

# Historical Happenings

## Newsletter of the PA History Society



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### Message from the President

*Robert S. Smith, DHSc, MS, PA-C, DFAAPA*

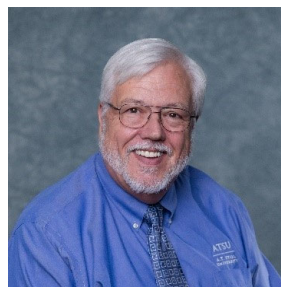


2024 brings the promise of new things, new opportunities, and new commitments. Our PAHx Society is no different. January ushered in a change in the leadership with me taking the reins of the Society and [Richard C. Vause, Jr.](#), DHSc, PA-C Emeritus, FCPP, DFAAPA, serving as President-Elect. We also welcomed new Trustees: **Randy Danielsen**, PhD, DHL(h), PA-C, Emeritus, DFAAPA and student **Alec Williams**, PA-S.

During our Board of Trustees meeting in November 2023, we reviewed our Strategic Plan for 2024 with four pillar goals. Our first goal is to continue to collect, assess, and preserve relevant information about our profession. For our second goal, the PAHx will continue to disseminate information about our profession to the public, other professional

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### PAHx Welcomes New Trustees



The PAHx is pleased to announce that Randy Danielsen, PhD, DHL (h), PA-C Emeritus, DFAAPA, has joined the Society's

Board of Trustees. Dr. Danielsen is Professor & Director of the Doctor of Medical Science Program at A.T. Still University. Along with his outstanding PA career, Dr. Danielsen served in the US Air Force and Army National Guard. Read more about Dr. Danielsen's career from his [biography here](#).

The Society's 2024 Student Trustee is Alec Williams, PA-S. Mr. Williams is a second year PA student at Quinnipiac University currently participating in his clinical rotations. He has been an active member of the AAPA Student Academy and the Connecticut Academy of PAs. You can learn more about Mr. William's career interests from his [biography here](#).



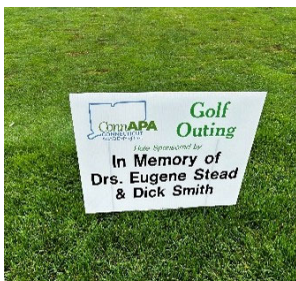
## Enjoying a Round of Golf to Celebrate PA Week

By Bill Kohlhepp, DHSc, PA-C, DFAAPA  
Secretary/Treasurer, PAHx Board of Trustees

For me, PA Week is not about saying “aren’t PAs wonderful”. It’s about PAs doing wonderful things in communities as a way of recognizing the anniversary of the start of the PA profession. During PA Week ‘23, the Connecticut Academy of PAs (ConnAPA) sponsored its first golf outing. AAPA President Folusho Ogunfiditimi was at the event, showing his support for PA Week and ConnAPA. More than 80 golfers came together to raise money for the [Hole in the Wall Gang Camp](#) and CT PAF student scholarships. The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp, started by actor Paul Newman, provides free, medically supervised summer camps and programs for children with serious illnesses and their families in the Northeast. The CT PA Foundation sponsors scholarships for PA students. Through the success of the event, ConnAPA made charitable donations to both organizations.



As a ConnAPA member for 45 years myself, I wanted to do something special in support of the event, so I donated money to sponsor several holes. When it came time to recognize those donations on signs at the sponsored holes, I decided to focus the spotlight on PA history – one hole had a sign saying, “Sponsored by the PA History Society” and the other sign said, “Sponsored in memory of Drs. Eugene Stead and Dick Smith”. Historical footnote about the CT PAF – the late J. Jeffrey Heinrich started the CT PAF. As one of ConnAPA’s early leaders, he saw the need for an organization that sponsored student scholarships.



Heinrich is also one of the founders of the PA History Society.

