

I am pleased to nominate Dr Richard Garibaldi, Dr G, to be the first recipient of the University of Connecticut "Doctor of the Year" award. There is no one who embodied the spirit of what being a doctor should mean, nor someone with a truer passion for his profession, than Dr G. I had the great honor and pleasure of working with Dr Garibaldi in the outpatient Infectious Disease and Primary Care clinic for nineteen years. There was never a day that I did not understand how special a person Dr Garibaldi was, or how lucky I was to share a partnership of caring for patients with him. His impact as a physician and colleague were unsurpassed. He was a dedicated contributor to the UConn Health Center, and the community at large. I know many remember him with reverence for so many things he did well, but I will always treasure him as a role model in providing excellent, loving, care to his patients, and a true collaborator and partner with nurses.

When I interviewed for my position, the part time nurse I would share the job with was describing what the job would entail. She talked about collaborating with different physicians and their particular nuances. When she described working with Dr G, a big smile came to her face and she just raved about what a gentlemen he was, and how easy it was to work as a team with him. I felt excited that I might be a part of that kind of team. She was right. Within the first several weeks I worked with Dr G, he pulled me aside to welcome me and tell me that because he "wore so many hats at UConn" he would not always be in the clinic, and would rely on me to be his eyes and ears to the patients. We would be a team and he would back me up. Our conversation assured me that he respected and would trust my assessments, and would always be available to take my call. He took every opportunity to teach me what he knew, and then asked me to share my expertise with him. He understood that both of our knowledge together would ensure the best plan of care for the patient. He was a teacher to not only me, but many students, residents and faculty. Not a day went by when someone did not stop by the clinic to seek his advice. He always took the time needed to counsel them. When he had students shadow him in clinic, I was always pleased to hear him tell me what he learned from them that day. He was so open to seeing things from a new perspective. Not only did he guide fellow physicians or staff, but he was an excellent teacher to his patients. He demonstrated exercises for keeping the range of motion for their hurt shoulder, or counseled them on medication interactions or explained the plan of care in a way that was simple and caring for each patient and their family. No conversation or instruction was beneath him or too time consuming.

He NEVER let me down. No matter if he was at the cape on his vacation, in an important meeting, or hospitalized with his own illness, he was always there to review a case, just bounce a question off, or support me. He was devoted to his patients, and treasured his relationship with them. He knew the gift we had been given sharing in the patients most vulnerable moments and he role modeled how to honor that gift. I have nineteen years of wonderful memories, and so many examples of outstanding care he provided. Dr G revealed heartbreaking diagnosis with tenderness, brought patients to his home for Thanksgiving dinner, made house calls on weekends and evenings, attended funerals, birthday parties and celebrations of his patients, but most of all he listened to his patients with his whole being during every visit. It was my greatest honor to share "our practice". This collaboration is what made our patient care so meaningful and special for the patient and for us. He is most deserving of recognition as "Doctor of the Year", but for me, he was the partner of a life time.

Molly Davison-Price, R.N.

Richard A. Garibaldi, M.D., (4/23/42-9/3/09), Hospital Epidemiologist, had an incredible ability to bring people together for the greater good of life. He always saw and nurtured the ability of others even when unknown to the person them self. He was a gentle mentor and educator allowing others to claim their success's all the while encouraging them.

One of his mottos was that we just "do it" whatever "it" may have been at the time because it was the right thing to do and we always did the "right thing". Living by these standards himself made others want to be close to him, to belong to his group, be on his side and learn from him. He was a "living" book, full of stories and tales of kindness, gentleness and profound meaning, a man and mentor with tremendous history page after page.

Dr. G thrived on guiding others to success and had an inextinguishable patience to do so with a fascinating ability to bring clarity and simplicity to any situation. I certainly had the good fortune to experience his knowledge and wisdom in which he helped to build my Infection Prevention career from the foundation up. I was amazed how he had the energy to always mentor a new student. I began to understand as I saw his passion for Infection Prevention in all venues of the science. He was involved with patients, professionals, students here in the different schools, education of the general public, education of professionals in the community and as a special advisor to the Department of Public Health and multiple committees in the hospital and other agencies. He lived life excitedly when he saw progress or problem issues to be addressed and resolved, helping those responsible for the "cure" in such a brilliant and gentle way, taking no credit for the success and causing others to be proud of their accomplishments. People sought out his compassion and advice on all levels.

