

Historical Happenings

The Newsletter of the PA History Society



Inside this edition:

Message from the President	1
What is it Like to be a Pioneer	1
From the Archives	3
Call for Trustee Applications	4
PAHx Trustee Testimonial	4
Thank You for Visiting PAHx	5
In Her Own Words: Tamatha Perkins	6
Palliative PA Legends	7
Educational Modules	9
PAHx Books	10
PAHx Banners	11

Message from the President

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



I am writing this message to you from a new perspective, now as President of the **PA History Society, Inc.** As the profession continues to evolve, so have we. To more adequately represent the current PA profession and its historical roots, we have legally changed our name to officially be the “PA History Society, Inc.” (changed from “The Society for the Preservation of Physician Assistant History, Inc.”). We are still the same small national organization dedicated to preserving and promoting the history of the PA profession, but now with a more contemporary and concise name!

Many PA programs and state chapters already have or will soon celebrate anniversaries. And, the Society is well underway in planning its own 25th anniversary celebration next year in conjunction with the PA profession’s 60th anniversary which is also in 2027.

Continued on pg 2

What is it like to be a Pioneer?

Reginald Carter, PhD, PA, Historian Emeritus

With Ken Ferrell’s recent death, all three of the first physician assistant/associate graduates are now gone. Fortunately, we have oral history interviews, articles and photographs that chronicle their amazing journey as pioneers of a new profession.

On November 1, 1967, the Duke Medical Center newspaper published an article, “What is it like to be a Pioneer?” based on an interview with Vic Germino. Germino said that, at first, both they and the medical center staff struggled to adjust to the new role. They were often asked, “physician assistant—what’s that?” Staff orientation sessions helped, but resistance to change remained a challenge. As they completed rotations in the



Photograph taken by Phillip Harrington for article produced by Berg, R.H. Less than a Doctor, More than a Nurse. (Sept. 6, 1966) Look magazine pp. 58-61

hospital and community clinics, their value became increasingly clear in research, patient screening, and reducing physicians’ routine patient-care workload.

Continued on pg 4

President's Message Continued from pg 1

As we plan for those two anniversaries, we are interested in receiving donations of historically relevant PA documents; please visit our [website](#) to find our [collection policy guidelines](#).

We also want to remind those PA organizations planning anniversary celebrations that the Society has an Anniversary and Celebration Planner resource on our website that is available for our [Associate members](#).

We are now many months into the launch of PAHx's online curriculum, *PAs as Social Innovators: The History and Legacy of the PA Profession*. The six online modules have been made available to all 2026 paid PAHx Associate programs. We continue to record positive feedback from the 37 PA programs enrolled and over 1,750 PA students registered to participate in the curriculum. Learn more about our online curriculum for teaching the history of the profession [here](#).

On a related note, we have important news! Coming soon... the PAHx's online curriculum, *PAs as Social Innovators: The History and Legacy of the PA Profession* will also be available to all PAs for 1.5 Category I CME credits. The PAHx Board will discuss at its August meeting the most effective way to offer the online modules to PAs.

Speaking of our annual virtual summer board meeting in mid-August, the PAHx Board will also be finalizing our 2027-2029 Strategic Plan. We'll be engaged in discussions regarding a second edition of our textbook, [PAs as Social Innovators in Healthcare](#), completing arrangements for the Society's Product Theater presentation at the PAEA Forum in Austin this October, and much more as we continue to capture and preserve all things PA history!

Most people who connect with the PA History Society know we have a small yet dedicated team of staff who support the Board of Trustees in our organization's efforts to successfully fulfill our mission. You've often met Managing Director Lori

Konopka-Sauer and Senior Archivist Michelle Schabowski at PA conferences over the years, but one team member that you may not have met in person, but you know her name, is Connie Mara. She has been the staff's part-time member sending the Society's email communications to PA programs and our PA constituents for nearly 10 years. I'm excited to share that recently Connie Mara has been promoted to a full-time position as PAHx Administrative Specialist!

When you have a question about the PA History Society resources, or need assistance regarding your annual PAHx Associate fee, purchasing the Society's books, reserving our PA banner exhibits, or with our online curriculum, please feel free to reach out to Connie at conniem@nccpa.net, now available four days a week (Mon., Tue., Thu., & Fri.).

