

In Memoriam: Arthur J. Zwerling 1952-2014



On July 25, 2014, the world of nurse anesthesia lost one of its most vigorous supporters, and the AANA movement to address chemical dependency proactively lost one of its staunchest advocates, with the passing of Arthur Zwerling, CRNA, MSN, MS, DNP, DAAPM.

Zwerling's early and unexpected death has created an enormous outpouring of tributes throughout the nationwide nurse anesthesia community, especially from those in the recovery community for whom he was a hero. He was always there when needed, as Sarah Ruth Gomes, daughter of deceased AANA Past President Jan Stewart, CRNA, ARNP, said, "I was one of the countless beneficiaries of Art's knowledge, passion, and care. He was by me in the hardest times, and his mark is carried in my heart."

Zwerling's passion and enthusiasm for helping others was inspirational. He became ardently involved with the wellness and peer assistance efforts, serving 16 years on the AANA Peer Assistance Advisors Committee from 1998 to present, four years as chair. He was also a consultant on peer assistance to the Council for Public Interest in Anesthesia and a member of the AANA Wellness Committee. He generously counselled innumerable colleagues and students who called the Peer Assistance Helpline. He was the voice on the phone that calmly and knowledgeably responded to family members and supervisors in difficult and often crisis chemical dependency situations, and he saved the lives of many CRNAs and students.

Before becoming a CRNA, Zwerling's early work as a certified addictions counselor helped prepare him for peer assistance work. But, it was his personal knowledge of addiction and recovery and open-hearted spirit of sharing that made the difference to the lives

he touched. Among those are the nearly 400 members of Anesthetists in Recovery (AIR), the online support community that he founded/moderated and where he lent untold support to CRNAs and student registered nurse anesthetists (SRNAs).

An Inspiring Educator

Zwerling played an invaluable role in advancing wellness/chemical dependency education to CRNAs and SRNAs. He was instrumental in the production of the Wearing Masks videos (www.AANA.com/WearingMasks), and his tenacity and ability to inspire others resulted in the recent requirement added to the Council on Accreditation of Nurse Anesthesia Educational Programs standards. Zwerling's compendium of lectures also provided a framework in the development of the AANA Learn modules (www.AANA.com/WellnessCurriculum).

Zwerling will also be remembered for his contributions to education across the spectrum of nurse anesthesia practice. He was a program director, faculty member, and adjunct faculty course director on advanced pain management modalities. An expert on a multitude of topics, he was a popular speaker at nurse anesthesia state association meetings. According to Diana Quinlan, CRNA, MS, past chair of AANA Peer Assistance, "Art gave of himself tirelessly to educate, comfort, and support so many in nursing, anesthesia, and the recovery community. His lectures were informative and colorful; some were quite memorable, like when he intubated himself with fiberoptic video before a live audience!"

Zwerling was passionately involved with the Pennsylvania Association of Nurse Anesthetists (PANA). Maria Magro van Pelt, CRNA, MS, MSN, of PANA, summarized, "A man of great character will do something that is not popular, because it is the right

thing to do. He will be the one to 'get things done' when everything looks bad. He will be the first to help, and the last to complain. He will not care if he stands out in a crowd, and when he does, he will stand out by his actions."

Zwerling's stewardship extended globally through his work with Health Volunteers Overseas (HVO), on the Steering Committee and teaching in Belize, Eritrea, and Cameroon. Suzanne Brown, CRNA, past Steering Committee chair, reports, "He will be missed, but more importantly he will be remembered in his students' anesthetics. He had the ability to frame complex material so students were able to learn and remember. Art made such an impression with his passion for anesthesia that when I returned to Belize, 12 years later, I was asked about Art."

Most recently, Zwerling serviced as staff CRNA at Fox Chase Cancer Center. For more about his career, volunteer works, and awards, see his online obituary and his "Why I Became a CRNA" column.

His Life's Work Will Live On

For those lucky enough to have known Art, whether as a friend, family member or loved one, colleague or student, or fellow CRNA/SRNA in recovery, he will be sorely missed. Yet for all in the anesthesia profession, he has left a significant, inspirational mark in pain management practice, education, and awareness of the road to recovery for those challenged by chemical dependency. AANA Past President Terry Wicks, CRNA, MS, paid tribute: "During his life, he was a beacon of hope whose light shone through the darkness that had blanketed so many for so long. Despite his passing, his spirit and his life's work will live on, through the frameworks of understanding he created, the knowledge and the love that he shared, and the countless lives that he saved." ■

The AANA Foundation has established the Art Zwerling Memorial Fund focused on wellness, pain management, and peer assistance; visit www.aana.com/give and select the Art Zwerling Memorial Fund from the Designation drop down.