

Historical Happenings

Newsletter of the Physician Assistant History Society

Message from the President

Stephen D. Wilson, PA-C



It has been my privilege to serve on the PA History Society Board of Trustees for the last 2 years under the capable leadership of Immediate Past President [Debi Gerbert](#). Debi and I have been colleagues and friends for most of our PA life. She has handed me

the gavel and a great opportunity to continue the PA History Society leadership legacy of fulfilling our charge that began [20 years ago this year!](#) This milestone, as with many accomplishments in our professional history, is thanks to the vision and voluntary leadership over the years. In the case of the Society, it was the vision of [Reg Carter](#) and the late [Jeff Heinrich](#).

Every incoming volunteer organizational president has the responsibility to build upon what previous presidents have brought to an organization. As I begin my term as the President of the PA History Society, I find myself benefiting not only from the past [13 PAHx Presidents'](#) leadership of the Society, but also their leadership in the profession, other organizations, and the PA educational process. The ones who come before inspire others to lead, and thus inspire a new generation. Leadership brings the blessings of friendships that last a lifetime. The PAHx [website](#) is filled with inspirational stories of what is possible as a leader.

As the [Society celebrates its 20th Anniversary](#), I encourage everyone to visit the PAHx's comprehensive website (www.pahx.org) that features over 50 years of the profession's history. As the PA History Society continues to strive and capture the wonderful things that PAs have accomplished, we will always have room for one more story. I hope it will be about you.

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I would like to welcome our new board members, Trustee Richard Vause and Student Trustee Joshua Penninger. You can read more about them on page 2 of this newsletter and soon their complete biographies on the [PAHx website](#).

The PA History Society Turns 20!

As the PAHx celebrates its anniversary this year, the Board of Trustees would like to thank Reginald D. Carter, PhD, PA, and the late J. Jeffrey Heinrich, EdD, PA, for their vision in establishing the organization. Together with a group of dedicated PAs, their ideas came to fruition and the Society was incorporated on January 17, 2002. Please join us as we celebrate the Society's Anniversary throughout 2022 by visiting our [website](#) often to learn more about the PA profession, its milestones, and the history of the PAHx itself! **Share your PA story for consideration to be featured on the Society's 20th Anniversary webpage by emailing us at contactus@pahx.org.**



New Trustees Begin PAHx Board Service in 2022

*"Volunteers do not necessarily have the time, they just have the heart." Elizabeth Andrew**

The Board of Directors of the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants approved two new members of the PAHx Board of Trustees during their November 2021 Board Meeting. The new PAHx Board Members will fill the vacancies created by Henry H. Heard, DHSc, PA-C Emeritus, and Student Trustee Madison Taylor, PA-C, whose terms of service concluded at the end of 2021.

The PAHx held its new Board member orientation in January to welcome Trustee **Richard Vause, Jr.**, DHSc, MPAS, PA-C, FCPP, DFAAPA, Captain USPHS (retired) and Student Trustee **Joshua Penninger**, MSM, PA-S1.

Dr. Vause has over 40 years of experience as a PA in clinical and academic settings, in addition to serving in the US Army and US Public Health Service. He



Rich Vause

has given back to the PA profession by being an active member of the Society of Army PAs, the USPHS Academy of PAs, the Veterans Caucus, the Florida and Pennsylvania Academies, the House of Delegates and numerous AAPA committees. Vause is looking forward to being on the PAHx Board and expanding the profession's history to not only PAs, but also to the public.



Josh Penninger

Mr. Penninger received his Master of Science in Management in May 2021 from the Wake Forest University School of Business, and he is currently attending the Wake Forest School of Medicine Dept. of PA Studies. Penninger has been interested in the history

of the profession for many years. As a Pre-PA student, he attended the 2018 AAPA conference to meet Ken Ferrell, one of the three original PAs, at the PAHx booth. Besides his passions for healthcare and history, Penninger also loves writing and is excited to serve on the PAHx Newsletter Committee.