## The Importance of Student Historians

By Michelle Schabowski, MSIS, CA

A class historian gives a sense of community to the PA cohort and builds a strong relationship between students, faculty, and alumni associations. They ensure that there is a record of the important events, accomplishments, and milestones, not only for the class they are assigned to, but also for the legacy of the PA program itself. A class historian also guarantees that there will be photographs and other things to share during class reunions and the PA program’s big celebration events, such as anniversaries and PA Week.

Students who are appointed to the role of class historian for their cohort may be unsure as to what the role entails. The main task of any historian is to oversee their class’s (or organization or group, etc.) journey and ensure that it is documented through photographs, articles, and records of milestones and class activities. A class historian will attend student events to take photographs and make sure that their classmates turn in their own photos either to them or to a central repository (such as a Facebook Group). A class historian should also collect meeting minutes of any student-led group or activity, articles written by or about any student in their graduating class, and written accounts or recordings of students sharing unique experiences while they were with the PA program (such as overseas volunteer trips, special awards, grants, or community outreach activities.)

Besides having a class historian for each cohort, each PA program should appoint a staff or faculty member to be the historian advisor. This will be the constant link between class historians from graduating class to graduating class. At the end of each class historian’s tenure, they will turn over all the photographs, stories, articles and writeups that they have gathered from their classmates throughout the years as students and turn them into the historian advisor.

(Continued on page 8)

## (President's Message continued from page 1)

organizations, and academic institutions. The third goal ensures that PAHx continues to expand, support, and enhance historical projects relevant to our profession, and the final goal is to increase the stakeholders' utilization of resources available at the PAHx Society.

To accomplish these tasks, our Trustees have all selected committees to tackle these challenges. Our Immediate Past President, [Steve Wilson](#), will be leading our Nominating Committee for our 2025 Trustee applications as we strive to regionalize our organization to better reach and gather material for our archives from each corner of the country.

A shout out to our staff, Lori, Michelle, and Connie, who have been working hard the past year to update our website, facilitate the distribution of our latest book: **Physician Assistants as Social Innovators in Healthcare Book** (available on our [website](#)), and create new exhibits from the PAHx archives for display at the [Stead Center](#), in Durham, NC.

A special thanks to all the organizations that continue to support our mission, and vision, and work. Finally, a big thank you to [Dawn Morton-Rias](#), EdD, PA-C, ICE-CCP, FACHE, NCCPA CEO/PAHx Executive Director, and the NCCPA Board of Directors for their continued support and expertise. I'm looking forward to a great and exciting year; stay tuned for more information!

## Become a PA Historian: Preserving PA History

A small group interactive CME session during the AAPA Conference in Houston  
Tuesday, May 21 at 2pm (CT).

### Learn the value of:

- saving historical materials
- recording organizational leadership and historical events
- identifying what needs to be preserved
- understanding basic archival tenets
- creating a historical timeline, writing biographies, conducting interviews about crucial events, and ensuring special events are photographed, recorded, and much more!



## In Her Own Words: Debra S. Munsell, DHS, PA-C, DFAAPA, PAHx Trustee

By Bruna Varalli-Claypool, BBA, MHS,  
PA-C, DFAAPA, PAHx Trustee



### What is the last book you read?

The most recent book was *Among the Bros: A Fraternity Crime Story* by Max Marshall. It is an eye-opening account of recent crimes involving national Greek Fraternities. I am now

reading *Astor: The Rise and Fall of an American Fortune* by Anderson Cooper and Katherine Howe. It recounts a Gilded Age family and their influences on American society as their fortunes developed and eventually declined.

### You have been the Inaugural Program Director for two PA Programs. What have those experiences taught you about yourself?

I have learned a great deal from these experiences. As for myself, I have learned that I can be flexible, without compromising my integrity. Also, I learned that I have a reserve of resilience that I had not fully tapped.

### Where will your retirement home be?

My husband and I are doing research on this subject constantly. We have a lovely place in Mississippi, but our families are in Texas and Cape Cod, Massachusetts. The current economy may dictate retirement in place. Ideally, I would love to settle in the Texas Hill Country around La Grange.