Yes, we have a new name but the work on behalf of the PA profession continues as always and much has been accomplished already. But I know there is so much more we can achieve together as we work in partnership with our colleagues throughout the PA community as we continue to collect, preserve and share the important history of the PA profession. Consider joining the PAHx Board by submitting an application by the August 15th deadline. We are seeking one PAHx Trustee and one Student Trustee.

Don't forget to check out the Society's [website](#) regularly for 'all things PA history', including:

426 inspiring biographies

269 oral history interviews

179 videos

2,500 photographs

and much more!



From the Archives

Michelle Schabowski, MSIS, CA

The PA History Society has over 2,500 digitized and non-digital photographs in our Photograph Collections. Plus, numerous undated photographs.

As the PA History Society celebrates its 25th anniversary in 2027, we would love to have donations of photographs and videos to fill in some of the gaps in this important collection of PA history!

The PA History Society is especially seeking photographs and videos from the 2000s, 2010s, and 2020s. Photographs and videos must feature PAs serving in their professional roles (please remember to protect patient privacy), volunteering, advocating, or at local, state and national conferences.

If you would like to donate photographs or videos to the PA History Society, please contact the Senior Archivist at contactus@pahx.org.



Hall of History photograph display at the annual AAPA conference which was created to celebrate the profession's 25th anniversary, 1992

Need photographs for a presentation?



Click [Here](#) to Explore Our Highlighted Photograph Collections!

Who is that PA?

HELP AN ARCHIVE IN NEED!



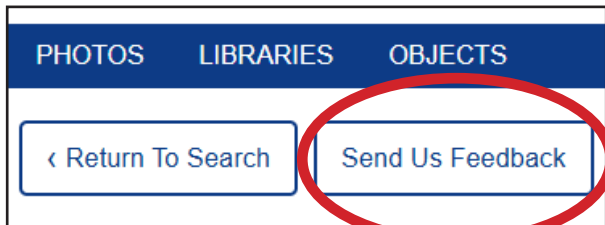
THE PA HISTORY SOCIETY NEEDS YOU TO IDENTIFY UNKNOWN PAs IN OUR PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTIONS!

Do you know what the most used keyword in the PA History Society's photograph collection is? It's "Unidentified".

The Society is asking for your help in changing that!

To help up identify the unidentified PAs in our collection. Please [click here](#).

If you come across an unidentified PA or can help us put a date or location to a photograph that is missing it, click on the "Send Us Feedback" button in the top right corner of the webpage. A popup window will appear.



In the "Comments" box, please supply the missing information and then click on the blue "Submit Feedback" button at the bottom of the popup window. We appreciate your help!

What is it Like Continued from pg 1

Building on training in physiology, pharmacology, nursing, electronics, physical diagnosis, and laboratory techniques—along with Navy medical corps service, practical experience, and some college education—they worked in settings ranging from electronics labs and renal dialysis to general practice groups in Ahoskie and Durham, North Carolina. After graduation, they began careers at the medical center: Ken Ferrell as a clinical associate in chest diseases, Dick Scheele as a clinical associate in endocrinology, and Vic Germino as a research associate in pulmonary diseases.¹

Online resources that provide insight into what it was like to be a pioneering PA include:

Victor Germino and Ken Ferrell Oral History (2005): A round table interview conducted by Reginald Carter on June 8, 2005, for article in JAAPA. Accessed at: pahx.org/audio/full/ohc-00035.mp3

Carter, R., Germino, V., Ferrell, K., & Moyers Scott, P. (2005). In the beginning: a PA history roundtable. JAAPA, 18(10), 26 29-27 30. Access at: [In the beginning: a PA history roundtable: Journal of the American Academy of Physician Assistants](#)

¹ Germino, Victor. What is it like to be a Pioneer? Duke University Medical Center Newspaper, The InterCom. November 1, 1967, p.4. Accessed at seq-4.pdf.



PA's and Student PA's!

Do you ...

- love PA history?
- enjoy writing?
- appreciate volunteerism?
- want to get involved with your profession?

If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, consider applying to join the PAHx Board of Trustees!