** Elizabeth Andrews (1882–1960) was the first woman organizer of the Labor Party in Wales.*

PAHx Fun Facts: 2002 – 2011

- 2002 – 2007: PAHx is a membership organization**
- ✓ 2002: The first issue of the PAHx Newsletter hits the stands
 - ✓ 2003: The PAHx records first oral history interview
 - ✓ 2004: The first PA History workshop is held
 - ✓ 2006: The Society creates a museum replica of Dr. Stead's Lake Home Office at the Stead Center in Durham, NC
- 2007 – 2010: PAHx is a supporting organization of the AAPA**
- ✓ 2007: Don Pedersen raises funds for a replica of the statue Life Savers Then... Caregivers Now to be installed in the Stead Center Garden
- 2011: PAHx becomes a supporting organization of the NCCPA**

The Development and Expansion of Dental Therapists in the U.S.: Parallels to PA History

*Ruth Ballweg, MPA, PA-C Emeritus
 PAHx Historian*

This is the conclusion of a two-part series. The first part of this article ran in the fall 2021 issue of *Historical Happenings*, and it can be accessed here: <https://pahx.org/pa-history-society-newsletter/>

Part 2

Dentist Dr. Louis Fiset created the curriculum for the Alaska Dental Therapy Program and MEDEX Program Administrator Jennifer Johnston supported the program internally within the University of Washington system, including gaining authorization for UW academic credit for the Dental Therapy students.

The joint program between the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC) and the University of Washington/MEDEX graduated its first Dental Therapy class in 2009 with the requirement that these new dental therapists would be assigned and employed in rural communities with poor dental access. Dental Hygienist Colleen Brickle currently leads the program.

The Alaska Native Tribal Health Corporation (ANTHC), created to find and manage health resources and encourage collaboration between Alaska Native villages and corporations, sent their Dental Director, Dr. Ron Nagle, to New Zealand to see what arrangements he could make with the University of Otago located in Dunedin on the South Island. After meeting with Dental Therapy trainers, Drs. Don and Rosemary Kardos agreed that two cohorts (6 students each) would come from Alaska to be trained in Dental Therapists classroom content and then return to Alaska for their Clinical Year. In the meantime, ANTHC would make the contacts necessary to create an Alaska-specific Dental Therapy curriculum to train their young post-high school students from the beginning and return them to their Native villages just as they had with the

Community Health Aides who provide primary care through Alaska remote villages.

As was originally planned, the academic home for the Alaska Dental Therapy Education Program was transferred from the University of Washington to the Alaska Native Illisagvik College in Barrow, Alaska in 2014 and offers a 2-year Applied Associates Degree. Didactic education is presented in Anchorage in cooperation with the Alaska Native Tribal Health Corporation with clinical training in Bethel and throughout rural Alaska. Illisagvik is the only tribally controlled college in Alaska, and is the northernmost community college located in the United States.

(Dental Therapists, continued on page 4)

In His Own Words: Daniel Lee McNeill, PhD, PA-C

*Bruna Varalli-Claypool, MHS, PA-C
 PAHx Trustee & Newsletter Editor*

Dan McNeill's PA career has spanned over 30 years. He is a recognized scientist, educator, and mentor. Dr. McNeill is a former program director and professor at the University of Oklahoma and founding program director at the Oklahoma City University PA Program.



Who is your favorite singer?

I honestly don't have a favorite singer. My playlist is wildly diverse with music spanning about 80 years. One day Buffett is my guy, the next it'll be Andrea Bocelli, the next Keb'Mo - and let's don't forget Sam & Dave. Then Broadway show tunes, and finally, to really make you scratch your head, the end credit song from the movie "Cast Away," as performed by the City of Prague Philharmonic Orchestra, is as beautiful and soulful a piece of music as there ever was.

(Dan McNeill, continued on page 4)

(Dental Therapists, continued from page 3)

Nationally, the Dental Therapy movement continues to be developed and supported by a variety of funding sources—primarily from major US foundations. Subsequently, dental therapy has been authorized in **Minnesota, Maine, Vermont, Arizona, Michigan, New Mexico, Nevada, and Connecticut**. In addition, Washington, Idaho, and Montana have authorized dental therapists to practice on tribal lands with licensing and regulatory processes managed by the Swinomish Tribe’s Dental Licensing Board. Two retired University of Washington MEDEX faculty members, dentist Dr. Louis Fiset and former Program Director Ruth Ballweg, serve on this board and continue to support the training and utilization of Dental Therapists nation-wide.