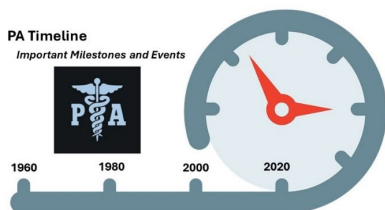
### How did you become a member of the Meridian, Mississippi Symphony Board of Directors?

I have always been drawn to music in any form. I participated in the band in junior high, high school, and college, playing flute, oboe, and tenor saxophone.

(Continued on page 5)



## From the PA Illustrated History



Here we are in 2024. This year, Facebook will celebrate its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary and Amazon its 30<sup>th</sup> year of existence. The PA profession will be celebrating some pivotal events this year as well. So, the beginning of a new year is always a good time to look back on how our own profession has evolved over the years. Here are some pivotal events drawn from the Society's [Illustrated History Timeline](#):

### 60 Years Ago - 1964

[Eugene A. Stead Jr.](#), MD, disillusioned by organized nursing's rejection of the advanced nurse clinician program that he and nurse educator, [Thelma Ingles](#), had developed, announces in [a letter](#) to Duke Hospital Administrator, Charles H. Frenzel, his intention to develop a program for the "physician's assistant", using former military corpsmen, modeled after the relationship between [Amos N. Johnson](#), MD, and [Henry Lee "Buddy" Treadwell](#), his assistant, that was well known in the North Carolina community.

### 50 Years Ago – 1974

The [AAPA and APAP joint national office opens](#) in Washington, D.C. [Donald W Fisher](#), PhD, serves as the first executive director.

Fourteen national health organizations come together to form the [National Commission on Certification of Physician's Assistants \(NCCPA\)](#) to provide oversight regarding eligibility and standards for the NBME examination, and to assure state medical boards, employers and the public of the competency of PAs. [Thomas E. Piemme](#), MD, is elected the first President. [David L. Glazer](#) is selected as the first Executive Director. A [national office is opened](#) the following year in Atlanta, GA.

### 25 Years Ago – 1999

The NCCPA's Physician Assistant National Certifying Examination (PANCE) is administered for the first time by computer at multiple sites around the country through a process developed by the National Board of Medical Examiners, and already in place for the licensing of physicians. The [computer-based examination](#) soon becomes universal for certification and licensure of all health professionals throughout the country.

### 10 Years Ago – 2014

One of the largest healthcare systems to use PAs, the Veterans Health Administration (VA), updates its Utilization Guidelines for PAs. The updated guidelines enhance the use of PAs while continuing to embrace a patient-centered and team-based approach to practicing medicine. The directive establishes a [new guideline](#) that allows PAs, within defined limits, to exercise autonomous medical decision-making.

Following preliminary discussions which began in August 2014, the PA History Society signs a contract with the National Library of Medicine (NLM) to develop a [traveling exhibit](#) consisting of six banners that highlight the professions flexibility, diversity, collaborative framework and community service, both nationally and internationally. Funded by a grant from NCCPA, the exhibit is to travel between NLM constituent libraries and affiliated organizations for five years beginning in 2017 when the PA Profession celebrates its 50th anniversary.

### Expectations for 2024

Expectations are high for the new year. Artificial Intelligence and quantum computers will drive technological developments. New vaccines will be introduced globally to combat malaria, COVID and influenza. The job market will remain strong for Advance Practice Providers (e.g., PAs, NPs).

What significant events will take place this year in the PA profession? Only time will tell!

(In Her Own Words continued from page 3)



Christmas Symphony Board-  
Chief elf wrangler

phony performs there. My volunteer activity led to my Board Service.

