May 14, 2016

I am Karen Eilers, a former administrator in the SOM Dean’s Office who is most fortunate to be a friend and former colleague of Narri’s. Over 20 years ago, I was introduced to this charismatic, highly intelligent, and articulate Italian native whom I was impressed to learn that for 12 years, had been commuting from Davis to UC Berkeley to manage the Italian Department!! Curious about how she spent her time in transit, I learned that she kept abreast of current events reading *The Wall Street Journal* and that sheenjoyed doing crossword puzzles in two languages ~ and reading books in five languages ~ just for pleasure! I immediately knew that the School could benefit from someone of Narri’s intellectual curiosity and dedication!

Fortuitously, shortly thereafter, Rafe deVere White who has a gift for recruiting stellar staff, hired Narri as manager of Urology on April Fool’s Day 1993. Narri passed her first trial by fire…..not by just surviving Rafe…..but in meeting Administration’s first unreasonable deadline! She had been instructed by the Assistant Dean that she had two weeks to learn the nuances of the School’s financial system and to complete the department budget that was due the day prior to her arrival! [This was not an April Fool’s joke!] However, our Narri, confident and tenacious, rose to this daunting challenge, as with many to follow, and presented her budget on **April 15**!

Narri quickly became an acknowledged leader recognized for her integrity and passion for excellence in the School of Medicine and Health System. After successful stints as manager of Urology and the Cancer Center, she joined Psychiatry as Chief Administrative Officer 18 years ago, and with Bob Hales has helped to build one of the finest departments of psychiatry in the country.

Over the years, Narri continued to demonstrate her extraordinary talents and resilience, especially during implementation of incompatible financial systems – for which we were beholden to campus and Office of the President! When we needed to pilot programs, no department manager was more willing to take on the task-- “hands-on”

-- than our Narri who skillfully delved into systems and offered suggestions for improvements. Narri was very protective of her staff and didn’t assign any task that she herself could not master. She always led by example!

While Narri’s contributions to the Health System are too numerous to list, her ability to aptly analyze problems and identify cogent solutions was highly valued. Narri never said, “NO!” On behalf of our Office of Human Resources, she investigated thorny, sensitive personnel issues related to administrative improprieties, harassment and/or personality clashes. Furthermore, she was frequently called upon to represent managers in Health System strategic planning, executive recruitment and administrative reviews. She also aptly chaired the SOM Council of Managers and was often sought as a seasoned mentor to many chief administrative officers. And I, many times, used her as a sounding board and received her valued perspectives ~ oftentimes served up with a cup of her sobering Italian espresso!

Following retirement, I served on a Psychiatry Support Group established by Narri, and I personally witnessed Narri’s firm leadership and nurturing heart in dealing with her staff, faculty, and residents who trusted her implicitly as she was always available, round the clock to listen and give advice and guidance. And Narri ensured that every occasion, whether birthdays, a new baby, or other special achievements, were celebrated! She fostered a professional yet caring and supportive work environment, a balance that is very difficult to achieve!

Narri’s leadership is also recognized for her external contributions as president of the National Association of Academic Psychiatry Administrators. Her unwavering spirit and commitment to excellence helped shape the organization into a highly effective asset

for academic psychiatry.

I was truly honored that Narri was one of the first recipients of the Karen Eilers Award for Staff Excellence for her inspirational leadership and dedication to creating a positive and fruitful working environment aligned with our School and Health System’s missions in education, research, patient care and community service.

Narri, I want to take this opportunity to thank you from my heart for being a tireless professional, an inspirational colleague and an amazing friend.   What a blessing it was to work with you, and I look forward to our next chapter together in retirement! But we’re going to have to work hard at retirement to remedy what your beloved Peter has fun-lovingly characterized as your ”Restless Brain Syndrome”!

You see, with Narri, there is no idle time! I’ve had glimpses of being on holiday with Narri….and I envision a reprise of her “wild E” ride ~ aggressively shifting gears as she drove us up the challenging hills of Cinque Terre, leading us in zumba in the azul waters of the Caribbean, snorkeling and sailing in Turks and Caicos and dancing the night away by moonlight!! Indeed, we will harness her energies to plan more exciting adventures!

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In sincere appreciation of Narri’s giving nature and her positive impact on the School, Health System and our community at large, my husband Carl and I are excited to announce the establishment of an endowed award to be named the "Narriman C. Shahrokh Community Service Award" to be presented annually.    Nominations may include staff, faculty, residents, and fellows in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences.   And we invite YOU, family, friends and her colleagues to join us in donating to this fund to recognize Narri for her exemplary career and contributions to UC Davis and academic psychiatry. A rousing toast to Narri.