REMEMERING
Dr. MONA COUNTS, FAANP
Dr. Mona Marie Counts, PHD, CRNP, FNAP, FAAN, 77, of Rices Landing, Pa., died Thursday, April 4, 2019 at home surrounded by her loving family and friends. Mona lived life to its fullest! She is recognized by many as the “Mother of Nurse Practitioners”, she was a very strong advocate for women’s education and advancement. She traveled the world over and touched thousands of lives that even she did not realize and left a positive impact that will live on in the hearts of many. This obituary, as many would agree, will never do justice in acknowledging all of her achievements and accomplishments. Dr. Counts, only the second NP in the nation and former President of the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners, started the first profitable free-standing nurse practitioner run family practice clinic in the United States. Through this clinic she educated hundreds, if not thousands of nurse practitioners and residents. Her efforts were recognized by many nationally, lobbying and testifying at the state and national level on behalf of full practice authority for Nurse Practitioners. Along with many other awards, she was awarded the endowed Eberly Chair at Penn State University and was director of the Nurse Practitioner Program. She failed retirement several times, opening a “back porch” practice, volunteered as the telemedicine provider for a free-clinic in Altoona and Wesley Health Center of Connellsville, and was active in the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners Certification Board up until the time of her death. She was also exceptionally proud of earning her Master Gardeners Certification, as well as her pilots license and Board Member of SOAR…and the list goes on and on.

Mona is preceded in death by her mother Natoma Harrah, her father Francis Haggerty. She is survived by her husband JD Yellets, daughter Joy D. Nugent, MSN, NP-C and her son-in-law Courtney and grandson Grant, son Daniel Yellets, and cherished foster children. (You know who you are!)

Her family wants to thank the nurses, CNAs and staff of Amedisys Hospice. Your loving care and invaluable guidance will never be forgotten.

Friends are invited to a mass of Christian Burial at St. Marcellus, Jefferson, at 11am, Saturday, April 13, 2019. A celebration of life to follow at The Olde Station Inn Bar & Grill 1611 Mt. Morris Road, Waynesburg, Pa from 2 to 6pm. In lieu of flowers, Mona has requested that mass cards be filled out in her remembrance with donations to support charitable works in her name.
MONA COUNTS—Condolences

Senate of Pennsylvania

Whereas, The Senate of Pennsylvania mourns the loss of Mona Marie Counts, Ph.D., who passed away on April 2, 2010, at the age of seventy-seven; and

Whereas, Laced as the Mother of Nurse Practitioners, Dr. Counts was the second person in the nation to achieve nurse practitioner status. A past President of the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners, she established the first nonprofit nurse practitioner-run family practice clinic in the United States. Dr. Counts’ efforts to establish full practice authority for nurse practitioners by lobbying and testifying at the State and national levels earned her a prominent voice in health care policy-making decisions. She was awarded the endowed Ethel Chair at The Pennsylvania State University and served the university as Director of its Nurse Practitioner Program. After retiring, she volunteered as a Telemedicine provider at free clinics in Altoona and Connellsville, and she continued to serve on the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners Certification Board until her passing. Dr. Counts earned Master gardener certification and a pilot’s license, and she also served as a Board member of SOAR; and

Whereas, Dr. Counts represented many things to many people, among them a beloved family member, dedicated nurse practitioner and avowed community steward who gave of her heart and time to enhance the quality of life of her family and community. Her inspiring presence and genuine love for her family and friends will live long in the hearts and memories of the many individuals whose lives she touched; now therefore be it

Resolved, That the Senate of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania note with great sadness the passing of Mona Marie Counts, Ph.D., whose life greatly benefited all those who lived, served and worked with her; and extend heartfelt condolences to her husband, J. D. Yellets; son, Daniel Yellets; daughter, joy Nugent; and one grandchild, Grant Nugent; and be it further

Resolved, That a copy of this document, sponsored by Senator Camera Bartolotta, be transmitted to J. D. Yellets, 126 Water Street, Rice’s Landing, Pennsylvania.

