

# Historical Happenings

## Newsletter of the PA History Society



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**Message from the President**

*William C. Kohlhepp, DHSc, PA-C Emeritus, DFAAPA*



I am excited to be starting my one-year term as President of the PA History Society. For me, this opportunity to serve the Society brings me way back to the beginning of the Society itself. I watched as my first clinical co-worker, the late J. Jeffrey Heinrich, EdD, PA-C Emeritus, along with Reginald D. Carter, PhD, PA, established and incorporated the PA History Society. I joined the Society in its first year of existence as a founding member. I am humbled to be following the footsteps of those who

have led the Society in years past.

The PAHx has several major projects set for this year. Shortly after 2026 began, we launched the new online Educational Curriculum. We have been reaching out to PA programs to encourage them to join as Associates of the PA History Society so that they can access this valuable resource for teaching the history of the PA profession. The curriculum is intentionally interactive, concise, and informative to respond to the learning styles of today’s PA students. Faculty will appreciate that the curriculum is tailored to the ARC-PA “B” Standards to help teach the history of the profession.

*(Continued on Page 2)*

**RSVP for the PA History Society’s CME Session at AAPA 2026**

The Society is excited to offer another interactive, small group CME session, [“Preserving PA History: Pearls and Pitfalls”](#), during the **AAPA Conference in New Orleans on Monday, May 18 at 8am.**

organization’s leadership and historical events. Each participant will receive a PA History Society Historian Reference Guide upon completion of the session.

This session is free, but space is limited, so please RSVP in advance on the [AAPA conference website/ app.](#)

Participants will learn the value of saving historical materials, how to identify what needs preserving, and ways to record their



PAHx CME Session at 2024 AAPA.

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

The Educational Curriculum looks at the history of the profession through the lens of a social innovation model as captured in our companion textbook, *PAAs as Social Innovators*. In 2026, we will be updating this popular textbook and creating a second edition that will be published as an e-book.

As someone who relishes organizational leadership, I am excited about our plans to devote most of our April workshop time to developing our future goals that will be outlined in the 2027-2029 Strategic Plan. We are also planning ahead to 2027, when PAHx will be celebrating the PA profession's 60th anniversary and the Society's 25th Anniversary. We will of course continue our ongoing work of collecting new stories from PAs who are making history by making a difference every day!

The success of PAHx depends on a small but very dedicated staff and an engaged working Board of Trustees. I welcome to the leadership team of the Board President-Elect [Robin Hunter-Buskey](#), DHSc, CPHQ, CCHP, CDCES, PA-C, CAPT. USPHS and Secretary-Treasurer [Greg Thomas](#), PA-C Emeritus, MPH, DFAAPA. We will continue to benefit from the input of Immediate Past President [Rich Vause](#), DHSc, MPAS, PA-C, FCPP, DFAAPA, CAPT USPHS (retired). We welcome new Trustees Stephanie Gilkey, EdD, MS, PA-C, DFAAPA, and Kaylee Billstone, PA-S2. We look forward to their contributions on the Society's Board.

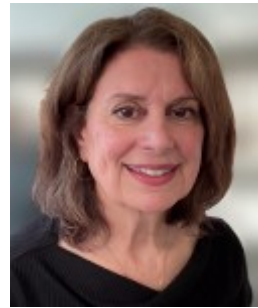
Although the Society is recognized by many as the leader in the preservation and presentation of the history of the PA profession, our research shows that too many PAs and PA students are unaware of our various resources. Please visit our [website](#) and share with others what you find there – ever-changing features, new exhibits and historical information of interest to everyone learning about the PA profession.

As I close, I want to offer the Board's thanks to our fantastic PAHx staff – Lori Konopka-Sauer, BS, Managing Director; Michelle Schabowski, MSIS, CA, Senior Archivist; Connie Mara, Administrative Support Coordinator; Tricia Marriott, MPAS, MJ, PA-C, DFAAPA, PAHx Historian.

