

The AARC Turns 60



**Robert R. Weilacher, BHA,
RRT, FAARC, AARC Member
Since 1960**

As both a former AARC president and an executive director of the Association, Robert R. Weilacher, BHA, RRT, FAARC, has definitely left his mark on the profession of respiratory care.

During his years in AARC leadership he was responsible for introducing new concepts, such as the need to develop a scientific basis for the profession, as well as new membership benefits, not the least of which is this magazine, which was founded 30 years ago this month during his tenure as executive director. In addition, he has served as the Association's historian and he received the AARC's highest honor, the Jimmy A. Young medal, in 1994.

In the following interview, Bob Weilacher recalls how it all began, and why he's still at it today.

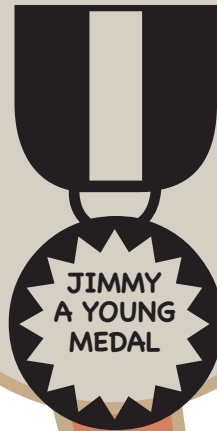


AARC Times:

What has kept you in the profession all these years?

Weilacher:

The ever-expanding employment opportunities and practice challenges have kept me devoted to the profession these past 48 years. This very day I reviewed a shift in some long-standing practice strategies that will change the way we do things in a sleep lab I manage. I still work and live in as exciting times as I did in 1959.



AARC Times: Why did you become a respiratory therapist?

Weilacher: I became a respiratory therapist after an undergraduate classmate introduced me to the profession. He is now a retired physician and professor of medicine in Kentucky. I'm still working . . . is there a lesson to be learned here?



Jeffrey Davis, RRT, AARC Member Since 1986

AARC Times: What is your most memorable experience as a respiratory therapist?

Weilacher: My most memorable experience in respiratory care was drawing my very first arterial blood sample, analyzing it, and marveling at how the resulting data instantly impacted the care of a ventilator patient. The clinical environment in which I was working was such that my medical director and I had to buy the first adult ventilator used in that institution. My, but those were interesting times!

Works at: Las Palmas Medical Center in El Paso, TX.
First learned about the profession when: I was two years out of high school and had no idea what I wanted to do with my life. My neighbor worked in human resources at a community hospital, and one afternoon we were discussing my options for a career choice in medicine. She listed off some careers such as occupational therapy, physical therapy, and respiratory therapy. I'll never forget my response: "What is respiratory therapy? I've never heard of that!"
Inspired by: Several years into my career, I was looking for some motivation. Luckily,

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Weilacher: During nearly five decades of practice, I have had three significant mentors. Two were anesthesiologists: R. David Hinds, MD, from Missouri, and Charles H. Williams, MD, from Texas. They were tutors and colleagues who challenged me technically and directed me intellectually. David E. Rose, MHA, also from Texas, served as an administrative mentor as I took on ever greater managerial responsibilities. I have had numerous outstanding role models, who, in their own ways, served as living templates, directing my behavior by their example and counsel. They include Easton Smith, from Florida, Winfield Singletary, from Texas, Robert Miller, from Maine, Ray Masferrer, from Texas, and Sam Giordano, from Texas, to name a very few.

AARC Times: Did you have a mentor as you were moving up the ranks in the profession, who helped your career?

AARC Times: What do you think has had the biggest impact on the respiratory care profession and why?

Weilacher: I believe the so-called "Sugarloaf Conference" in Philadelphia May 2-4, 1974, had the most profound impact on the profession, one that resonates to this day. The *Proceedings of the Conference on the Scientific Basis of Respiratory Therapy* — the published results — introduced the necessity of examining every aspect of our practice in a scientific manner rather than in empirical terms. For us that signaled the age of evidence-based practice, protocol-driven practice, and the assurance of our value in a patient care environment dedicated to just that: patient care. ■



Jeffrey Davis

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the AARC International Respiratory Congress was convening in Cincinnati, OH, that year. It was my first — of many — Congresses. What an overwhelming feeling of camaraderie I felt in the Grand Ballroom during the opening sessions. I have since attended almost every International Congress.

Mentors include: Two of my mentors are Joseph Huff and Gene Andrews, both very active in the AARC and the Ohio Society for Respiratory Care (OSRC). Joe and I have become close friends. I have learned so much from him — from the organization and work done with the OSRC, to our teamwork on the Program Planning Committee. These men have worked tirelessly for years advancing our great profession.

Biggest change in career: In 2005 I made the difficult decision to leave my great friends and colleagues in Ohio for the sunshine of El Paso, TX, where I took the next step in my career to become director of respiratory care at Las Palmas Medical Center. I have been here almost 16 months now and am making new friends and colleagues. I have become involved in the Texas Society for Respiratory Care's Southwest Region activities.

Stays in the profession because: I don't believe I could have made a better career choice. This feeling runs in the family, as my daughter is a recent graduate of The Ohio State University and is a practicing registered respiratory therapist in Chicago, IL. ■