

Tribute

Jeri L. Dobbs: 1935–2015

Jeri Dobbs was an early pioneer in our field who served with distinction his entire career. One wonders why he was so involved?—probably, initially out of a sense of doing his share in promoting our fledgling profession and then surely as a committed volunteer for other activities as his demonstrated accomplishments manifested. For him, and many of that era, performing well clinically was not enough—Jeri chose to give back to the profession as the tributes below attest. In his life-long commitment to perfusion education he served as a role model for younger generations who entered the field in the 1970s and 1980s. Jeri received the inaugural American Society of Extracorporeal Technology (AmSECT) Award of Excellence in 1976, an award given to a perfusionist who demonstrates excellence and best exemplifies creativity and intellectual honesty in their endeavors. Jeri's creativity and intellectual honesty extended far beyond 1976. His efforts were continuous, consequential, and a positive influence when deliberations that affected the course of our profession were being considered. We pay tribute to this exemplary man.

THE AMERICAN BOARD OF CARDIOVASCULAR PERFUSION (ABCP)

Jeri L. Dobbs completed his on-the-job training with the University of Oregon Medical School in Portland, OR, in 1968 and became an instructor there the next year. By 1974, he had become Assistant Professor of Cardiopulmonary Surgery. He became a Certified Clinical Perfusionist (CCP) by the ABCP on June 27, 1975, and was on the original Board of Directors for the ABCP from 1975 through 1979. He was an oral examiner for the ABCP certification examination on several occasions. Jeri was also the program director for the Oregon Health Sciences University, Cardiopulmonary Surgical Physician Assistants' Training Program in Portland, OR, which was approved for perfusion training by the ABCP in July 1976. He contributed to the perfusion community with research projects, publications, and presentations at various meetings throughout his career and after retirement. He retired from clinical perfusion in 2001 and was ABCP-certified through December 31st of that year; however, he continued to teach and promote online perfusion courses through his website www.perfusioneducation.com and, in his retirement letter, he stated that he had been named Assistant Professor in Perfusion Technology at the new Midwestern University Perfusion Program in Phoenix,



AZ, in 2001. He was awarded CCP Emeritus status with the ABCP in 2013. Jeri was an active member of the American Society of Extracorporeal Technology as early as 1971 and was a charter member of the American Academy of Cardiovascular Perfusion (AACP). He earned his Bachelor of Science degree from Pacific University, Forest Grove, OR, in 1964, and his early interests in cardiac surgery, pacemakers, artificial heart valves, long-term perfusion, and developmental research makes the list of his publications very long. The ABCP sends its sincerest sympathy on Jeri's passing.

ARNOLD BENAK

I only worked with Jeri for two brief years but what I can tell you is that he truly loved what he did. Jeri was an educator and a very skilled clinician, passionate about the career he chose, and he welcomed every opportunity to share that knowledge with anyone in the Operating Room. To me, Jeri will always be remembered as a quiet man, a man who never stopped learning, never stopped teaching, and never stopped caring. We talk about a past era, one that we older perfusionists can recall, and we refer to many of the surgeons during that era as “gentlemen surgeons” . . . well, Jeri was a “gentleman perfusionist.” He loved his family, his God, and cared for his patients with grace and skill. I will remember Jeri and smile . . . he was a good colleague . . . and a good friend.

DIANE CLARK

Jeri was a class act! Gathering memories of him, I cannot think of even one criticism of Jeri from anyone! Yet,

superlatives seem to fail to fully describe Jeri. There were many firsts in Jeri's service life: he was secretary-treasurer on the first ABCP. He was the director of one of the first accredited perfusion education programs. He was charter member and the first president of the AACP, a professional society which he had helped to form. When, after many years of struggling, the Academy was finally allowed access to the influential Coordinating Committee for Perfusion Affairs, Jeri volunteered for and was appointed to be one of the first two delegates from the Academy.

One of the finest contributions from Jeri was the introduction of Dick Adams, court reporter, to the AACP. From the very first AACP meeting, Dick reported the proceedings, including all questions and discussion from the floor of the meeting after presentations. The AACP and Dick developed genuine affection for one another, and the AACP voted Dick an honorary member a few years later. Additionally, as the first president of the AACP, Jeri arranged a memorable formal dinner, with wandering violinists, at a historic San Francisco mansion.

Jeri did not just cling to old memories—he embraced new information technologies as they developed. He helped incorporate them into his endeavors by conducting distance perfusion education classes, some affiliated with an accredited perfusion education program. All-in-all, I would describe Jeri Dobbs as brave, refined, stalwart, wise, calm, intelligent, and articulate. These are some of my memories of Jeri Dobbs. And Jeri achieved all that he did with considerable aplomb! I am honored to have known him.

