Professor Mario Gerla (1943-2019)

Professor Mario Gerla passed away on February 9, 2019 after a prolonged battle with pancreatic cancer. He was 75 years old.

Mario was born in Arona, Italy in 1943 and grew up in Milan. He received an EE degree from the Politecnico di Milano in 1966 and completed service in the Italian navy before moving to the United States in 1969 to join the team at UCLA working on the ARPANET led by his advisor Leonard Kleinrock. He received his MS and PhD degrees from UCLA in 1970 and 1973, respectively. From 1973 to 1976, he was a manager in Network Analysis Corporation in Glen Cove, NY, where he was involved in several computer network design projects for both government and industry.

Since 1977, Mario has been on the Faculty of the Computer Science Department of UCLA, where he held the Jonathan B. Postel Chair and served as Department Chair from 2015 to 2018. He was the Director of the Center for Autonomous Intelligent Networks and the Network Research Lab.

Mario’s research focused on the design, performance evaluation, and control of distributed computer communication systems and networks. As a pioneer in computer networking, his early work optimized that which we now know as the Internet. Over the course of his career at UCLA he graduated more than 100 PhD students from all over the world and published more than 1,000 papers. For his work in the field of mobile ad hoc networks he was made a Fellow of IEEE and ACM, received the SIGMOBILE Outstanding Contribution Award, and was recognized for lifetime achievement awards by INFOCOM and MILCOM.

Although he left Italy nearly 50 years ago, he always maintained a close connection with research colleagues in his homeland. He helped to found the Italian Scientists and Scholars of North America Foundation (ISSNAF) and was awarded a knighthood by the President of Italy in 2002, the Cavaliere Ufficiale in the Order of Merit of the Republic of Italy (OMRI).

Mario was a marathoner, triathlete and member of the UCLA Masters Swim Club. He was also an ardent traveler who was proud to have visited all 7 continents and swum in 6 of 7 seas during his lifetime.

Mario is survived by his wife, his two daughters, his three siblings, many beloved nieces and nephews, and the global community of friends, colleagues, and students whom he touched with his intellect, kindness, gioia di vivere, and warm smile.