Dr. Fiset and Ms. Johnston visiting Wasilla, AK

(Dan McNeill, continued from page 3)

Favorite song?

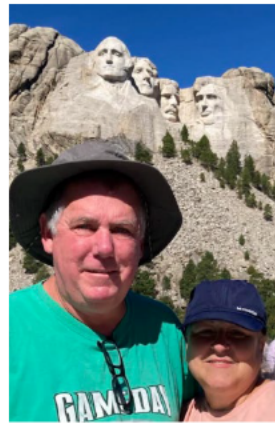
Sitting here right now, on my porch in the Cayman Islands, it’s *Never Enough*, as performed by Loren Allred from the movie, *The Greatest Showman*. Her performance of this song is powerful and moving. Ask me tomorrow and it’ll be something completely different.

What has working in academia taught you about yourself that you didn’t know before?

Even at 64 years old and having taught over 30 years, there is still so much to learn. Being in academia and surrounded by inquisitive students gives me that opportunity.

What would you tell early career PA educators when they ask you about entering PA education?

I tell them you have to have a passion for learning, teaching, and helping students grow. You have to set the bar high for yourself and your students.

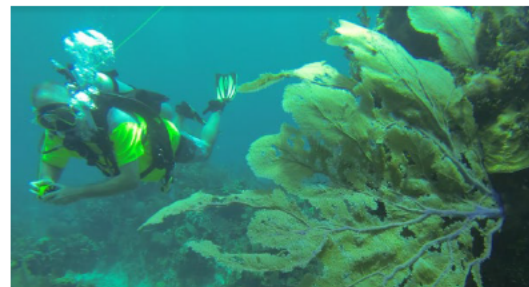


Where will your retirement home be?

Well, since I will have left full-time employment by the time this is published, my lovely wife Kelly and I will be dividing our time between our homes at Lake Eufaula in eastern Oklahoma and on Cayman Brac in the British West Indies.

What is your favorite food?

Anything from the water. Or from India, Mexico, Italy, Asia, Greece, or off the backyard grill!



What do you do for fun?

If I’m at Lake Eufaula, it’s fishing, hunting, and pulling the grandkids on tubes or boards. If we’re on the Brac, it’s SCUBA, snorkeling, or just relaxing and listening to the waves.

Visit the Society’s website for all things PA history! www.pahx.org



Then vs. Now: A Comparison of PA Salaries

Joshua Penninger, MSM, PA-S
Morgan Swan, MSM, PA-S

Today, the PA profession is a high-paying occupation. In 2020, the median PA salary of \$110,000 was 72.48% above the median *individual* American worker’s salary of \$51,480 and 47.86% above the national median *household* income of \$67,521, but has this always been the case?

A retrospective look at data from a series of surveys sponsored by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation in the late 70s and early 80s and annual AAPA membership census reports from 1989-2010 can answer this question. The earliest accessible and comprehensive records of PA salary data from 1981, suggest an average PA salary in 1976 was \$13,941. Using the Consumer Price index, \$13,941 equates to \$69,906 modern-day dollars, 30% more than today’s median *individual* American worker’s salary. However, the median household income in 1976 was \$14,960, revealing that the average *individual* PA income during that time was only 7.05% less than the median *household* income of that time.