The Society is accepting applications through August 15, 2026, for a 3-year term Trustee position and a 1-year term Student Trustee position. Both positions will begin January 1, 2027.



PAHx Trustee Testimonial: A Meaningful Experience

Jeff Myers, MPH, MMSc, PA-C, DFAAPA

“As a PAHx Trustee, I have enjoyed being able to help highlight those moments in our profession that can help us understand how to move forward and impact health and communities as a PA in the future. It’s more than just capturing stories in biographies—it’s highlighting those moments in PA history that can help inform how the next generation of PAs make a difference.”

For more information regarding the Trustee application process, please visit our website [here](#).

Thank you for Visiting with the PAHx during ...

AAPA Conference

Our Trustees and staff enjoyed speaking with the hundreds of PAs and PA students who stopped by our booths during the AAPA conference in New Orleans. In addition to our main exhibitor booth, the PAHx also participated in the Saturday AAPA Pre-PA workshop where we spoke with enthusiastic students who were interested in learning more about the extraordinary history of the PA profession. On Monday morning, PAHx Board President Bill Kohlhepp, Historian Tricia Marriott and our Senior Archivist Michelle Schabowski presented the Society's CME session, "Preserving PA History: Pearls & Pitfalls", explaining the value of saving historical material and sharing how to identify what documents should be retained so that PA organizations don't lose or forget their important instructional history. At our main booth located in the convention center, we participated in engaging conversations with PAs about the history of the PA profession and the Society's educational resources, and, of course, we handed out lots of cool swag to everyone who stopped by! The PAHx also held a random drawing where three lucky winners were chosen from the 100+ entries. They each received a Social Innovators book, PAHx teddy bear, and a PAHx mouse pad inside a New Orleans themed reusable tote bag!

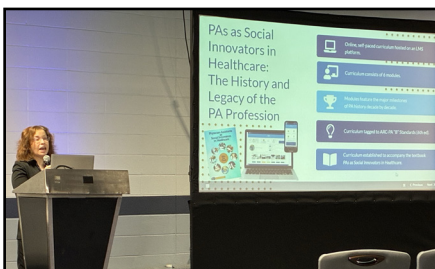


ARC-PA Conference

Last month, the PAHx exhibited at the second annual ARC-PA Conference in Minneapolis. In addition to handing out more PAHx swag, our Senior Archivist gave a live demonstration of the Society's new online curriculum for teaching the history of the profession to PA students. Two PAHx Trustees, Stephanie Gilkey and Deb Munsell, also attended the ARC-PA conference!



PAEA Forum



This fall, the Trustees and staff are looking forward to seeing you again during the PAEA Forum in Austin, TX. You will find the PA History Society inside the PAEA Exhibit Hall at booth #112 from October 7 – 9. Please join us at the Society's PAEA Product Theater on Thursday, October 8, at 12pm to learn about our online curriculum. Our team will demonstrate our educational modules for faculty who teach the history of the profession to PA students!

In Her Own Words:

Tamatha Perkins

Bruna Varalli-Claypool, BBA, MHS, PA-C, DFAAPA



Tamatha Perkins is a veteran of the US Army. After retiring from the military, she entered PA school. She is currently deployed to Antarctica as part of the medical team at the Amundsen-Scott South Pole Station.

You retired from the Army after 30 years. Why go to PA school?

I always wanted to be in the medical profession, and more than a decade before I retired, I thought I wanted to become a PA. I met Captain Sharon Denson, a PA. She was awesome, and that sealed it for me. I also knew that whatever I did, it would NOT be what I had been doing (and mastered) for the previous 30 years.

In the past 2 years, you've been on assignment as a PA in remote villages in Alaska and currently in Antarctica at the South Pole. Why?

New places and challenging assignments. In Alaska I get to give back to underserved populations.

What surprises you?

The resilience of people in the face of adversity. People are amazing and have more strength than sometimes even they realize.



Tamatha holding baby at clinic in Hooper Bay, Alaska

Kindle or a "real" book?

Both – Kindle is great, still love the feel of a real book.

What was the last book you read?

I just reread James Patterson's *Toys*. I'm working my way through the books saved on my Kindle and the library here at Amundsen-Scott Station at the South Pole.