**You have a lot of varied experiences in AAPA Leadership. How do you account for your longevity with this organization?**

I believe that every PA should be involved in advocacy for our patients and our profession. I have enjoyed every aspect of volunteer service to the profession. I attribute my longevity to a genuine interest in service to the profession and a willingness to take on any role or task that was presented. Having become a PA in the late 1970's and early 1980's, we were told we were "pioneers" and that it was our duty to make this profession one that would be valued and make meaningful contributions to patient care.

**What do you say to PA's who ask you "Should I get a doctorate degree"?**

I first ask them "Why are you interested in the degree and what do you want to accomplish after you receive it? Also, my answers include knowing the current stage of their career. Knowing that there are many different types of doctoral degrees open to PAs, it is important to know the why involved in the decision. I am all in for gaining knowledge for knowledge's sake, but reality and finances often dictate our decisions.

**If you could have a superpower, what would it be? Why?**

I would choose to have the ability to transport myself and/or others through time and place (much like Samatha Stevens from Bewitched). I would use this most likely to travel at any moment, to any location or any time period, because I love to travel and see new things and experience different cultures. It would also be tempting to transport others to locations far away!



Mardi Gras New Orleans  
Krewe of King Arthur

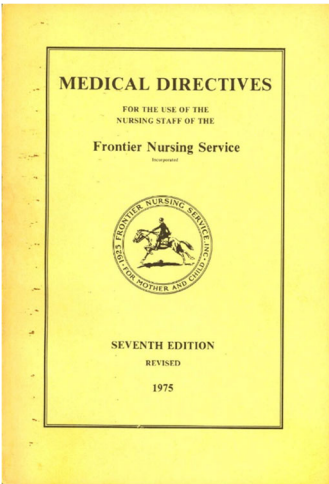
**What was your favorite childhood toy?**

I think that would have been my 1969 Schwinn Fair Lady Bike, metallic blue (of course), with chrome fenders, white wall tires, 2-tone banana seat saddle with a glittery blue insert, and a white, real wicker basket decorated with pink plastic roses and Stingray handlebars. I LOVED that bike, it represented freedom! "My bike" upper right in the catalog. \$39.95! A fortune for my family. Imagine my surprise when I spotted "my bike" hanging in the Smithsonian! It is still my favorite. I washed and waxed and polished it regularly.



## A Heritage of Innovation: Frontier Nursing Service

By Reginald Carter, PhD, PA



The PA History Society's archives contains a book that was used by Frontier Nurses to help them provide healthcare to underprivileged Americans who had no or little access to firsthand medical services. The book is divided into three sections: General Medicine, Midwifery and Family Planning. The establishment of the Frontier Nursing

Service in 1925 by pioneering nurse, Mary Breckinridge, is noted on the Society's [illustrated history timeline](#) as an example of the use of non-physician healthcare providers prior to the formal education and certification of Advanced Practice Providers (PAs, NPs, Midwives, Nurse Anesthetist). The history and impact that the Frontier Nursing Service has had and still has on infant and children mortality is worth knowing. In many ways, Breckinridge's innovative use of nurses is like that of [Dr. Richard Smith](#) who used ex-military corpsmen (MEDEX) to extend healthcare to rural regions of the northwest USA. [Dr. Henry Silver](#) and [Dr. Loreta Ford](#)'s innovative program to educate Pediatric Nurse Practitioners also resonates as a similar way to improve child healthcare.

A 1932 newspaper describes Mrs. Mary Breckinridge as "a current rider of a new order. By horseback, and by foot when necessary, over dangerous mountain passes and through swollen hillside torrents, for six and a half years she has been carrying a gospel of health to the hill dwellers in the primitive fastness of the Kentucky mountains." The article notes that when Breckinridge founded the Frontier Nursing ser-

vice in 1925, there was no doctor in an area of thousands of square miles with a population of 15,000 people. "Fifteen children had died from diphtheria along a single creek. Typhoid took its yearly toll."