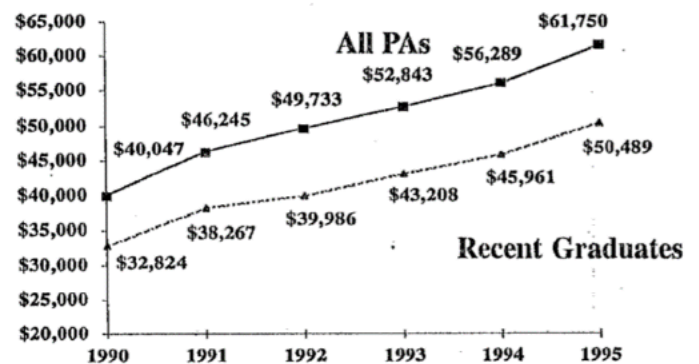
Four years later, in 1980, the median PA income increased to \$21,000, 0.01% less than the median household income at that time (\$21,020). Later, in 1990, the average PA income nearly doubled to \$40,047. This is 28.87% more than the median household income in 1990 (\$29,943). Ten years later, in 2000, the median PA salary jumped to \$65,177 and was 42.91% above the median household income in 2000 (\$42,148). This trend continued in 2010 when the median PA salary skyrocketed to \$90,000, 58.17% above the median household income (\$49,445). As mentioned previously, the 2020 median PA salary was \$110,000, which is 47.86% above the median family income (\$67,521). From 2010 to 2021, the median household income in America showed a significant increase which offsets some of the growth of the median PA salary when comparing the two.

Based upon the data presented above, the salary of physician assistants through the years has not always

been comparable to what it is now in terms of purchasing power concerning inflation and median household income. In other words, the magnitude of salary that a PA in the 1970s-1990s received is not the same as the salary of a PA in today’s economy. Most PA students and early career PAs do not realize this, and it is important to know so we can give proper homage to the PAs who advocated for the profession well before us. Ultimately, the current PA salary represents how, as PAs have expanded their scope of practice, they have become a stronger asset to the healthcare team. Their compensation has gradually grown to reflect that. By adding value through efficiency, productivity, and access to care, PAs have demonstrated that their worth demands a salary that is proportional to that value.

Year	PA Salary	% Difference of Median Household Income of the same year
1976	\$13,941 (average)	-7.05%
1980	\$21,000 (median)	-0.01%
1990	\$40,047 (average)	+28.87%
2000	\$65,177 (median)	+42.91%
2010	\$90,000 (median)	+58.17%
2020	\$110,000 (median)	+47.86%

Figure 1 — Total Mean Income by Year



(For all PA-related work, performed by civilian PAs in full-time clinical practice. Source: AAPA Annual Member Census, 1990-1995.)

Accessed from 1995 AAPA News Article, January 29, 2022

(Then and Now Salaries, continued on page 6)

(Then and Now Salaries, continued from page 5)

Income

The average income for civilian, patient care PAs in 1980 was \$22,179. In 1978, the average income of PAs was \$17,611 and in 1976, \$13,941. This implies an annual percentage growth in PA income of 14.8% from 1976 to 1980. Average salaries are highest in the west (see Table VIII) with little differences noted between other regions. The highest percentage increase in salaries from 1978 occurred in South Central states, about 32%. Alaska had the highest reported average salaries, \$33,361, and North Dakota the lowest, \$17,700.

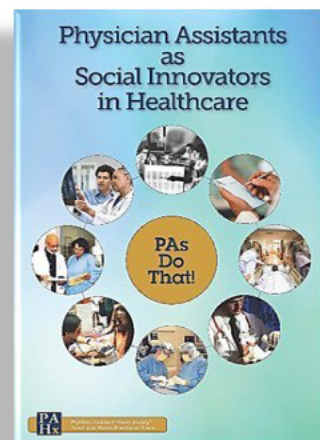
Accessed from Preliminary Report: 1981 National Physician Assistant Survey, January 29, 2022

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<https://www.census.gov/library/publications/2021/demo/p60-273.html>

Coming Soon ... The Society's Next PA History Book!

The PA History Society's newest educational resource will be published in April 2022. *Physician Assistants as Social Innovators in Healthcare* presents the history of the PA profession as a social innovation that has changed and improved the way medical, surgical, and preventive healthcare services are delivered. It explores transformations that have taken place over the past 54 years to ensure that the PA innovation continues to meet societal needs for effective, efficient, and affordable healthcare services. Watch for more details about the book on the Society's social media outlets and website this spring.



