

From the Editor

“So, What Is It That You Do?”

Do you remember your first time in the cardiac operating room? I'll never forget the first time I saw the heart exposed and beating, the placement of cannulae and the words, “Go on bypass.” It was a moment of fascination and awe that continues to this day.

Over the years, I have been asked many times, as I am sure that you probably have, “So, what is it that you do?” This question always causes me to search for words to articulate this conceptually simple yet enormously complex process that begins with the simple removal of a clamp and turn of a knob that progresses into a life sustaining feat. We would do well to think deeply about what we do. How we define our work is intricately related to how fervently we approach our work and likewise to the rate of progress in our field.

I am reminded of Richard Feynman's observations about the Manhattan Project recorded in Warren Bennis' book, *The Organization of Genius*. According to Feynman, the physicists working on the project floundered at first for many months because of the secrecy imposed by the United States Army. They had no real sense of what exactly they were doing. J. Robert Oppenheimer convinced the Army to end the secrecy and explain the purpose of the work at Los Alamos. Once they understood that they were building a weapon that would abruptly end the war and ultimately save many lives on both sides, there was an enormous exponential increase in their individual and collaborative efforts. They became focused and determined to achieve their objective. They worked around the clock solving problems that once seemed insurmountable.

So what is it that you do? It is accurate to say that each day you and I battle on the front lines against heart disease, a worldwide killer, responsible for more than 16.7 million deaths in 2002, a number that continues to grow. What about the estimated 3 to 12 of every one thousand children born with disabling heart defects? Infants and children whose days are numbered without an intervention to reverse their failure to thrive.

It would also be accurate to describe our work as providing temporary life support to each and every one of more than seven trillion living cells that comprise a human life. An awesome responsibility with life altering consequences.



Robert Groom

I recently attended the American Academy of Cardiovascular Perfusion Annual Meeting in San Diego. A highlight of the meeting was the twenty-three original papers presented, of which some of the best were from young investigators. Their diligent effort to create and share new knowledge was inspiring.

In this issue of the *Journal*, we are pleased to publish the abstracts of papers to be presented at the AmSECT's 45th International Convention that will take place on April 19th in Atlanta, Georgia. These abstracts are a prelude to presentations many of which will subsequently become published as full papers in the *Journal*. New knowledge that will broaden our understanding and lead to the more effective delivery of support.

Find a moment to think deeply about what you do. This will likely evoke a healthy sense of awe, humility, and a heightened sense of purpose. It is this same passion for life that Longfellow succinctly described in his Psalm of Life.

Life is real! Life is earnest!
And the grave is not its goal;
Dust thou art, to dust returnest,
Was not spoken of the soul.

Not enjoyment, and not sorrow,
Is our destined end or way;
But to act, that each to-morrow
Find us farther than to-day.

In the world's broad field of battle,
In the bivouac of Life,
Be not like dumb, driven cattle!
Be a hero in the strife!

Trust no Future, howe'er pleasant!
Let the dead Past bury its dead!
Act,--act in the living Present!
Heart within, and God o'erhead!

Let us, then, be up and doing,
With a heart for any fate;
Still achieving, still pursuing,
Learn to labor and to wait.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
Born: February 27, 1807, Portland, Maine
Died: March 24, 1882, Cambridge, Massachusetts

Robert Groom, CCP
Editor