You have extensive volunteer and community service experience. Which has been your favorite? Why?

Foster parent. Guardian ad litem (a court-appointed advocate for a child's best interest whose primary goal is to ensure the child's welfare is prioritized in decisions). Habitat for Humanity. Working with underprivileged kids. I have been blessed in life but have never forgotten where I came from and how hard it was. If I can help someone believe in themselves, gain self-confidence, know the security of having your own home, then I will have done something even more worthwhile than being personally successful.

If you could have a superpower, what would it be and why?

To slow down time in the moments that matter most, to honor it, protect it, and make the most of it. Time is precious and fleeting. More time to relish the moments with my kids/grandkids, time to listen deeply, think critically, and then act decisively. Time is one resource we cannot replenish.

Any Pets?

Have had dogs, cats, pigs, goats, cows, and horses as pets. Currently cats and cows.

Coffee or tea?

Coffee, but I do love a good cup of Constant Comment tea.

Continued on pg 7

Tamatha Perkins Continued from pg 6

What do you do for fun?

SCUBA, sky dive, hike, rock climb, ski, swim and read.

Mountains or the beach?

Both! I love a good hike in the mountains, and I love suiting up and walking into the surf to scuba.

What was the last movie you watched?

Forrest Gump. The last videos were Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) lectures on Physics Fridays here in Antarctica!

What piece of advice would you give your teenage self?

You don't have to have everything figured out yet but do figure out how to go to college sooner rather than later. Go to every school offered. Discipline will take you farther than talent. Choose your friends very carefully. And never forget-failure is not an identity- It's life's feedback. (FAIL = First Attempt in Learning) You choose to let setbacks harden you or refine you and your skills. Choose refinement.

You have been all over the world. What is your favorite location? Why?

Home. Not because of geography, but because of what is there, family, love, a feeling of being where I belong, of being grounded, connected, whole. I enjoy traveling, enjoy the many places I have been, but there truly is no place like home.



Tamatha & husband Dennis at beach

To learn more about Tamatha Perkins and her work as a PA, please visit her [biography](#) on the PA History Society's website.

PA Palliative Legends

Jeff Myers, MPH, MMSc, PA-C, DFAAPA

This May, while at the New Orleans AAPA Conference, PAHx Trustee Jeff Myers had an opportunity to sit down with some of the founding members of the PA organization Physician Associates in Hospice and Palliative Medicine (PAHPM).



Jeff Myers being recognized with Lifetime Achievement Award

This year, PAHPM celebrated its 15th year as a formal group of PAs practicing in palliative medicine and hospice care. The group supports PAs in the profession through education, legislative work, and advocacy.

Jeff, a PAHPM member and past president, sat down with Donna Seton, Judy Knudson, Rebekah Halpern, and Nadya Dimitrov. Just before each was honored with a lifetime achievement award at PAHPM's anniversary celebration and annual meeting, Jeff was able to spend some time hearing from each of these PA leaders as to how their own journeys into serious-illness care of patients and families began.

Their conversation centered on the challenges PAs have faced throughout the years in medicine, defining our roles alongside our healthcare colleagues. Palliative medicine and its specifically multidisciplinary approach to care highlight just how important early PA leaders were in educating not only the public, but our healthcare colleagues on how much PAs can add to the hospice and palliative medicine workforce. To watch an edited version of the interview, [click here](#).

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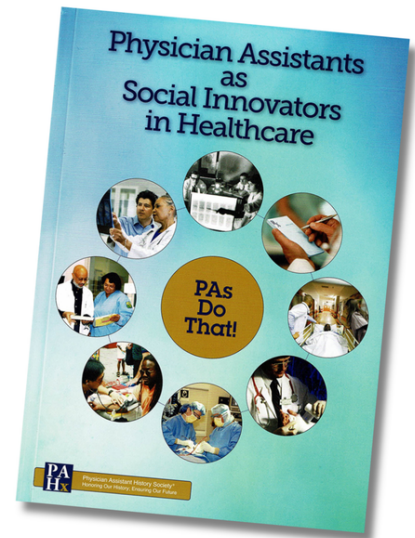
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