

Transactions Illinois Academy of Science

REVEREND ROBERT ROLLAND BRINKER
1905-1970

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The Reverend Robert R. Brinker, O.F.M., professor of biological sciences at Quincy College and Second Vice-President of the Illinois State Academy of Science in 1959-1960, died of a heart seizure April 2, 1970, near St. Louis, Missouri. Father Robert, whose body was found in his automobile, was apparently returning to Quincy after a few days visit in St. Louis.

Robert R. Brinker was born October 15, 1905, in St. Louis, Missouri, the son of Frederick and Irene Gausepohl Brinker. As a boy he attended St. George, an elementary school in St. Louis. The family moved to Richmond, Indiana, where he attended St. Andrews, and when the family moved to Indianapolis, Indiana, he spent three years at St. Catherine.



Father Robert R. Brinker in 1967.

Father Robert entered the Franciscan Order at Teutopolis, Illinois, on July 1, 1925, and was ordained to the priesthood

on May 5, 1932, at Indianapolis. After his ordination, he spent a year in the study of sacred eloquence at St. Louis. Later, he was parish assistant and chaplain of St. Joseph Hospital at Ashland, Wisconsin. In 1936, he came to Quincy, Illinois, where he served the Quincy College Academy for a short time as a science teacher and later taught botany in the biology department at Quincy College.

From 1940-1942, Father Robert pursued graduate studies in botany at the Henry Shaw School of Botany, Washington University, St. Louis, and received a master of science degree. He described eight new species of *Schoenocaulon* in a paper entitled, "Monograph of the Genus *Schoenocaulon*" published in the *Annals of the Missouri Botanical Garden* 29(4): 287-314, 1942.

In 1942, Father Robert returned to Quincy College to resume teaching in the biological sciences, and was concurrently an instructor at St. Marys Hospital School of Nursing. At Quincy College, Father Robert was chairman of the division of natural sciences and chairman of the department of biological sciences until 1960. He was also a member of the Sigma Chi Honors Society.

During his stay at Quincy College, Father Robert attained a wide reputation as a landscape gardener and as a collector of the flora of Adams County, Illinois. His flowering plant herbarium containing approximately 1,850 specimens is preserved in the herbarium of the Illinois Natural History Survey, Urbana, Illinois. He was interested in the study of mosses and published three papers in 1948. These were "Plagiochila Dotensis," *Bryologist* 51(1):1-4; "Plagiochila Standleyi," *Bryologist* 51(1):4-6; and "Plagiochila tricarinata," *Bryologist* 51(1):7-9. His moss collection is in the herbarium of the Missouri Botanical Garden.

In 1960, after he performed the duties of Second Vice-President of the Academy excellently and efficiently, Father Robert was transferred to St. James Trade School at Riverton, Illinois, where he served as chaplain and instructor. He returned to Quincy College in 1963 as professor of biological sciences, a post he held until his death.

Father Robert was not the ideal lecturer, but he was an excellent teacher. His main objective was to help his students learn. He believed that learning does not consist merely in memorizing but that knowledge also comes from doing the things about which the student reads and hears. A former student in systematic botany supplied a striking example, "I began to realize some of the problems a taxonomist faces when Father Robert assigned us the task of constructing a key to the oaks of Adams County. One cannot construct a key unless he knows something about the organisms included in the key. From one assignment, therefore, I learned something about oaks, about the problems of a taxonomist, and about the construction of keys."

Father Robert was equally at home in the classroom or in the kitchen. He en-

joyed gourmet cooking, a task at which he attained much notoriety upon the completion of his masterpiece, the roast suckling pig. He was chief cook on summer school trips to Florida and the Southwest and would work equally hard to produce a pot of fish soup, broiled lobsters from the Gulf of Mexico, or a sauce for the biology club pizza party.

Over the years Father Robert proved to be deeply committed to the welfare of his community. He served as medical field agent for Adams County and spent many Christmas and Easter Holidays assisting in various parishes of the diocese.

To those of us who knew Father Robert, he was a kind and sympathetic man with an excellent sense of humor. Let us hope that the world sees more of his type.

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