In working with Dr. G, I never felt "alone". Even in overwhelming circumstances I was confident that I would have a partner who trusted my knowledge and was willing to "roll up his sleeves" and work a long side me. It was an amazing phenomenon to enter his office in a state of confusion and tremendous concern and in a few minutes leave with an entirely different perspective on life. When dealing with a particularly difficult issue inevitably he would say "Isn't this fun? This is fun!" and somehow it became so. He was real in all ways and the recipe to building one's confidence. I for one, know that I always stood a little straighter walked a little faster and saw life much brighter with him by my side.

He loved his profession and his patients and found himself, by their invitation, entangled in their lives. When I had a question or information that required Dr. G's immediate attention, I would go to the clinic and wait... and wait to speak with him until he finished with his patient. The door to the exam room would open and they would walk out. A common sight to see was his patient giving him a "hug" goodbye. He built so many heart - to - heart bonds.

He had tremendous commitment to the Health Center and his profession. Always making himself available to me and others as needed, even when he was on vacation. It was obvious he loved walking through these halls. He was the salt of this institution and has left a tremendous legacy.

He had the genuine foresight to see issues of importance for the future. He shaped the Health Center's Infection Prevention Program in earnest and others always reached out to him. The acknowledgement of his success by everyone, from those who were local to nationally recognized groups and individuals is undeniably appropriate and deserved for our Dr. G. The CT Department of Public Health and the HAI subcommittee gave tremendous acknowledgement of his life's work both verbally and in moments of silence. The Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America, which he was a founding member, had a dedicated acknowledgement of his contributions as well as the Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology. His gifts were far reaching and he shared them freely.

Dr. Garibaldi, a mentor, friend, and confidant, was an inspiration with his kindness, gentleness and humanitarianism. I am so grateful to have had the opportunity to have learned academic and life experiences from the greatest, most brilliant teacher. I will miss him always, each and every day and strive to accomplish and live out his beliefs, goals and pure love and excitement for Infection Prevention and Control each day.

*With love, admiration and a sense of profound loss,
Sincerely,
Nancy Dupont, R.N.*

Doctors Day

March 30, 2010



Dr. Richard Garibaldi Honoree (In Memoriam)



University of Connecticut
Health Center

KNOW BETTER CARE

"People do not die for us immediately, but remain bathed in a sort of aura of life which bears no relation to true immortality but through which they continue to occupy our thoughts in the same way as when they were alive. It is as though they were traveling abroad."

I want to express today my sincere condolences to the Garibaldi family. I am honored to be asked to share my thoughts and reflections about my best friend, Dick Garibaldi whose friendship developed over the last 20 years of working together at the UCONN Health Center. At work I would refer to Dick simply as "G", sometimes Dr. G (depending on the audience we were with), RAG (his initials...if we were in a joking mood, and more recently Dick. There is no doubt that this will be difficult. His death is a suspended reality for all of us. It was much too soon and unfair on all levels. We have lost a humble, decent, witty, and truly genuine human being and a champion of medical education. Today we are here to celebrate his life as we come together to remember our dear friend, mentor, advisor, colleague, boss, doctor, and most importantly beloved grandfather, father and husband.

"G" was quite an accomplished man. He graduated from Harvard for both his undergraduate degree and his medical degree, then completed residency with Harvards's Program at Boston City Hospital. He completed fellowships related to the subspecialty of infectious disease at the CDC, the NIH, and the University of Utah. Despite starting his professional career in Utah, he moved back east to University of Connecticut in 1981. At that time he shared time in the Infectious Disease Division; worked as Vice Chair in Dept of Medicine and began his clinical practices in both internal medicine and the specialty of infectious disease. It didn't take Dr. Freston (Chair of medicine at the time) long to realize what a champion for medical education "G" really was and by 1982 he became the Program Director for the Internal Medicine Residency Program, where he remained for the next 15 years. In 1997 he became Department Chair of Medicine for the next 9 years. When he stepped down in 2006 his Health Center efforts focused on hospital epidemiology, infection control, being a first class physician, and special advisor to all. There is clearly not enough time for me to list all of "G"'s professional activities, memberships, service on committees both local and nationally, and honors and awards today, but trust me they are numerous and have all become a matter of record.

