

Tirone E. David, recipient of the American Association for Thoracic Surgery Lifetime Achievement Award



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The American Association for Thoracic Surgery (AATS) from time to time honors unusual individuals who have made significant and sustained contributions to the specialty in the areas of patient care, teaching, research, or community service. It is both an honor and a pleasure to introduce Tirone David, 85th president of the AATS in 2005, and the ninth recipient of the AATS Lifetime Achievement Award (Figure 1).

An individual with unusual talent might develop 1 new surgical technique that shifts a minor paradigm; few of us even do that. It strains the definition of unusual to develop techniques that define new paradigms and set standards for technical excellence across many procedures. Tirone David worked patiently over decades to refine the technique for valve-sparing aortic root replacement that bears his name. His eponymous operation has achieved such complete penetration that you need simply to enter *David procedure* into your operating room software and your table will be properly set. Along the way, odds on success in the repair of ischemic ventricular septal defects were dramatically improved with Dr David's infarct exclusion technique, based on insights into pressure/stress relationships that seem so obvious now. He helped define mitral valve repair, and the Ross procedure, and made fundamental contributions to development of the stentless aortic prosthesis.

Elements of personal history are borrowed liberally from the insightful and entertaining short biography written by Vivek Rao and Carolyn David in 2016.¹ Tirone David was born November 20, 1944, in Ribeirao Clara, Brazil. Propelled by family pressure and support to pursue medicine,

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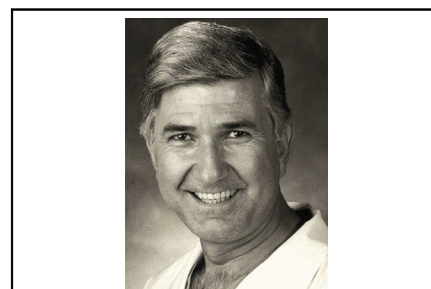
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Tirone the Younger.

CENTRAL MESSAGE

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he obtained his doctorate of medicine degree from the University of Parana in 1968, where he developed a passion for surgery. General surgery training begun at the State University of New York, was completed at the Cleveland Clinic in 1975, followed by cardiothoracic residency at the University of Toronto. By all accounts, he was a prodigy at every step. His first assignment upon joining the faculty was to resurrect the failing cardiac surgery program at Toronto Western Hospital. For a young person right out of training that would usually be a professional suicide mission, but under the young Dr David it soon became the premier unit in the city. This transformation was well along in 1980 when I was applying to cardiothoracic residency programs. I was interviewed by Dr David in his office at Toronto Western. I remember it vividly (he does not, unsurprisingly). Dr David was the most impressive individual I met at all of the places I visited, including the program I eventually chose for training. He was as confident as the sun.

Toronto Western and Toronto General merged in 1989 to form the Toronto Hospital, and Dr David became head of the combined cardiovascular surgery division, a position he held until 2011. He has trained more than 100 cardiac surgeons, many of whom are in leadership roles around the world. Dr David has published nearly 400 scientific papers, 35 textbook chapters, and 4 surgical textbooks.



FIGURE 1. Tirone E. David, recipient of the AATS Lifetime Achievement Award.

He became an honorary member of the Brazilian National Academy of Medicine in 2013. He served on the AATS Council for 4 years and served as secretary for 5 more before becoming vice president, president elect, then president in 2004-2005. Dr David received the AATS Scientific Achievement award in 2016. He received the Order of Ontario in 1993, and the Order of Canada in 1996, which is the highest honor given to civilians in Canada. Dr David was appointed university professor in 2004, which is the highest honor given to faculty in the University of Toronto. Our honoree has achieved enough for several lifetimes.

How did Tirone David achieve these things? In his Presidential Address,² Dr David thoroughly and thoughtfully analyzed many factors that contribute to exceptional skill in surgeons. He covered knowledge, judgment, and dexterity insightfully. But he landed hardest on caring, which he called "...the most important component of work ethics in the practice of medicine." He concluded, "Finally, they monitor their own performance obsessively and worry constructively. They worry because they care." Tirone David worries and cares.

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