Thank you also to the NCCPA for supporting our work and to Dawn Morton-Rias, EdD, PA-C, ICE-CCP, FACHE, our Executive Director and the NCCPA CEO.

I look forward to the many accomplishments by the Society in the coming year.

## PAHx Welcomes New Trustees



Stephanie Gilkey



Kaylee Billstone

In January, the PAHx Board of Trustees welcomed two new members during our annual board orientation meeting: **Trustee Stephanie Gilkey, EdD, MS, PA-C, DFAAPA**, and **Student Trustee Kaylee Billstone, PA-S**.

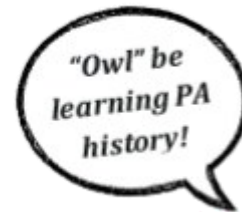
Trustee Gilkey comes to the Society Board with extensive experience in both clinical practice and PA education. Dr. Gilkey currently serves as the founding PA program director of the PA department and an associate professor-clinical at the College of Health Sciences, University of Michigan – Flint campus.

Student Trustee Billstone is in her second year at Hardin-Simmons University in Abilene, Texas. She is the class president of her 2026 cohort. Student Trustee Billstone will be serving a one-year term on the PAHx board.

The PAHx Board is looking forward to working with these new Trustees on a variety of projects this year!

## What are PA Students Saying About the Society's New Online Modules?

- ◆ **The test your knowledge questions were helpful, I appreciate interactive components of that sort.**
- ◆ **It is important to know where our career started in history to further improve and innovate.**
- ◆ **The content is great. I have better understanding of the history of PA profession.**
- ◆ **The information was informative but concise and visually appealing.**
- ◆ **This module was very informative. I clearly understand the difference between the four national organizations that support the PA profession.**
- ◆ **Great information on PA legislation!**
- ◆ **Very informative and relevant to today.**
- ◆ **I appreciate the interactive portions of the model to reinforce understanding of the content.**



To learn more about the PAHx's new online modules to help teach the history of the PA profession, please [click here](#).

## PAHx Honors Observance Months

The PA History Society takes great joy in honoring observance months and highlighting relevant biographies, oral history interviews and other materials to join in the celebrations.

In February, the PAHx features an online collection in honor of Black History Month. If you haven't had the chance, please check out this year's exhibit: <https://pahx.org/news/black-history-month-2026/>

In March, please visit our [website](#) to view our online Women's History Month exhibit and in June, visit to see our Pride Month collection!

The Society is always looking for more PAs to add to either our biography or oral history interview collection. If you would like to submit someone to be featured, please email your recommendation to: [contactus@pahx.org](mailto:contactus@pahx.org)



**In Her Own Words:  
Kaylee Billstone, PA-S2**

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

**Before attending PA school, you had been involved in research and gene mapping. Why PA and not research? Or do you plan to do both?**



I absolutely loved my experience researching at UT Austin; however, I couldn't quite see myself in a long-term role as a researcher. I have a passion for people, and research just didn't fulfill the extroverted side of me! The PA profession allows me to continue learning while serving people.

**What is your favorite cartoon character and why?**

My favorite cartoon character is Buzz Lightyear! There's a line Buzz says that my mom has always told my sister and I, so it holds a special place in my heart. My mom told my sister and I "I love you to infinity and beyond," like Buzz does! It's less of a quote, and more of just a sweet sentiment.

**What will be the title of the first book you write?**

I really love kids and have always dreamed of writing and illustrating a children's book! I also have two dogs who are my whole world, so if I wrote a children's book, I would incorporate them. I would title it "A Spot of Gold!"

**(Continued on Page 6)**

**PAs in Germany Celebrate 20th Anniversary**

The German University Association of Physician Associates (DHPA) published the commemorative manuscript **"20 Years of Physician Assistant Studies"** to celebrate this milestone anniversary!

The publication features the history of the profession in Germany and that of the DHPA, which oversees the legal and educational framework of the profession in Germany. The 140-page publication features articles from multiple German educators and PAs. Also included are articles from US-trained PAs [Lisa Mustone Alexander](#), EdD, MPH, PA-C, current Program Director of The Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI) and Karen Roberts, MSc, PA-C Emeritus, a PA educator in the UK.