From the Archives: The Clara E. Vanderbilt Papers

Michelle N. Schabowski, MSIS, CA

Clara Vanderbilt is a 1971 graduate from the Duke PA Program. She was the first surgical PA intern and worked at the Montefiore Medical Center where she established the first postgraduate residencies in surgery. She was Associate Director and then Director of the PA surgical residency program at Montefiore Medical Center and traveled across the country to establish similar residency programs for PAs. She also served the profession on the early boards of the AAPA, the New York State Society of PAs, and the Association of Postgraduate Physician Assistant Programs.

(Clara Vanderbilt Papers, continued on page 7)

PAHx Fun Facts: 2012 – 2022

- 2012:** PAHx Associates program is established with exclusive educational resources
- 2013:** *The Physician Assistant: An Illustrated History* book is published
- 2014:** Development of the traveling PA Banner exhibition begins in partnership with the National Library of Medicine
- 2015:** PAHx launches the Educational Learning Modules and Historian Toolkit
- 2016:** PAHx contacts current cartoonist of *Gasoline Alley* to bring Chipper Wallet, PA-C, back into comic strip for PA profession's 50th Anniversary
- 2017:** PAHx celebrates the PA profession's 50th and the Society's 15th Anniversaries with a reception and dedication of the *only* PA Veterans Garden at the Stead Center
- 2018:** PAHx holds first PA Historian Boot Camp; a two-day workshop, which offers AAPA approved CME Category 1 credit
- 2019:** PAHx produces video tour of the Stead Center and PA Veterans Garden
- 2020:** PAHx launches Celebration and Anniversary Planner for Associates
- 2020:** COVID strikes and the PAHx goes virtual and successfully participates in speaking engagements, board meetings, recording interviews, and continuing "business as usual"
- 2022:** PAHx Celebrates 20th Anniversary
- 2022:** The Society's latest book, *Physician Assistants as Social Innovators in Healthcare*, to be published this spring

(Clara Vanderbilt Papers, continued from page 6)

Vanderbilt donated her papers to the Society in 2011 where they were processed and added to the Society's digital card catalog in 2015. The collection contains primary sources dealing with the early years of the New York State Society of PAs, the American Academy, the NCCPA, the Association of Physician Assistant Programs and the PA profession as a whole. Materials consists of board meeting and committee meeting minutes, correspondence, newsletters, reports, and articles.



This collection will be helpful to those interested in the early discussions of certification and recertification of PAs, continuing medical education, Medicare reimbursement for PAs, PA practice legislation and legal proceedings, and specialty PA programs and surgical assistants/PAs working in surgery. These collected materials span from 1970-1987.

Please visit the following link to see the finding aid of the Clara Vanderbilt papers:

<https://pahx.pastperfectonline.com/archive/B6B28BD4-060B-4A46-B746-291993539119>

If you are interested to learn more about Clara Vanderbilt, please visit her biography:

<https://pahx.org/assistants/vanderbilt-clara-e/>

You may also listen to her audio only oral history interview here:

<https://pahx.pastperfectonline.com/archive/D5DEE170-A210-43F8-AB28-921742426150>

If you think anything in the collection may help in your research, please contact the PA History Society to request more information or digital copies of the relevant materials: contactus@pahx.org



February is Black History Month! Visit the PA History Society's website to learn more about the contributions

African American PAs have made to not only the PA profession, but also to their patients and communities!

<https://pahx.org/news/black-history-month/>



Photo: John Davis, Joyce Nichols, Percy Golson, AAPA Conf. 2006

Steadisms Told Here

Reginald Carter, Ph.D., PA

“The art of medicine is not confined to organic disease; it deals with the mind of the patient and with his (or her) behavior as a thinking, feeling human being. The essential skills depend not simply on instruction but on emotional maturity manifest by sensitive self-cultivation of the ability to see deeply and accurately the problems of another human being. The challenge is further magnified by the fact that the examining clinician is himself (or herself) a human instrument, subject to error due to events in his (or her) own biography.” Eugene A. Stead, Jr.