"G" and I go back to 1988. I was a fourth year medical student applying for residency in internal medicine. I can remember so vividly running into him outside the cafeteria at John Dempsey Hospital, me 8 months pregnant and as he passed me, gently touched my arm, and said "Kiki, I look forward to having you join the program next year". There was just something about that moment, his kindness, his warm smile, and his trademark look that made you feel like you were the most important person in the world that made my decision about putting UCONN first on my rank list for residency such a "no brainer".

Our professional relationship blossomed in the most incredible ways over the next 20 years. He may have started out as my program director responsible for my medical education and my development as a physician but he became much more to me. As my program director he was simply the best. He was the academic triple threat: a trusted leader, an accomplished physician; and an outstanding teacher. He was always fair and balanced (in fact guilty of rescuing almost any resident physician from any impossible situation); patient with all learners (You know Kiki not every IM resident needs to finish the program in 3 years), and very respectful of the next generation of physicians, specifically, as it related to the need to balance work and family (so Kiki your pregnant now for the 4th time? You sure you want to be a doctor?...) .

Unbannounced to all of us, as "G" transitioned himself to other leadership positions at the Health Center, most notably Chair of the Department of Medicine, he started to create his legacy. He worked hard mentoring a group of younger physicians, including myself, (Steve Angus, Adam Silverman) who he taught to passionately lobby for education, scholarly activity, and the importance of Primary Care Internal Medicine, even during periods of constrained resources. In 1996 he finally felt comfortable handing over his most prized possession, the residency and fellowship programs, to a group of dedicated educators.

Becoming Chair was a much more challenging and some would say thankless position that he threw himself into. As Chair he helped to guide the Department of Medicine through challenging times at UConn. He earned universal admiration and trust from the community. He was such a loyal leader with no apparent expression of ego and he took enormous pride in representing the Department of Medicine. He became the face of the department, he represented each and every one of us whether you had a lot of personal time with him or a once a year meeting; and for all of us here today who were members of his dept... we always felt a sense of comfort and safety having him as our leader. I think those who got to know him better in this role got to know the "G" that I had known for years. The man who made you feel as though you were the most important person in the world.

BUT Most importantly to me, "G" has left a legacy of being the master clinician, a brilliant physician and diagnostician. He was genius in morning report and inspiring to be with him when he taught at the bedside. Everyone wanted to be his patient and no one was ever turned away. He had that uniqueness that is rarely found in the new generation of physician...he still made house calls, would always see his own patients (unless he was out of town); would attend the wakes or funerals of his patients that died; and would never forget to write a condolence note to a family member. His approach to his patients was scientific but more importantly it was compassionate. He taught all of us that medicine was a noble calling and that patient advocacy and dedication to excellence were critical core values. Despite the ever changing world of healthcare, for "G", no one could ever change his belief in the sanctity of the doctor patient relationship. He would never become a provider he would always be a doctor.

"G" started out as my program director, became my advisor, transitioned to my mentor, and ultimately became my best friend. We could and we would talk for hours in the last six years about everything from academics to zebras. We never could just stop and chat for a few moments.

When Dick was diagnosed a year ago we as a community were blown away. It seemed so unfair that Dick's greatest fight in life would come at a time when had simplified things professionally. He spoke at length of his new found freedom and being able to do more with his family.

In a very strange twist of fate I become one of his caregivers and healthcare advocates. It became a natural progression of what I felt I should do for my friend. I can't think of a bigger privilege and honor to be able to help him after all he had given me both personally and professionally.

In the end he remained grateful for all his medical care, his personal good fortune, his friendships and above all his incredible family. I had a wonderful moment with him near the end of his life. We were able to reminisce about the good times when "he was smarter than me" I was able to thank him for every professional opportunity he gave me. We cried and hugged and I knew he understood how much he meant to me and many others. He was a very special and unique member of the Health Center Community. His legacy and his impact will live on through many of us.

"I believe that imagination is stronger than knowledge - myth is more potent than history - dreams are more powerful than facts - hope always triumphs over experience - laughter is the cure for grief - love is stronger than death"

"G" There will always be a special place in our hearts for you - and we will love you forever.

Jacqueline "Kiki" Nissen, M.D.