On behalf of the NCCPA, an overview of the successful 2025 International PA Summit was summarized in an article by long-time PA advocate, Sheila Mauldin, MNM. The content on the first 122 pages is in German, the three articles written in English can be found on pages 135-140.

You can download the [German 20th Anniversary publication here](#).



## The 2005 JAAPA Roundtable Interview

By Reginald Carter, PhD, PA



In 2005, to mark the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the launch of the inaugural physician assistant (PA) program at Duke University in 1965, the editors of the *Journal of the American Academy of PAs (JAAPA)* asked Reginald Carter, PhD, PA – co-founder and historian of the PA History Society - to conduct a roundtable interview with two

distinguished members of the first graduating class, Kenneth Ferrell and Victor Germino. [The third member of the graduating class, Richard Scheele, passed away in 1970.]

The insightful discussion with Ferrell and Germino was published in the October 2005 issue of *JAAPA* under the title, “In the Beginning: A PA History Roundtable.” The article provided readers with firsthand reflections and stories from these pioneering graduates, offering a unique glimpse into the early days of the PA profession.

Germino and Ferrell joined the Navy Reserves in high school and later trained as hospital corpsmen. While Germino worked as an operating room and research technician at Duke University and Ferrell served on a ship in the Mediterranean Sea, they both learned about the Duke Department of Medicine’s plans for the PA program. Germino and Ferrell’s application interviews were informal, and after meeting with Dr. Eugene Stead, Jr. (Department Chairman) and James Mau (Department Administrator), they were accepted for full-time enrollment in October 1965. Dr. Stead described the PA role as “an extra pair of hands and legs for physicians,” which has since grown into a collaborative care model with PAs playing an active role in diagnosis and treatment.

After the interview with JAAPA, Ferrell and Germino looked over items from the PA History Society’s archives including a copy of the 1966 *Look Magazine* with the article, “More Than a Nurse, Less Than a Doctor” featuring photographs of them and their classmates. The magazine article captured a pivotal era in the development of the profession. Mira Waller, serving as the PA History Society’s archivist, was on hand to assist with the interview and to share relevant items from the archives. You can listen to the original interview at [pahx.org/audio/full/ohc-00035.mp3](http://pahx.org/audio/full/ohc-00035.mp3)



From left to right: Mira Waller, Vic Germino & Ken Ferrell in PAHx Offices, 2005

Don’t forget to check out the [Society’s website](http://pahx.org) regularly for ‘all things PA history’, including:

- 426 inspiring biographies
- 269 oral history interviews
- 179 videos
- 2,500 photographs
- and much more!



**(In Her Words Continued from Page 4)**

**Do you have any pets?**

I have two dogs! A 5-year-old golden retriever named Zola and a four-year-old dalmatian named Tux (short for tuxedo). They are my whole world! And fun fact, Zola is named from a character in Grey's Anatomy!



**Do you know what kind of medicine you want to practice? Why?**

I'm currently on rotation 5 of 10, and I have loved bits and pieces from each rotation. I'm keeping an open mind while I go throughout my clinical rotations and keeping faith that I will end up where I'm meant to be! So far, I love surgery and pediatrics, but I still have so much to see and experience.

**What did your mission trip to Peru teach you about yourself?**



My medical mission trip to Peru with my PA program taught me SO much. One thing I learned about myself and my role in medicine is to slow down, listen more intentionally, and approach patient care with humility. Next month I am

participating in another medical mission trip to Peru assisting medical providers.

Practicing medicine in a resource-limited setting showed me how much can be accomplished through collaboration, creativity, and genuine human connection.

**As your PA class president, you coordinate and host class-wide events. What was the most memorable event and why?**

The most memorable event I've planned as PA class president is a Thanksgiving dinner for my class and staff. It was only 3 months into starting the program, at a time when many of us were still adjusting to the academic rigor and intensity of PA school. I wanted to create an opportunity for our class to pause, connect, and build a sense of community outside of the classroom. The event helped strengthen relationships early in the program and set a positive tone for collaboration and support moving forward.