When the family of the late Eugene and Evelyn Stead sold their parent’s lake home in North Carolina, they donated a wooden sign to the PA History Society that had been placed at the entrance to the

property. The sign had written in bold letters, “Steadisms Told Here.” It was a gift to the Steads from their caretaker, John Williams, who lived next door in the Stead’s guest house. Steadisms refer to quotes or statements made by Dr. Eugene A. Stead, Jr. that were collected over time from in person encounters or from Stead’s publications and correspondence. As a collection, they give insight to Dr. Stead’s philosophy about a broad range of subjects that include teaching, clinical training, and taking care of patients and one’s self. Two books have been published containing Steadisms: *E.A. Stead Jr.: What this patient needs is a doctor*, edited by Galen Wagner, Bess Cebe and Marvin Rozear, and *Just Say for Me**, collected by Fred Schoonmaker and Earl Metz. The Society’s intent was to place the sign in the garden located at the back entrance to the Stead Center in Durham, NC. The garden already contains bronze statuettes that were donated to the Society by the Stead family after Dr. Stead’s death in June 2005. However, time and weather had deteriorated the wooden sign beyond repair. Consequently, a new wooden replica of the original sign was created by the PAHx and placed in the

garden at the Stead Center in January. The sign reminds us how fortunate we are as a profession to have been established by such far thinking and deeply dedicated physicians, such as Drs. Stead, Silver, Myers, Kirklin and Smith. (* *Just Say for Me* books can be purchased from the Society by clicking [here](#).)

Replica of the wooden sign at the entrance to the Stead Center’s Garden located in Durham, NC



Passages: PAHx Remembers Early PAs and a PA Advocate

John D. Trimbath, PA-C, MPAS – Mr. Trimbath became interested in a career in medicine while serving in the US Air Force as an aircraft mechanic. As a 1979 graduate of the George Washington University PA program, he influenced governmental



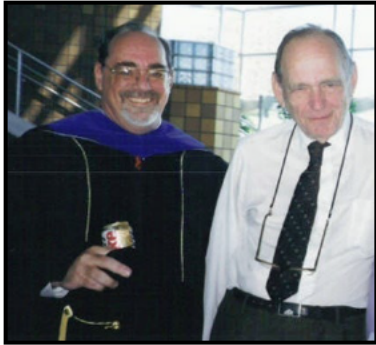
policy and hospital bylaws that are used in many institutions across the nation. He served on the Board of Directors for the Ohio Association of Physician Assistants and the AAPA. Mr. Trimbath passed

away on November 8, 2021. To learn more about Mr. Trimbath, please view his Biography on our website: <https://pahx.org/assistants/trimbath-john-d/> and his Oral History at: <https://vimeo.com/516413323>

(Passages, continued on page 9)

(Passages, continued from page 8)

Barry A. Cassidy, PhD, PA-C served in the US Air Force, he enrolled in the Duke University PA Program in 1969. As many other PA students during that time, Cassidy's admission to the program was



based upon his experience as a former military corpsman because he did not have a college degree. After graduating from the Duke PA program, he earned his Bachelor of Science

degree and his Doctorate in Philosophy. He was the first PA to practice in Illinois, the first cardiothoracic PA to practice in the Arizona Mayo Clinic, and the first PA to hold an executive director position on a state medical board. After his retirement from the PA profession, he went on to serve as a police officer working in the Family Investigations Bureau. PA Educator Dr. Cassidy passed December 16, 2021. To learn more about Dr. Cassidy, please view his Biography on our website: <https://pahx.org/assistants/cassidy-barry-a/>

Lawrence M. "Mac" Detmer, MHA – Mr. Detmer was involved in the development of the initial policies and procedures used to accredit PA programs based upon a set of established "Essentials". These "Essentials" became the basis for the ARC-PA's Standards of Accreditation.

During his career Mr. Detmer was involved in the ARC-PA, AAPA and APAP (now PAEA). He also served as the Executive Director of the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP) from 1994 until his retirement in 1998. Mr. Detmer passed away on December 11, 2021. To learn more about Mr. Detmer, please view his Biography on our website: <https://pahx.org/assistants/detmer-lawrence-m-mac/>



The Vibrant PA Banner Exhibit is Available, *Once Again!*

The PAHx has received one set of the colorful, informative PA banner exhibit to share with our PAHx Associates and the PA community. The Society created this exclusive 6-banner exhibition in collaboration with the National Library of Medicine. The banners started traveling across the US in 2017 until the COVID pandemic caused the exhibit to stop in 2020.

