In Memoriam
Mark Richmond

On December 20, 2009, the perfusion community received the sad news that Mark Richmond had passed away. Mark’s wife, Beth, four children, 15 grandchildren, friends, professional colleagues at the University of Southern Mississippi, former students, the perfusion community, and the American Board of Cardiovascular Perfusion (ABCP) will sorely miss him. He touched the lives of many during his time, but in particular, for the perfusion community, he was one of the true pioneers.

The American Society of Extracorporeal Technology established certification in 1972, and the ABCP was first incorporated in 1975. In 1979 with limited financial resources, the ABCP was faced with the dilemma of finding a new national office and new examination consultants. One of the directors, Jerry Richmond, suggested his brother Mark Richmond, EdD, a college professor with the expertise in statistics and test development, might be interested in working with the ABCP on test development. Mark associated a colleague, Beth Arnold, PhD, who brought extensive knowledge of evaluation and test interpretation to the mix. On January 1, 1980, a contract was signed between the ABCP and theRichmonds to manage the office and test development. The following sentiments of past ABCP Board Members describe the contribution of Mark and his wife Beth Richmond.

EARL LAWRENCE (1979–1983)

“If you were involved in perfusion in the late 1960s and early 1970s, you belonged to one of two very separate groups that differed in their vision of the future. There was the professional organization that was part of an organization dominated by renal dialysis technicians, and they were titled pump technicians. The other side was a small group that had a vision of developing a quality profession of well-educated and well-trained clinical perfusionists. The former group was closely aligned and had total subjugation of the cardiac surgeons, who thought they should have total control over pump techs. The latter group sought independence of any group to define and control their own professional destiny. Charlie Reed led the separation of pump techs from dialysis techs in the professional organization and continued on to develop the foundation of national certification and quality education for the perfusion profession. The American Board of Cardiovascular Perfusion was established and led the way for certification and school development. Many cardiac surgeons feared losing control of perfusionists and became skeptical regarding the establishment of perfusion schools.

Like any developing democracy, there was great acrimony and passion on both sides. The organizational leadership was happy with surgeon control while the visionary perfusionists were committed to independence. The political pressure became so great that Charlie Reed resigned from the American Board due to job security and I replaced him. At this point perfusion schools had been established across the country and their accreditation was the only real contentious issue left. Surgeons and their allies in the organizational leadership were committed to controlling the accreditation process, and the Board was committed to independence.

When I assumed the presidency of the ABCP, I saw my challenges as 2-fold. First was to shore up the certification process, and second to see through, at any cost, the acceptance of perfusion schools as the source of future perfusionists. That is, no more on-the-job trainers. A long time friend and fellow Board member, Jerry Richmond, told me about his brother and what he did as a college professor. We met, talked and it seemed right to develop a partnership with his academic credentials and expertise in the education process.

Professional perfusionists must forever be grateful for the efforts and expertise and commitment provided by Mark and Beth. Without their taking on the responsibility of the first objective of the Board at that time, we would not have been able to effectively fight the fight that was necessary to win the second important issue, school accreditation. Their expertise and standing in the education profession totally blunted any descent from the other side, because they knew more about education and had more credibility than them. Without their timely introduction into perfusion, we possibly may not exist. It’s always the people in the back, out of the spotlight doing the hard work that are the most responsible for any success. Thank you, Mark and Beth.”


“Thirty years ago, two young PhDs, Beth Arnold and Mark Richmond, became the co-executive directors of the Board and forever changed our Certification process, as well as our profession. A pretty bold statement
you say, suggesting that two non-perfusionist educators, with little to no experience in either certification or management, could be a positive change to anything in our profession.

In 1980, Beth and Mark brought to the Board an outside consultant that worked with the Board to produce a valid written examination. That study was published to show the profession they had a certification examination that was reliable as well as valid. That same year, with their aid, the Board published a test manual and started work on the Oral Examiners’ Workshop.

In 1982, the profession believed there was a manpower shortage and the Board needed to delay the on-the-job trainers deadline. The Board voted to have an alternate pathway into the examination for the OJT.

In 1983, Mark published a manpower study showing that there was no shortage. Mark and Beth also studied how the on-the-job trainers did on the examination and were able to show that without formal education they could not pass the examination. The results of the study persuaded the American Association for Thoracic Surgery and the Society of Thoracic Surgeons to support only those graduates from an accredited Perfusion program. As educators, they always had a problem with the Board granting accreditation to Perfusion schools and were a very important part of us moving our schools over to the American Medical Association - Committee on Allied Health Education Accreditation process in 1984.