PAUL DIBBLEE

Jeri Dobbs touched the lives of many people, not only as a physician assistant/perfusionist in clinical settings but as a mentor and educator. Jeri was a font of knowledge and was always eager to share his knowledge. His knowledge was vast from his pioneering work at the start of our field by his continuing research and teaching. He loved being involved even after his retirement and he continued teaching. Jeri was a good friend, mentor and inspiration to me, and I will miss him as will our profession.

LEROY J. FERRIES

I first got to know Jeri in 1971 when AmSECT developed the first certification examination. Ten of us “technologists” from both teaching and nonteaching institutions were charged with developing a certification examination in both the perfusion and dialysis disciplines, as AmSECT membership included both at that time. Each of us was asked to submit 50 questions, with references, in four categories—Anatomy and Pathology; Physiology; Pharmacology; and

Perfusion Technology. It was then that I experienced what a knowledgeable, considerate, and soft spoken person Jeri was. His physician assistant background, teaching, and research experience with Dr. Starr was readily apparent. Jeri and I also had the privilege of being on the first ABCP in 1973. We served in that capacity through the late 1970s. Jeri was always easy to work with and about as a non-political person as one could ever meet. Jeri, without question, was a pioneer in perfusion. It truly was an honor and privilege to have known Jeri and worked with him over the years.

ROBERT C. GROOM

I first met Jeri in 1980 while a student at the Texas Heart Institute School of Perfusion and Surgical Technology in Houston, TX. Jeri was conducting a site visit of the school, part of ABCP's re-accreditation process for perfusion schools. During his visit, Jeri interviewed me as part of his assessment of the visit to determine if the school was meeting the standards set forth by the ABCP. I was most impressed by his professionalism and thoughtful questions. I saw Jeri again later that year at AACP's annual conference in San Francisco. Jeri was the president that year, and he also chaired a panel on professionalism. These encounters with Jeri were instrumental in my professional development. Over the years I observed that when passionate debate would ensue during scientific sessions or at business meetings, Jeri was always calm, respectful, and skilled at posing disarming questions that would dissipate heat and shed light on the important issues. Over the years we became friends and made it a habit of sitting together during the formal dinner at the AACP's annual conference. The professional societies are indebted to Jeri, and those of us who knew him and served with him were influenced by this gentle giant in our field.

AARON G. HILL

On October 15, 2015, Jeri Dobbs succumbed to a two-year battle with renal cancer. I was acquainted with Jeri for over 40 years. I first met Jeri on the ABCP. I was working at the University of Rochester Medical Center at that time, and Dr. Edward A. Lefrak was in his fellowship in cardiac surgery at the Oregon Health Sciences University. Dr. Lefrak was preparing to leave and start a heart program in Fairfax, VA. He asked Jeri for a recommendation for a perfusionist to accompany him in this new endeavor. Jeri suggested that he contact Aaron Hill as he was quite capable to start the perfusion aspect of a heart surgery program. That was a turning point in my perfusion career, which continued at Fairfax Hospital for over 25 years.

Jeri was truly a diamond in the perfusion profession and possessed many facets. I continued to work with Jeri on many national perfusion associations. His counsel was always worthwhile and wise. After his retirement from clinical practice Jeri continued pursuing the academic aspect of perfusion. Jeri was always a great mentor and friend. I will list some of the other achievements among the many that he pursued: in 1958, Jeri worked as a perfusionist in the Department of Physiology at the University of Oregon Medical School. In 1966, he began working with Dr. Albert Starr in cardiac surgery. Jeri also served as the second president of the Oregon Society of Physicians' Assistants in 1975 until 1977. In 2000, Jeri had retired from clinical practice and was an assistant professor in the Cardiovascular Science Program, School of Perfusion at Midwestern University in Glendale, AZ. He had also been a physician assistant and an assistant professor in Cardiopulmonary Surgery at the Oregon Health Sciences University in Portland, OR. He had been a director of a perfusion training program and director of an online perfusion education program, PerfClass[®]. He was a founding member of the ABCP, a member of the AmSECT Board of Directors, a charter member and president of the AACP. He served as a member of the Accreditation Committee for Perfusion Education and the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs. He authored or co-authored over 40 journal articles, chapters in books, training manuals, and scientific exhibits. He was director of PerfusionEducation.com, an online perfusion education program for both perfusion students and CCPs. Having served on the ABCP with Jeri helped me to appreciate his devotion to education. Subsequently we served on other committees as well as the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs where we went on several site visits for the accreditation of perfusion educational programs. Jeri was always one to give support to the programs where needed as he had run one of the only physician's assistant and perfusion programs in the country.

During a national AmSECT meeting held in Portland, OR, in summer 1975 Jeri revealed his whimsical side and arranged for the meeting attendees to be presented with baked Alaska by the hotel waiters carrying flaming swords. Jeri had many accomplishments but was always humble about his successes.

