeoSt.John's in 2019.

Bob was pre-deceased by his wife of many years, Pat, who he married in 1955. He is survived by four children, five grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren. He will be greatly missed by the geohazard community around the world.