In 1985, the Board offered the first written examination with randomly generated questions from our computer. That only happened because Beth and Mark worked with the Board, teaching us how to write questions that were valid, which meant we were able to add more questions to our bank. After you have read what the other Board presidents say about Beth and Mark, I’m sure you will agree with me that our Certification process is the gold standard, not only for Perfusion, but all of Allied Health. I want to thank my friends, Beth and Mark, for all they did for me during my tenure, I will always be eternally grateful. Congratulations on your thirtieth anniversary and I hope you have many more years with the ABCP.”


“The ABCP was still a young certifying agency and was being pressured by the surgeons, program directors, professional organizations, and employers to relax our criteria. Beth and Mark demonstrated a great deal of wisdom in helping us realize the importance of our professional stance and the courage to stand firm. As we made significant changes and improvements to the certification process, they were there to gently guide us. We were fortunate to have two educational professors who gave us the tools to build a strong foundation for the ABCP.

I think our profession owes a great deal to Mark and Beth, who have provided consistency and professionalism to our certification process through some very challenging and difficult times, as well as the good times. Thank you Mark and Beth!”

“When elected to the Board, I had little knowledge of this body and how important and difficult its work was. Almost immediately, I realized I was surrounded by a group of very special people who “walked the walk” on this team of totally committed professionals. This culture of service-above-self, value of the credential and commitment to the profession was due, in no small measure, to the directorship of Mark and Beth Richmond. As a team, they possessed the perfect combination of talent and ability. They knew their stuff and they had the unique ability to gracefully, but firmly, prevent us from making poor decisions that were contrary to the mission of the ABCP and the value of its credential. They were non-perfusionists who cared as much about our profession as we did.

Unique talents, you bet. Mark Richmond is a psychometric and statistical genius. His talents in the area of test structure and data analysis are more than considerable. The ABCP was always ahead of the curve when it came to computer enhancement of our chores and duties. When I joined the Board, Mark would bring his computer to meetings and would require several dollies to get it to his hotel room. When I left the Board, 12 years later, the entire group was working and conducting meetings via laptop computers. All of this was due to Mark’s talent and skills in this area. It was always Mark who was quick to point out that we were veering off course and losing focus on our mission. “Make a great exam and let the exam do its work”. He hammered that home to us, over and over. It was his way of challenging us to be professionals, for the profession.

Beth Richmond is the epitome of a southern lady. Gentle, gracious in her demeanor, but no pushover in matters that matter. She has the keenest memory of anyone I’ve ever worked with, able to recall names of exam candidates, perfusionists, and other details from years passed. If she and Mark disagreed in their position on a point, we knew to listen to Beth. Her experience and skills as a professional educator were invaluable to us when it came time for exam work.

My time as a director of the ABCP has been the most rewarding professional experience of my 30-year career. It exposed me to a group of outstanding perfusionists who became part of my personal and professional life. It was important and hard work that I enjoyed. This entirely rewarding experience would not have happened without the leadership and friendship of Mark and Beth Richmond. I cannot overstate the gratitude and appreciation I have for them and what they have done, not just for me personally, but for the entire perfusion profession.”

BRIAN R. O'CONNOR, CCP (1999–2001)

“I served on the American Board for 9 years, the last two as president. As I reflect on my time on the Board, I realize how true my Irish grandmother’s words were. She always emphasized education as the pathway to a better life. The Richmond’s, through their unwavering commitment to the certification process, helped to elevate the profession of perfusion by way of emphasizing education and the assessment of that endeavor is the CCP credential. It was a long path from being called “pump jockeys” to being called perfusionists, recognition of the professionals we are. The strength of that credential can be credited, in large measure, to the tireless contributions of the Drs. Richmond.

My deepest respect for their abilities as educators came during the transition from a norm-referenced exam (the old orals) to a criteria-referenced exam (current format). There were endless hours spent educating each of the directors of the Board in the ways of psychometric testing. Ebel ratings and various other tools of measurement were applied to hundreds of questions with no guarantee that the end result would be an exam that was fair and relevant. Each of the directors presented varied and often polar opposite views as to how best to achieve those ends. Mark and Beth steered that ship into a safe harbor.

I often wondered, why would two college professors, who really had little scientific understanding of what we do every day, work so tirelessly for our profession? The answer comes in understanding what it means to be a teacher. Be it a parent, coach, clergy, or college professor, there is a trust that is accepted in shaping the future of those we teach. Towards that end, the perfusion community owes an enormous debt of gratitude to Mark and Beth Richmond for protecting that trust.”


“When I think of the Richmonds’ contribution to the ABCP, I think of it as a watermark in page. While they are not responsible for the content on the page, they make the page better and more significant by their presence.

As a former ABCP Board member and president, I have seen first hand the contributions Mark and Beth Richmond have made to the perfusion profession and, as a CCP, have benefited from their efforts to elevate this profession to the level it has attained in the healthcare world today. Despite that, neither are perfusionist or even healthcare professionals, their personal careers as college educators and test development specialists have benefited the profession of perfusion in so many ways.