Death from childbirth was just considered "necessary" in many ways. Between 1925 and 1932, nine nursing stations were established over an area of 800 square miles, staffed by 30 riding nurses. In 1,000 maternity cases, only one mother was lost. Forty thousand inoculations had wiped out typhoid and diphtheria cases were dwindling.<sup>1</sup>

According to her biography, Breckinridge was the daughter of a US minister to Russia during the Cleveland presidency and the granddaughter of a vice president of the USA. She was educated in private schools in Lausanne, Switzerland and in Stanford, Connecticut. After the untimely death of her first husband, she attended and graduated from the St. Luke's Hospital School of Nursing in NYC in 1910. She remarried and had two children — one died in infancy, the other at age 4. She separated from her husband, spent some time working as a public health nurse in Boston and Washington, D.C. and then traveled to France after the end of WWI to work with the American Committee for Devasted France. One of her primary roles was to provide food and healthcare assistance to children, their mothers and pregnant women. While in France and England, she became familiar with the role of professionally trained mid-wives, decided to become a mid-wife herself and to return to rural Kentucky to apply her knowledge and skills and eventually to establish the first nurse mid-wifery school in America.<sup>2</sup>

So, as PAs, our history is intertwined with other human social innovations in the fields of medicine, nursing and allied health. In the

(Continued on page 9)



## Physician Assistants in Switzerland: The Development of PAs Continues!

*By Nancy Hurwiz, DScPAs, PA-C  
Assistant Program Director, Director of Clinical  
Education, Associate Professor  
MCPHS Boston PA Studies*

In an article published in the Spring 2023 newsletter, the history of the physician associate (PA) role and its development in Switzerland was outlined. This article serves as an update on the PA profession as it continues to grow within the Kanton (member state) of Zurich and throughout Switzerland. As of this writing, there are 250 PAs practicing in Switzerland.

At this time, the PA program at the Zurich University of Applied Sciences (ZHAW) is continuing to offer students three levels of training in the form of Certificates of Advanced Studies for PAs located within the School of Public Health. Ms. Anita Manser Bonnard heads the PA program and Dr. Julia Dratva is the Dean of the School of Public Health. They are the driving forces, along with Dr. Marcus Wepf and Dr. Stefan Breitenstein, who are paving a path for PAs throughout Switzerland.

All accepted students enter Level 1 and all have prior medical education in the field of nursing, physical therapy, or paramedicine. The students continue to work approximately 80% full time in their chosen fields while they are in the PA program. The medical aspects of the curriculum are designed and overseen by Dr. Rajha Pereira. Students may opt to continue through Level 2 and in the third year, earn a Master of PA Studies in Level 3. These levels, as offered today, are:

**The Certificate Advanced Studies 1:** Here students take three modules of coursework which cover the basic levels in: Information and Communications, Medical Systems (for

example: laboratory science, diagnostics, pharmacology, cardiology, and more) and finally Health Care Organization and Administration. Level 1 currently matriculated 60 students.

### The Certificate of Advanced Studies

**2:** Students who return for Level 2 learn advanced

medical concepts and content in modules including: Medical Systems (for example: neurology, endocrinology, practical patient interaction, and more) and the Swiss Healthcare System. This second year contains approximately 20 students.

**The Certificate of Advanced Studies 3:** Students completing this level attain a Master of PA Studies degree. Students who choose to reach this level of PA education study topics in depth which were touched upon in the first two levels, including Case Management and advanced medical situations, such as pediatric emergency, gynecology, fluid, and electrolyte management. Students in this final year then complete either a health care research project with a collaborating physician or a health care management project with ZHAW faculty. The first class of 7 Master of PA Studies students graduated in Summer of 2023.

In order to complete a Certificate of Advanced Studies at each level, students must successfully pass both Proof of Performance written and in-lab, case-based testing. This testing is similar to the ARC-PA summative testing standards.

The Bachelor of PA Studies track had hoped to matriculate its first students in 2024. The awarding of the Bachelor Degree has hit some delays, not unlike the American PA trajectory.