[Signature]
Senator Camera Bartolotta

[Signature]
Joseph Scarnati III, President Pro Tempore

Attest:
[Signature]
Meg Martin, Secretary
I met Mona Counts in 1995 when I joined the Board of the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners. We instantly connected, though at the time, I had no idea that she would become my life-long friend and mentor. Mona loved life and lived it to its fullest. Becoming a pilot taught her many lessons that she was able to pass down to me and those around her. She once told me, “If you have wings, then use them. That’s what flying is about. Use your wings to fly to the highest peak.” As I hesitated whether I would run for AANP President or not that was Mona’s pep talk to me and I’ll never forget it. These words of wisdom pushed me to run for AANP President, and I can never thank her enough for it. As a pioneer in the NP profession, she was a consummate professional who was way ahead of her time. She always saw the good in everyone, was a champion for the under-valued, and stood up for all of us as she moved the NP profession forward. She was a woman of firsts: the first to hold three national presidencies (AANP, FAANP, AANPCB), the first to run an FQHC in rural Appalachia, and the first Towers award winner. There are simply too many to mention here. Mona followed me as AANP President, and I could not have been prouder to have her as my successor. As I handed over the gavel, I knew I was leaving the organization we both loved so much in good hands.

While I could go on and on about her professional achievements, what Mona was truly known for was the impact she had on those around her. She was an inspiration to her students, her colleagues, her family, and her friends. She encouraged everyone she knew to reach higher, dream bigger, and to stand up for what they believe in. Everything Mona did was for the good of others. Over the 20+ years I knew her, Mona and I became kindred spirits. We spent many days, weekends, and weeks together. We traveled near and far, always united by our mission to move the NP profession forward to where we all want it to be. For as many hours as we spent writing and developing the NP certification exam together, we always had fun. I’ll never forget the boxes of wine after a grueling day, or Mona’s “respiratory treatments”. I am sure I speak for everyone when I say that we all have great memories of Mona that we will continue to hold near and dear to our hearts. Mona was a diamond in the rough, my mentor, my confidant, and my friend.

I was able to talk to Mona right before her passing; an opportunity not many of us are lucky enough to have with those we care about. We talked about what she wanted after she passed. She told me that I needed to keep advocating for NPs, what we both loved most and did best. My life changed because of you. Mona, you brought so many of us together as lifelong friends, and we will keep your legacy alive. It’s this legacy, the passion you radiated, the impact you made, and the fun we had that makes this one of the toughest losses I’ve had to endure. Rest well, my dear friend.
I first met Mona Counts as my professor at West Virginia University. I had not planned to be a nurse practitioner, just get my masters degree and be a nurse administrator and get out of school, but Mona had different plans for me. She said you are going to be a nurse practitioner, who says ‘no’ to Mona. Over the past 30 years I learned that Mona had different plans for many of us.

Mona – Wife of JD. Proud grandmother for Grant. Loving mother of Joy and Daniel and foster mother to many. And a founding mother of the nurse practitioner movement. A pilot and a master gardener. A mover and a shaker, innovator and a person who spoke her mind. She lived her life to the fullest.

Mona came to my Professional Aspects class via camera to tell her stories to my students, she talked about being married to a military man, rearing her daughter, traveling across Europe, and how she met JD. She told the students about her experience in medical school and how becoming a nurse and an NP allowed her to make changes in health care. She talked about the early days starting a Nurse Intensivist Program at Emory that later became NPs. She talked about the changes she brought healthcare and the impact on the patients we served in mid-Appalachia.

I practiced with Mona for many years in Mt. Morris, PA. When I was in clinic on Monday I knew that losing Mona was a big personal and professional loss, I had no one to run my thoughts by. No one to give some practical wisdom. I miss her.

Mona would push me (and others) to do things I did not want to do, Once I told her that I was not like her, that if I slipped and fell in crap, I would look like I slipped and fell in it, but she would get up, smile and someone would ask where they could buy that cologne. She just grinned. That was Mona.

