



**Dr. George Raymond Gerula**  
**July 28, 1937 - August 30, 2024**

Dr. George Gerula passed away on August 30, 2024 at the age of 87. He is survived by his wife Alida, his daughters Agatha and Anne, his sons John and Nathaniel, his sister Gloria and his niece Synthia, and nephews Shawn and Brent.

Dr Gerula was born in Hamilton, Ontario on July 28, 1937. He graduated from medical school at Queen's University in 1963. He did his internship at the Kingston General Hospital from 1964-1966 before completing his Anesthesia residency training at the University of Western Ontario in 1969. He worked at the North Western General Hospital in Toronto briefly before moving back to his hometown, joining the Anesthesia staff at the Hamilton General Hospital in 1972. He continued working in the department as it became the Hamilton Civic Hospitals (after merging with the Henderson General Hospital) and eventually the Hamilton Health Sciences, until he retired in 2000.

Dr. Gerula began his career in Hamilton very soon after the medical school at McMaster was founded (1969) and the Academic Department of Anesthesia was formed (1970). During his career there were many innovations in Anesthesia, including advances in:

- monitoring (pulse oximetry, capnography, non-invasive blood pressure cuff monitoring, and widespread use of ECG during anesthesia);
- equipment (laryngeal mask airways, Swan-Ganz catheters, and use of bronchoscopes for awake fiberoptic intubations);
- drugs (vecuronium, atracurium, propofol, fentanyl, alfentanil, sufentanil, isoflurane, enflurane, sevoflurane, and desflurane);
- chronic pain medicine;
- modern critical care medicine which was only just being developed.

Dr. Gerula evaluated all and adopted most of these advances into his practice but tended to prefer a classic induction cocktail of pentathol and succinylcholine over propofol and rocuronium; he believed non-depolarizing muscle relaxants took too long to do the job and felt their propensity to crystalize with pentathol in the intravenous tubing an avoidable liability. During this induction he loved to say, "you may or may taste garlic but you will fall asleep...". After induction he preferred the security of the endotracheal tube over the ease of the laryngeal mask. Anesthesiologists do have their preferences and Dr. Gerula loved the classic, safe choices and didn't worry about whether he was following or bucking a trend.

Dr. Gerula always had a pleasant demeanour, and this came through with his smile. He was a supportive teacher and encouraged his students not to be pushed into doing things which made them uncomfortable and to think for themselves when making treatment choices. He was a creature of habit and was meticulous about his workspace. In fact, Perla, the longtime Neurosurgery resource nurse listed “Likes to rearrange the furniture” as the first line on Dr. Gerula’s preference card. Indeed, Dr. Gerula often rearranged the equipment in the operating room just to his liking.

His colleagues found Dr. Gerula to be scrupulously fair and he showed this when managing the Department call schedule and vacation schedule. He felt strongly that every member should be treated equally and he would take extra call on himself rather than offload it onto others. At a time when the group was small and the call schedule heavy, Dr. Gerula was among the first to cover for a colleague when needed.

He loved all things tech and was a very early adopter of computers and made a hobby of upgrading his devices at a time when that was a complex adventure without a Youtube video to serve as a guide. This love of tech especially extended to video and he became the Department’s official videographer for all special events. Members of our department were thrilled to see Dr. Gerula at our Christmas party in 2023 at Liuna station, still sporting his trademark grin and his youthful gait at the age of 86.

Dr. Gerula will be missed. He practiced during a seminal time in our specialty, when the sole reliance on raw clinical skills merged with the rapid innovations that would reshape the field.

Dr. Gerula gave his very best to both his patients and students. He will be remembered for his singular and down to earth approach. One of our senior colleagues, Dr. Stephen Puchalski, described him as “a salt of the earth character,” and that he was.