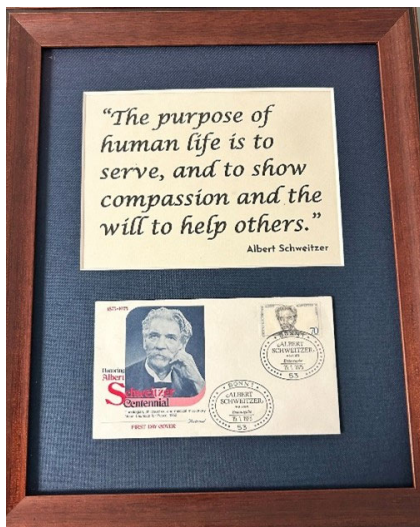
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Nancy Hurwiz, Anita Manser Bonnard and Dean Julia Drava, MD

## Paths Converge

by Bill Kohlhepp, DHSc, PA-C, DFAAPA  
Secretary/Treasurer, PAHx Board of Trustees



I am sure everyone can look back on those times when the paths from seemingly different parts of your life converge. Recently, that happened for me in the unlikelyst of ways. My paternal grandfather was a philatelist – a collector of first day of issue covers. I was recently going through a collection

of first day covers I inherited and found one that piqued my interest. A first day cover (FDC) is a postage stamp on a stamped envelope postmarked on the first day of issue. Although he passed away many years ago, I have continued to be interested in collecting covers issued in the United States.

Being of German heritage, my grandfather in his collection had both U.S. first day covers and covers from Germany. The cover I found was issued in Bonn Germany in 1975 on the 100th anniversary of the birth of Albert Schweitzer. Now Albert Schweitzer has a place on two paths of my life – Quinnipiac and the PA History Society.

Quinnipiac hosts the Albert Schweitzer Institute, which supports students, faculty, staff and alumni to become agents in promoting a culture of peace in our communities and the wider world. Housed inside the institute is a memorial museum open to the public that allows visitors to experience highlights from Schweitzer's life of history-making humanitarianism. The museum traces Schweitzer's life as a young man through his later years with authentic photographs, works of art created by Schweitzer's colleagues in Africa and artifacts from his years at Lambaréné. My first thought with the first day cover was to have it suitably framed and

then donate it to the museum.

As I thought more deeply about Albert Schweitzer, I was reminded of a passage in the text PA's Policy and Practice authored by Hooker, Cawley and Everett. That passage is one I often used in my course for Quinnipiac PA students on the history of the PA profession. In their discussions of the pioneers of the PA profession, the authors highlight Dr. Richard A. ("Dick") Smith. In the text they note: "Dr. Richard Smith spent time with Dr. Albert Schweitzer in the 1960s when Dr. Smith visited him at Lambarene Hospital in Gabon, West Africa. Many of Dr. Smith's ideas were formed as a result of those conversations."

I quickly went to the PA History website to see if that piece of history was captured in the biography on file (<https://pahx.org/bios/smith-richard-a/>). I reached out to Jim Cawley to confirm where they had obtained their information for their book and was told that the passage came from a personal communication with Dr. Smith that occurred in 2007 between Smith, Jim Cawley, Rod Hooker, and Ruth Ballweg. Those three traveled to Hawaii for a weeklong interview with Dr. Smith. The passage came from discussions about Dr. Smith's time in Africa as a global public health worker with Albert Schweitzer.

When I presented to the Albert Schweitzer Institute the framed first day cover, I included on the back a dedication to the role that Dr. Schweitzer played in forming Dr. Smith's ideas, including the role of non-physician providers in the delivery of care.

### (PA Student Historians continued from page 2)

If your PA program is a paid [Associate of the PA History Society](#), you will have access to our PA Student Historian checklist along with our updated Historian Toolkit! Ask your faculty member to download the documents from our website's Associates Only webpage. The PA History Society will also be holding a [small-group interactive CME session at AAPA](#) this year. Please consider sending your class historian to attend to learn more about the history of the PA profession and how they can do their part in preserving it!