Having Mona as a mentor and a friend was truly a privilege.
I first met Mona when I was inducted as a Fellow in 2007. I remember being in awe of her as she was a legend in the nursing world and a person I wanted to emulate, not only because of her brilliance, but because of her forthright, take no prisoner’s attitude! I knew if Mona said it could be done, it would be! She was gracious, tenacious, thoughtful, inspiring, funny, and down to earth.

Mona was Chair of the Fellows (2014-2016) when I was the secretary. She was a wonderful mentor to me and an extraordinary leader. The Fellows grew and thrived under her leadership and I am so grateful for her service to the Fellows, but especially for her friendship. She encouraged me to run for the Chair position and supported me along the way.

I was honored to be able to attend Mona’s funeral service and Celebration of Life along with Joyce Knestrick and Mary Ellen Roberts, representing AANN and FAANP. Many current and former students, NPs she influenced, and her staff attended the service and celebration along with her family and friends. Pennsylvania State Senator Camera Bartolotta attended and presented Mona’s daughter Joy, also an FNP, a proclamation from the Senate, mourning her loss. It spoke of her many accomplishments, her impact on healthcare and health policy and legislation, but also of the sadness at the loss of such an inspiring individual.

The things I will cherish and remember most about Mona are her indomitable spirit, her hard work, her love of the role, her joie de vivre, and her dedication to making life better for everyone she encountered! May we all aspire to live a life as productive, meaningful, and full as Mona’s!

Terra Cotta Warriors, Xi’an, China
Words that described Mona Counts: dedicated, kind, thoughtful, brilliant, engaged, mentor, dear friend, contributor, pioneer NP, nurturer, service to the profession, resource on professionalism, clinical skills, and innovative interventions for better health outcomes, all around colleague.

I could say many more things about Mona, her heart, her devotion to friends and family, and her influence on publicizing the NP role. But, I think her greatest impact was to care for underserved people. She would never say “it cannot be done”. She was always more likely to say “why not?” She leaves a great hole in our hearts.
MONA COUNTS, FAANP

Richard Ricciardi’s Personal photos

INDUCTION PHOTOS
MONA COUNTS, FAANP

Wife
Mother
Daughter
Grandmother
Friend
Foster Mother

Nurse
Nurse Practitioner
Educator
Professor
Clinician
Researcher
Pilot

Primary Health Care
Mount Morris Primary Care Center
Mobile Clinic
Farm

Big Heart
Generous

Traveler
Warrior
Adventurer
Untraveled roads

AANP President
2007-2008
Leader
Professional

AANPCB
President

FAANP
Chair: 2011-2012
Member-at-Large
Leader
Nominator
Mentor
Innovator
Motivator

Towers Award

Caring
Loving
Kathy Wheeler’s photo

Catherine’s Palace
St. Petersburg

Special Edition
At Great Wall of China (above and below).

Note message across glass of gondola.

Jade Temple, Shanghai
MONA COUNTS, FAANP, HONORED
BY ADMIRING NPS WHO LOVED HER

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Dr. Counts has been active in the nurse practitioner movement since 1970 when she started the role at Emory University. She went on to help initiate programs at several other universities including George Mason, Baylor, and Penn State. She then moved to West Virginia to begin a program to provide healthcare to underserved areas. She is now recognized as a national nursing leader who has participated in three White House Panels to study primary care issues with a focus on access. She served the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners (AANP) as President in 2004 (a six-year commitment), and was elected to the AANP Certification Board in 2009. She is also a consultant to the AANP Foundation. She is a Fellow of the National Academies of Practice, an Everyday Hero in Readers’ Digest, and was featured on a segment of 60 Minutes discussing rural nurse practitioners. She recently received the Loretta Ford CCA Association Lifetime Teaching Award. Dr. Counts continues to teach full-time as the Eloise Ross Eberly Professor at Penn State and practices 16-20 hours at the Primary Care Center of Mt. Morris Inc., which is run solely by nurse practitioners. Begun in 1994, the center now serves an estimated 6000 patients. Dr. Counts holds the Chair of the Technical Advisory Panel for CMS looking at CPT coding for Medicare and has a grant for a mobile health unit in rural Pennsylvania. The following interview took place on Dr. Count’s farm where she lives with husband, John Yellets, a retired coal miner and educator. Her daughter is also a nurse practitioner who works alongside her mother. The farm has served over 400 children who, as Dr. Counts states, “needed a place to stay.”