**Mountains or the beach?**

My dream would be beach in the summer and mountains in the winter. But if I had choose—Beach!

**What makes you laugh?**

Dad jokes... the more awkward, the funnier they are!

**Where will you vacation after PA school?**

Anywhere with a beach! I would love to take a family trip to Destin, Florida.

## PAssages: John McElligott, PA, MD, FACP, MPH



The PA History Society is sad to announce the passing of John McElligott.

Dr. McElligott passed away on February 15, 2026.

McElligott was a Navy corpsman who served in the Vietnam War and graduated from the Duke PA program

in 1974. He was the second president of the AAPA's Student Academy and then served on the AAPA Board after his graduation.

While McElligott was establishing the PA program at the University of Texas – Dallas, three rural doctors recruited him to help the area they served. Because the area was in sore need of medical professionals, McElligott enlisted the help of fellow PA Charlie Clark. Together with the doctors who recruited them, they made history in the state by being the catalyst of PA practice legislation within Texas.

Eventually, McElligott and Clark moved to North Carolina where they established the first medivac services in the eastern part of the state. They then went on to Tennessee where they created the first independent PA emergency room/hospital coverage group.

In 1986, McElligott graduated with his medical degree, becoming a physician. He remained a supporter of the PA profession throughout his life. He was one of the earliest supporters of the PA History Society, helping the Society to establish offices from Duke University to the Stead Center in Durham, NC. The Society named their PA Veterans Garden at the Stead Center after John McElligott.

McElligott founded [St. Christopher Trucker Development and Relief Fund](#) in 2007, an organization that helps semi-truck drivers impacted by illness or injury. The group also provides free health and wellness programs to truck drivers to prevent illness.

Information for this article was taken from John McElligott's biography on the PA History Society website, which you can read in full [here](#).

### From the Archives: Calling All Spring Cleaners!

Next year the PA History Society will be celebrating its silver anniversary and the PA profession its 60th anniversary!

You can help the PAHx commemorate these special milestones in style by sending us interesting PA-related memorabilia to create fun displays, both physical and virtual!

This year, while you're doing some spring cleaning, please look for hidden PA-related treasures that you would be interested in donating to the PAHx.

We're always looking for personal papers, print materials (such as newsletters and conference brochures) and old PA journal issues and books.

Before mailing items to the PA History Society's office, please email us ([contactus@pahx.org](mailto:contactus@pahx.org)) to make sure your items and materials meet our [Collection Development Policy](#) and that they are not duplicates of items we already have in our holdings.



## PA History Society Trustees & Staff

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Email: [contactus@pahx.org](mailto:contactus@pahx.org)

## Who Knew?

Not only was [Joyce Nichols](#), the very first female PA, graduating from the Duke University PA program in 1970, but she was also one heck of a bowler!

Check out this snippet of an article from the June 7, 1974, issue of Duke University's *InterCom* newspaper showcasing Joyce winning second place at the Duke Women's Bowling League Tournament in 1974.