**(Frontier Nursing continued from page 6)**

epilogue of the Society's newly published book, *Physician Assistants as Social Innovators in Health Care*, PA leaders are encouraged to collaborate and develop a shared vision of the profession's future. "A vision that strengthens interprofessional relationships and reforms existing organizational structures that impede progress. Systemic change will require creative innovation, experimentation, evaluation and adaptation."<sup>3</sup> As a profession, the opportunities to overcome healthcare inequities are boundless. Who will be our next innovators?

**References:**

- <sup>1</sup> Blanshard, Julia. "Modern Circuit Rider is Nurse to Mountaineers." 13 March 1932. The News and Observer, Raleigh, NC, p15. [Document | America's Historical Newspapers | Readex \(duke.edu\)](#) Accessed December 20, 2023.
- <sup>2</sup> Breckinridge, Mary. ***Wide Neighborhoods: The Story of the Frontier Nursing Service***. Lexington KY: The University Press of Kentucky; 1952.
- <sup>3</sup> Physician Assistant History Society. ***Physician Assistant as Social Innovators in Healthcare***. Johns Creek GA: PA History Society Publication; 2022.

**(PAs in Switzerland continued from page 7)**

However, those strong proponents of the PA profession at ZHAW, along with their medical and regional community supporters, will continue to work toward approval of official recognition of the PA profession and the awarding of the Bachelor of PA Studies. Following in the footsteps of American PA innovators such as Dr. Charles Hudson, Dr. Eugene Stead, Dr. Hu Crim Myers and Thelma Ingles, RN, the team at ZHAW and their supporters continue to educate and advocate for the



MCPHS PA Student Kathy Newcomb, Swiss PA Grace Keller, and MCPHS PA Student Reyna Bellot

PA as the much-needed providers of primary and specialty healthcare.

In January 2024, PA students from MCPHS PA Boston had the opportunity to attend ZHAW Winter School, sharing and gaining knowledge about global healthcare delivery systems and diversity education in healthcare. They also had the opportunity to shadow PAs in both University Hospital Zurich and Kantonsspital Winterthur. The collaboration between ZHAW School of Public Health and MCPHS PA Boston will continue and will hopefully grow to include other departments such as Public Health, Physical Therapy and more!

Grace Keller, PA, who worked with the PA students from MCPHS, trained and worked for over 20 years as a cardiology nurse. Today, she is working as a PA alongside cardiologists, nurses, cardiology residents and fellows at University Hospital Zurich. Grace and her fellow PAs are pioneers and the first seedlings of the PA profession in Switzerland. Asked: "What made you want to become a PA, when the profession is so new in Switzerland?" Grace answered "You have to do what you love and fight for it. It's worth it".

Thanks to Grace, Anita, Rahja, and Julia who continue to fight for, nurture, and grow the PA profession in Switzerland.

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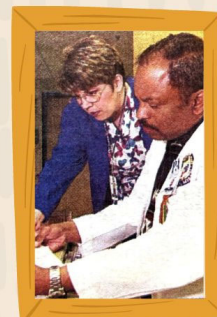
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PA HISTORY SOCIETY CELEBRATES

## BLACK HISTORY MONTH

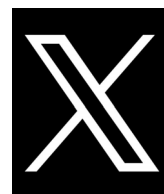
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by making a difference!

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updates.



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most recent educational publication:

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\$39.95 - Amazon



- An excellent resource for faculty and students!
- Kirkus Review April 2023 excerpt: "This illuminating history of physician assistants in the United States show how a novel medical profession took root and blossomed. "
- The book content may help address the ARC-PA curricular components such as B2.14(d) and B2.17 (b),(c),(e),(f) & (g) to help aid in teaching the history of the PA profession.



*QR code to order  
from our website*

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