I believe that I am a better person for having known Jeri and worked with him on numerous occasions. A true pioneer in perfusion, Jeri will be sorely missed by all who knew him and knew him through those things he accomplished.

WILLIAM J. HORGAN

Jeri Dobbs was one of the leaders who took us from pump tech to perfusionists. His leadership took us from

on-the-job training to formal education, certification, and continuing education. Jeri was always the voice of reason when the rest of us were talking past each other. He believed that we needed perfusionists to hold a degree. Jeri also believed that students needed to graduate with more skills than just "running the pump." Jeri's school graduated physician assistant-perfusionists. And Jeri continued to be an educator long after he retired from the university by moving from the classroom to the Internet.

I first met Jeri in the early 1970s and worked with him in AmSECT, on the ABCP, in the AACP, and on the Accreditation Committee-Perfusion Education (AC-PE). There is no area of our profession that has not been touched by Jeri, and in each of those areas Jeri was there only to advance the perfusion profession. In AmSECT he helped in the creation a profession through educational meetings and through examination and certification. The leadership of AmSECT knew if our certification was to be accepted the certifying body needed to be a standalone organization, and the ABCP was created. Jeri moved from the AmSECT Board of Directors to serve as a Director on the first ABCP Board and help develop our certification, recertification, and school accreditation.

There were some good fights between AmSECT and the ABCP over what perfusionists needed to know to practice and how a student should be educated. There were some who believed it was only necessary to teach the technical and the reasons why could come later. Jeri was on the side fighting for formal education.

Jeri helped to create the AACP and served as the first president. At the time the Academy was seen as an organization that did not support the society. For some that was true, but not Jeri, because he saw the Academy as an organization that would offer scholarship by hosting a three-day meeting where only educational papers were presented. Jeri never left AmSECT and worked for both organizations. During his time with the Academy leadership Jeri fought for a seat on the AC-PE. For a number of years the Academy's requests were rejected. But just as he did in AmSECT and the ABCP, Jeri was the voice of reason and won the Academy a seat on the AC-PE. On the AC-PE, Jeri's knowledge of perfusion education was very helpful in revising our standards. And Jeri was one of the best site visitors our profession has ever had. He knew the standards and also knew there was more than one way to meet a standard. Jeri was the one you could count on to go into a problem program, find the problem and help that program turn around.

To all who read this, tip one for Jeri and thank him for fighting for our profession, both for AmSECT and the Academy, for certification, education, and accreditation. All of our profession was touched by Jeri, and we are a better profession because he was part of our leadership.

Job well done, my friend, your legacy lives on with each meeting attended, each graduation, and each certification.

A. EARL LAWRENCE

Jeri Dobbs was the only person that could be the first president of the AACCP, because everyone liked and trusted Jeri. My first knowledge of Jeri was when we were both on the first AmSECT ethics committee, charged with writing a code of conduct for perfusionists. It was there I learned the true meaning of ethos from a man who lived with that as his guiding principle. The world truly is short of one more ethical leader.

DR. ALBERT STARR

So sorry to learn of Jeri Dobbs' demise. He was a great pioneer in the development and maturation of cardiology and cardiac surgery. At the very beginning, in the late 1950s, operating the heart-lung machine required a new set of skills beyond those available through nursing services and research laboratory assistants. We needed well-trained non-physicians who became perfusionists and clinical team members, both in the operating room, then to help with inpatients, reporting directly to the surgeon and later to other specialists who followed these team building efforts. There were no physician assistant training programs and state licensing. Jeri Dobbs was one of a handful of young medical enthusiasts who played an important role in the development of this special category of health care providers both in their education and deployment. As a crowning feature of his long career, he was the founder and CEO of a unique new company called CardioPace, which for the first time offered telephone monitoring and long term follow-up to pacemaker patients. This was made

possible by the design of an implantable pacemaker that allowed phone transmission of the signal. This was a revolutionary concept at the time. Jeri Dobbs deserves our respect and affection and will be missed.

BETTY STEPHENS

Jeri Dobbs and I worked together at Oregon Health Sciences University for over 30 years. We became very good friends over the years. Our children were all around the same age, so we enjoyed exchanging stories of our children and their growing pains. Jeri was on the heart team when two of my children had to have open-heart surgery. He knew my fears and anxiety and assured me all would be okay. Jeri and I ran the cardiac surgery laboratory. The lab was extremely small and did not have the best housekeeping service. Some mornings when we would enter into the lab, we would find that it had not been cleaned to our standards, and Jeri would look at me, and before I could say a word, he would say, "Okay Betty, don't start cussing," and then we would start to laugh. Jeri and I shared many moments where we would sit and talk about the problems in the world and within the establishment where we worked, eventually realizing that we could not fix everything. But we knew that our research would help to save lives. Jeri, may you rest in paradise. With warm memories forever.

CLOSING

While Jeri is no longer with us, his influence lives on in the society through many in our field who he inspired and taught by example.

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