JSL: What were your hopes for the Fellowship?

MC: I have long wanted to increase the collegiality of all nurse practitioners working together to counter the popular portrait of nurses “eating their young”. The Fellowship accomplished this not only by increasing recognition of the NP role, but by participating in local, state, and national political activities with other NP organizations. Fellowship members also tap the capabilities of NPs and use AANP resources to achieve change. I particularly like the mentorship program as it produces future leaders who will have a positive impact on the healthcare system.

JSL: What focus should the Fellowship be taking for the future?

MC: There is no greater issue facing this country than healthcare reform. We need to fund more research projects looking at NP productivity and the importance of billing under our own names. We also need to focus more studies on NP outcomes of care and the co-ordination of care in a holistic manner. The business of healthcare should be a requirement in every NP curriculum and the Fellowship must work with NONPF to achieve this goal.

JSL: You are active in so many professional activities. How do you find time for a personal life?

MC: I love our farm and enjoy brush-hogging the fields to defray stress. I love to raft and I also teach skiing on weekends. All in all, my life is rich and I would not change one part of it.

JSL: I’ve enjoyed our time together, Mona. One of my favorite memories is from a conference in Colorado when we were roommates and you arose to be at the Continental Divide by sunrise to greet the truckers who had been driving all night!

MC: That is what is so great about being a nurse practitioner: The people you meet and the changes that you can see happening to each person you care for!
Several Fellows Events were held at the *AANP 26th National Conference* in Las Vegas, Nevada.

A joint AANP-FAANP executive committee meeting was held Thursday, June 23, 2011. Discussion was held regarding Honorary Fellowships and was presented at the FAANP Annual Business meeting on June 24, 2011. Guidelines will be developed for the honorary fellowships.

Other areas discussed were mentorship, dues increase, leadership, and AANP’s proposed new mission, vision and core values.

The FAANP Annual Business Meeting was held on Friday, June 24, 2011. **Mona Counts,** Chair, opened the meeting and announced the establishment of the *Loretta Ford Award for the Advancement of Nurse Practitioners.* An ad hoc committee will develop criteria and guidelines and will submit these to the Executive Committee.
Dr. Mona Counts was everywhere. The Special Edition of the Forum holds only a few of the many and beautiful memories of Mona Counts which so many people have and will remember for many years. Thank you to those who contributed to this Special Edition of the Forum for remembering and honoring our dear, dear inspirational friend who gave so much of herself to the Nurse Practitioner profession. I did not know Mona as well as many of you but I cannot express how honored I was to read the many tributes. Even with tears in my eyes, I could easily see the depths of her impact on so many nurse practitioners.

Small Wild Goose Pagoda, Xi’an, China.
That beautiful smile, that “I am happy to be here” look. Farewell, Mona, until we meet again.
# Newsletter Team and Contact Information

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We welcome contributions from our members for the Forum. Please, send your topics to Mary B. Neiheisel at mbn8682@louisiana.edu

Do you have an achievement you would like to share with us?
We highlight self-reported accomplishments of our fellows in our newsletter published quarterly. If you would like to share newsworthy accomplishments please go to URL: [https://www.aanp.org/fellows-program/faanp-newsletter#submit-achievements](https://www.aanp.org/fellows-program/faanp-newsletter#submit-achievements) Your accomplishments will appear in the Forum, our fellow’s newsletter. (Note: we reserve the right to edit your entry to conform to allotted space).