Mark and Beth have tirelessly worked to turn a constantly changing group of dedicated clinical practitioners
(the CCPs serving on the Board) into knowledgeable test developers. Through the Richmonds’ own academic work at the University of Southern Mississippi, they have helped keep the perfusion profession on the leading edge of testing and evaluation strategies. While not always fun, they have helped with major changes in the exam process such as switching from norm-referenced to criterion-referenced testing. No small feat when you consider the majority of the directors on the Board are practicing CCPs and not trained educators. However, Mark and Beth would patiently explain the meaning of reliability and validity, and the importance/definitions of Ebels and taxonomy ratings yearly.

The Richmonds’ involvement with the ABCP for the past 30 years has gone beyond their roles as test development consultants. They have provided the Board with a certain continuity and stability. Their abilities to manage the day-to-day running of our national office have made it extremely easy for the working CCPs to manage their certification and to communicate with the Board. Their ability to work with an ever changing group of directors is almost Zen like. As a past president, their help at making sure that the work of the ABCP is accomplished no matter what, was awe inspiring and yet performed with a caring that is not often seen in our harried world today.

When I think of the Richmonds’ contribution to the ABCP and the perfusion community, I am reminded of the commercials for BASF “while we don’t make the products we make them better”. That is what Mark and Beth have done. They have helped make the CCP better for 30 years. And I’d like to thank them for making me better as well.”


“It is amazing to think that the American Board of Cardiovascular Perfusion was once a certification committee for AmSECT and in those early years so much hard work went into developing an examination and process that those individuals still feel the exhaustion when you have the opportunity to chat with one today. And it should be said here, “thank you early committee members for your perseverance,” as this ground work has led to a gold standard that still exists today. Being the current president, I have the opportunity to reflect back to the former years of Board work and glean the commitment of each former director and the professional growth of the ABCP. Behind the scenes and surrounding all the clinical aspects of the past and present directors, are the executive co-directors, Drs. Beth and Mark Richmond, whom have brought a true academic application and synthesis of our Perfusion profession to the present examination process.

So many former directors and past presidents have commented that Beth and Mark are exemplary in their fields and have brought another layer of excellence to the very valid exam we give through computer based testing on a biannual basis. All of these developments have required deep investigations that both directors and executive directors collaborated for the enhancement of the testing process.

Beth and Mark Richmond have a 30-year history with the ABCP, in part, this is a testimony to continued complete scrutiny of these individuals by many expert Perfusionists over the years. We owe a debt of gratitude for the guidance that has been given to us as a profession. We have a right to be proud of our examination and all the diligence that aspired to it. In the end, the entire perfusion community that we serve is better for it.”

The past president statements were collected as part of a celebration honoring Beth and Mark Richmond’s 30 years of dedication to the ABCP which took place at the 2009 AmSECT meeting in San Antonio, Texas. Many of the past presidents were in attendance, as well as former Board members and colleagues. Those that could not attend the event were there in spirit and expressed their thoughts accordingly. When Linda Mongero came to the Board with the idea of this celebration, it’s difficult to imagine that anyone would have known the events of the following year would play out as they have. It is rare that we are given the opportunity to honor someone when they are still with us physically so they can really feel the impact they have made on so many people.

We lost a great champion of the perfusion profession in Mark’s passing, but his conviction and commitment will live on through Beth Richmond who has provided the same magnitude of expertise for the ABCP. She will continue as executive co-director along with Steve Oshrin, PhD. Steve has been working closely with Mark and Beth and brings the same level of knowledge and foresight in the field of examination development. Casey Turnage, PhD has also been named as associate executive director and during her short time with the Board, has streamlined many of our processes with her systems and organizational skills. We are confident the ABCP will continue to move forward as the perfusion profession continues to evolve.

Those of us who currently serve on the Board would like to thank everyone that took part in the formation and development of the ABCP, especially those that took the time to put their thoughts in print so they could be shared throughout the entire perfusion community. We would also like to thank the perfusion community for all the support over the years, since it has been this support that has made the ABCP Certification Exam the “Gold Standard” that is has become. In closing it should be said that we have all lost a friend in Mark’s passing but his legacy will live on through those who have stepped up to follow the course he has charted.
A memorial scholarship fund has been established in honor of Jerry and Mark Richmond. Information regarding this fund can be found on the AmSECT website. The scholarship fund has been established to honor Jerry’s and Mark’s dedication to the perfusion profession. Please make checks payable to AmSECT with “Richmond Memorial Fund” in the notation section of the check and send to the following address: AmSECT, 2209 Dickens Road, Richmond, VA 23230.

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