Each of the six banners is 85" high x 33.5" wide and host venues will need floor space of approximately 20 feet long by 3 feet wide to display the 6 banners. The 6-set banner exhibit comes packed in one container which measures 48" H x 19" W x 19" D and weighs 70 lbs. The container is on wheels.

Although there is no charge to host the banner exhibit, each host venue will be required to pay for 3-day FEDEX shipping to and from the PAHx office to the host location. The estimated cost for one-way is between \$350 - \$700 for FedEx's 3-day Express Saver service. You can contact FedEx at 1-800-463-3339 or go online (www.fedex.com) to get an estimate of the shipping costs to your location from the PAHx office.

For more information and current availability to host the PAHx 6-set banner exhibit, please email us at: contactus@pahx.org.



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Newsletter Editor

Bruna Varalli-Claypool, MHS, PA-C

Email: bvaralli@ouhsc.edu

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PAHx Office: 678-417-8682

A Reason to Celebrate

As we celebrate the **20th Anniversary of the PA History Society**, it is interesting to look back at the early days. The Society's [first edition of the newsletter](#) was published in the summer of 2002 and was titled *Society for the Preservation of Physician Assistant History Newsletter*. This newsletter was printed and delivered by the US Postal Service. Now, known as *Historical Happenings*, the quarterly newsletter continues to be published for a growing PA community and is distributed electronically. In reviewing our online archival [collection of newsletters](#), you too can read about the many achievements the PAHx has made over the past 20 years. It truly is a reason to celebrate!

20 YEARS PRESERVING HISTORY

1,040 PRODUCTIVE WEEKS

50 BOARD MEETINGS

56 JOURNAL SERIES

257 BIOGRAPHIES

50 NEWSLETTERS

2,500 IMAGES

410 BOOKS

59 SERIALS

200 VIDEOS

274 REPORTS

920 ARTICLES

230 INTERVIEWS

37 MANUSCRIPTS

35 DISSERTATIONS

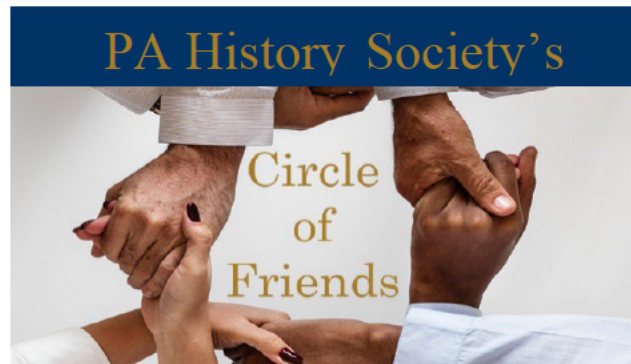
56 JOURNAL SERIES

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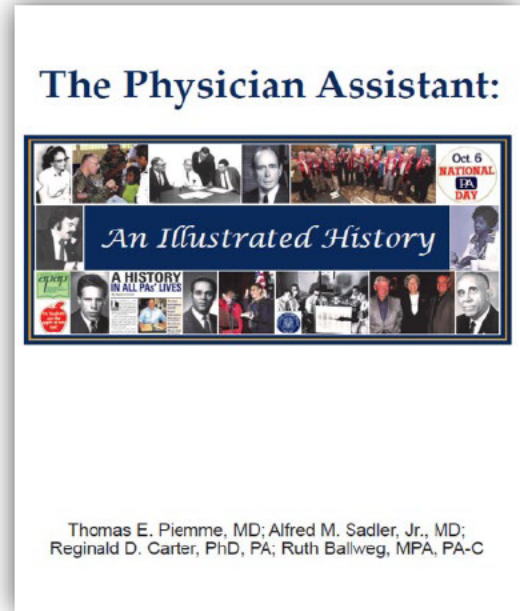
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