

1977-1979

Mr. Joseph Varano was the first president of the newly formed Pennsylvania Society of Physician Assistants. He must have had uncommon courage to take on this task. Here are his answers to our probing questions.

PSPA News: From your perspective, what were the greatest challenges that the PSPA and its leadership faced during your term in office as president?

JV: I think the major issue at the time was being accepted as a physician assistant. The other health professions were skeptical of our profession. Some thought it would not last. The biggest stronghold against us was the Pennsylvania Nurses Association. They did everything they could to try and block our profession from moving forward. We made a lot of trips to Harrisburg and spoke to a lot of people in both the Legislature and other health organizations.

PSPA News: What were the greatest achievements for PSPA during your term?

JV: As a result of our efforts, the Governor of Pennsylvania signed a law recognizing us as a viable health care profession!

PSPA News: What were your greatest disappointments?

JV: We were so new then, I really don't recall any disappointments. There were a few stand-offs with the nursing organizations but we succeeded and moved forward.

PSPA News: Tell us something that happened during your term as president that you think our members should know.

JV: In 1977 our main issues were writing a constitution and bylaws and convincing the Legislature that we were here to stay and the "physician assistant concept" was a reality.

PSPA News: Now that time has passed, was being president of the PSPA something that you are glad you tackled?

JV: I am so glad that I served as president of the PSPA. The board was a young group of dedicated individuals who could see the future of the physician assistant in Pennsylvania. I suppose it also helped when I moved to Connecticut. I served as president of the Connecticut Academy of Physician Assistants for 3 terms, 1993-94, 1997-98 and 2003-2004.

PSPA News: What did you do prior to becoming a PA?

JV: Before becoming a PA, I was a Registered Radiology Technologist.

PSPA News: Where did you get your PA education and when did you graduate?

JV: I received my PA education from Alderson-Broaddus College in Philippi, West Virginia. I graduated on Mothers Day, May 12, 1973. My mother said it was the best gift she could have received.

PSPA News: In what specialties have you worked?

JV: I have worked in general surgery, surgical oncology and my present position is neonatology.

PSPA News: What are you doing now?

JV: I am still working as physician assistant. I work in a Level III NICU at the University Of Connecticut Health Center in Farmington, Connecticut.

PSPA News: What are your major interests in life, i.e., passions or hobbies?

JV: I enjoy traveling as often as I can. I enjoy the company of my friends.

PSPA News: Who are your significant others, family members?

JV: My sister lives in Frackville, Pennsylvania and my brother lives in Lancaster, Pennsylvania

PSPA News: Is there anything else you would like to add?

JV: I want everyone to know that I think the PSPA is a great organization. I will always stand by and support it in anyway that I can. I will always remember my roots. To all the PAs in Pennsylvania – be proud of the PSPA and support it as it continues to grow.