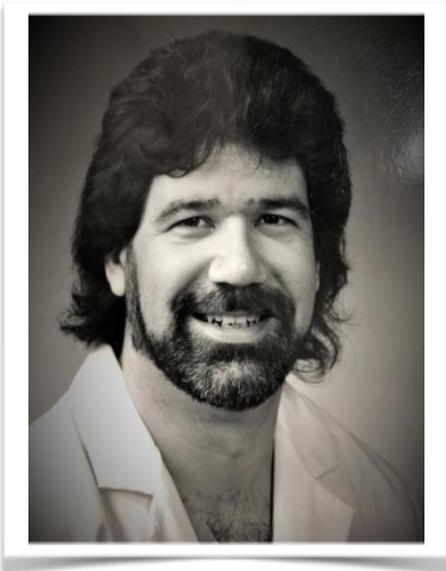


In Memoriam

To honor the perfusionists we've lost along the way



THI staff photo, early 1990's.

Sal Guercio

1954-2020

Sal Guercio was a perfusionist of 27 years and spent his entire perfusion career as a clinical instructor at the Texas Heart Institute School of Perfusion Technology (THI). He graduated from THI in 1988 and immediately went to work on staff. His path to perfusion began in respiratory therapy, a profession he worked in for nine years before entering the perfusion training program at the University of Texas School of Allied Health Sciences. He will always be

remembered for his consistent, constant and fair approach to clinical instruction and his dry and witty sense of humor.

Day in and day out, Sal brought a sensible, common sense aspect to clinical perfusion. His students always got his best effort to teach, guide, and impart the responsibility of the profession. Of course, it was sprinkled with jokes, sarcasm, and a genuine way of putting you at ease in a stressful environment. He was often described as having the "it" factor. The ability to assess a situation and gauge the response, whether it was a well placed remark to ease the tension in the operating room, or staying the course and dealing with the situation in the best interest of patient safety.



Sal behind the pump as a new THI staff instructor, mentored by Deborah Lowery-Adams (standing).

BEYOND THE PUMP

A Space for Perfusionist Profiles, News, and Current Events.

IN MEMORIAM

The ABCP is often notified of the passing of one of our own by family, friends, or colleagues. If you would like to communicate the loss of a CCP please contact the National Office (ABCP@ABCP.org).

Previous "Beyond the Pump" Articles:

March 2020: [Perfusionist Profile - Stephen Peterson](#)

Comments or suggestions for Beyond the Pump are welcomed and encouraged. Please contact the National Office: ABCP@ABCP.ORG

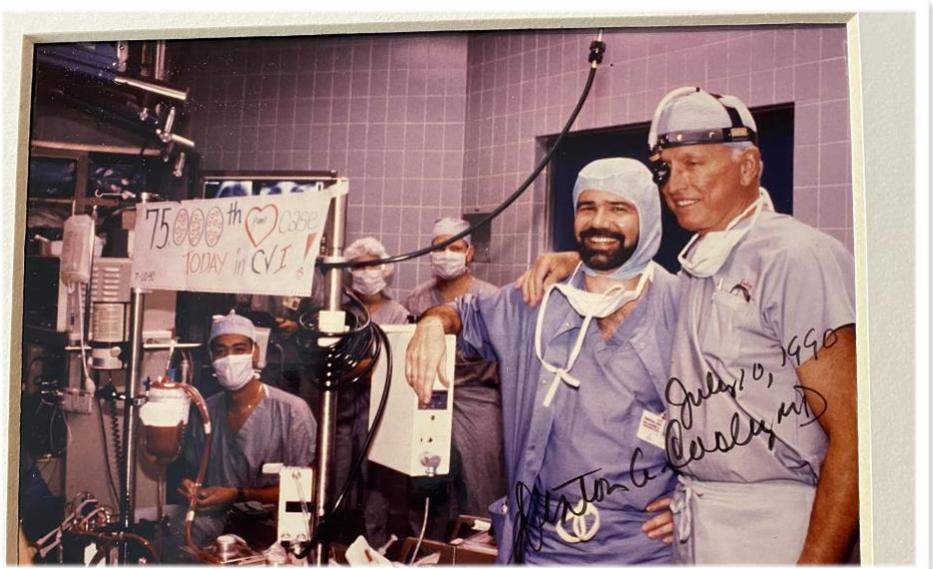
BEYOND THE PUMP - IN MEMORIAM

To his surgeons, Sal was dependable behind the pump. To his students, he was the best example of a well-rounded and confident clinician who was versatile and flexible in any situation. His even temper, affable manner and attention to learning benefitted every student every day.

Though Sal practiced in the same institution his entire perfusion career, he was never “institutionalized” by the routines and processes at THI. He was exposed to all the latest products and case variety that a

large volume, academic acute healthcare facility embodies. As increasing complexity sometimes brought increased gadgetry, he was famous for saying “simple is different too”. Sal was able to cut through all the bells and whistles and hone in on what really was important and necessary, utilizing as one surgeon commented, his “finely honed BS detector”.

Wanting to slow down from the full-time demands of the job, Sal retired from THI, but continued to give back to perfusion education and perfusion students. His creative simulation exercises with a bucket, tubing, and clamps were legendary among his students. He continued to volunteer his time and expertise in this area for THI perfusion students for some years after retirement. He also spent time in the classroom with the new students, going over setups and just talking with them about the profession and what to expect. He was a patient listener with an engaging personality. Sal had the gift of relating to new students in meaningful way. His accurate judge of character also made him a sought-after participant in the student applicant interview process. He understood that it takes a unique combination of attributes to succeed as a perfusionist.



Sal with Dr. Denton Cooley after the 75,000th open heart case at THI. July 1990.



Sal with THI staff, enjoying his favorite on the job beverage, Dr. Pepper.



Sal with fellow perfusion classmate, Rick Garcia.



Enjoying a break in his favorite recliner.

Sal was diagnosed with ALS in January of 2017. Mostly a diagnosis by exclusion, he had endured months of testing, appointments with specialists and second opinions. It was shocking to hear and sad to tell family and friends of the findings. His therapy included prescribed cycles of infusions at the neurology clinic. He quickly became, in Sal fashion, the most popular patient among his caregivers and the most popular



Sal with fellow perfusionists, Jim MacDonald and Terry Crane. AACP meeting 2019.

personality in the clinic with his fellow patients. They all loved to hear his stories, jokes and anecdotes. A native Houstonian, he could always tell you something interesting about the city and its history. The reason behind the clinic visit faded for everyone when they got together with Sal.



Sal and wife Ann enjoying one of many THI perfusion graduation dinners.

Sal's wife, Ann, was constantly and forever his champion and support throughout. "Our goal was to keep him engaged with his perfusion community, family and friends and in our home throughout the course of the disease process. He had many a house party with surgeons, former students, and life-long friends during his illness. They came by and picked him up for lunch or brought it in when getting out became more difficult. "As a practicing perfusionist, I came home many days to hear about his visitors and the latest scoop, as only Sal could tell it. We talked perfusion often over a favorite cocktail that only he could make. For the past few years, I made it a point to keep him active in perfusion meetings. He

was able to see and interact with so many friends in the perfusion community up until only days before his passing. In retrospect, I am overjoyed that he had that opportunity. While I would give anything for one more day with him, his future with ALS was not going to be bright. He left us too soon, but was still smiling, laughing, texting, emailing and finding joy in everyday til the end. It will have to be enough for those of us left behind." Ann Guercio