## Stay in Touch with PAHx thru Social Media!

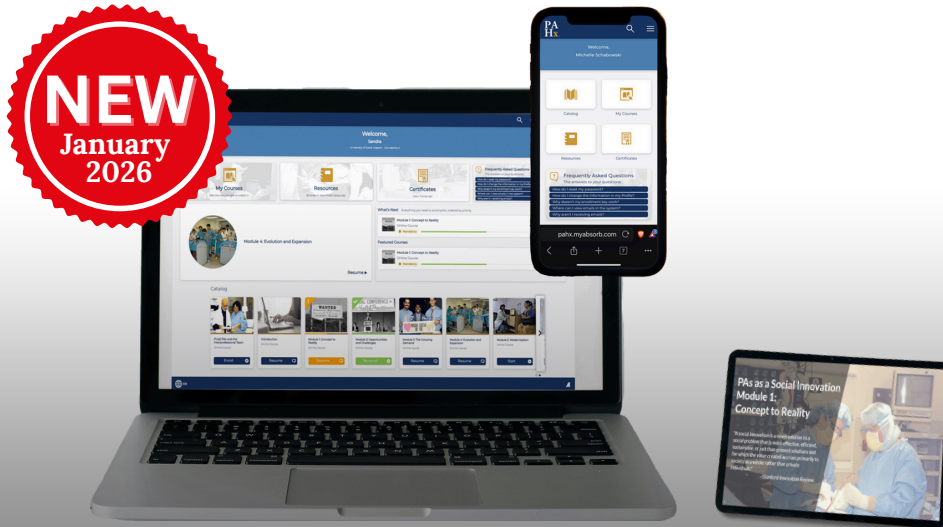
Please be sure to follow the PA History Society on [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Instagram](#) to receive updates on all things PA history!





# PA HISTORY SOCIETY

Gain access to the Society's **NEW** online curriculum resources for teaching the history of the PA profession.



## ADDITIONAL ASSOCIATE BENEFITS:

- *Historian resources providing guidance in documenting and preserving your PA program's own history and milestones.*
- *Access to the Celebration Planner to aid in organizing your special milestone celebrations.*
- *Feature on the PA Program Associate and First Class Picture webpages with a link to your program's website.*
- *One-way shipping charges when hosting the National Library of Medicine PA banner exhibit and PA Timeline banner exhibit.*



Scan the QR code to see if your PA program is an Associate:





# EXHIBITS AVAILABLE FOR LOAN FROM THE PA HISTORY SOCIETY...



**"ILLUSTRATES HOW THE PA PROFESSION DEVELOPED AS A SOLUTION TO MEET HEALTHCARE NEEDS AROUND THE WORLD."**

## A COLORFUL DISPLAY OF THE PROGRESSION OF THE PA PROFESSION

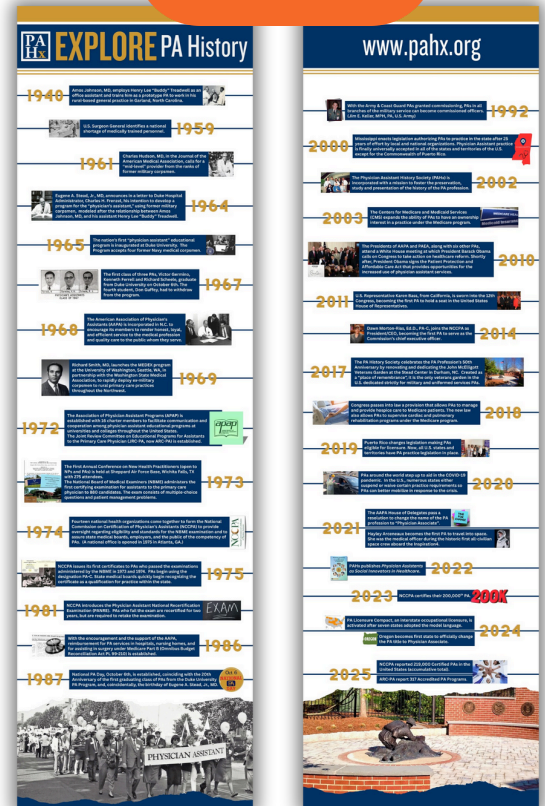
- Six Retractable Banners
- 84"H X 36"W each
- The Society covers one way shipping charges for all PAID Associates of the PAHX

**NEW!**

## MILESTONES AND EVENTS OF THE PA PROFESSION

- Two Retractable Banners
- 80"H X 24"W each
- The Society covers one way shipping charges for all PAID Associates of the PAHX

**"EXPERIENCE A WALK THROUGH THE DECADES WITH THE PA HISTORY SOCIETY'S NEW TIMELINE BANNER EXHIBIT."**



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- An excellent resource for faculty and students!
- 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.



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