

**Elizabeth Abel**  
**AANP Oral History Project**



## Elizabeth Abel

Dr. Abel retired as an Associate Professor (Tenured) from the School of Nursing at The University of Texas at Austin in 2006. She was Chair of the Division of Family and Public Health Nursing and Nursing Systems, 2000-2006, Director of the Family Nurse Practitioner Program, 1997-1999, and practiced in an Internal Medicine primary care clinic. Her research focused on health promotion of women with HIV. She served on the AANP Board of Directors and the Board of the National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties. She was the 1994 AANP Representative to the Public Health Service Primary Care Fellowship, as well as a Lieutenant Commander, U.S. Navy Nurse Corp, Reserve.

The phone interview was completed on February 4, 2010 from Dr. Abel's home on the Isle of Palms, South Carolina where she lives with her husband, Bob.

JSL: How did you feel when you were notified that you were selected as a Charter Fellow in the Academy?

EA: I was surprised as I saw myself as a team player with lots of work to do to promote the role of nurse practitioners. When I looked at the other Charter Fellows, I felt humbled to be numbered among them.

JSL: What were your hopes for the Fellowship?

EA: I saw it as recognition of nurse practitioner leaders who were in the trenches promoting prescriptive authority, delineating NP roles, developing practice standards and addressing reimbursement and other issues. In those days we would take two steps forward and one step backwards and there was always tension. The Fellowship emphasized the importance of tying policy, research, and education to clinical practice. The Charter Fellows mirrored this theme and I believe increased opportunities to build coalitions, especially with other nurse practitioner and healthcare professional groups. The Fellowship helped to mainstream AANP as THE group that represented practice and made a statement that leadership in the organization was an important goal.

JSL: How did being in the Fellowship help you to think outside the box?

EA: It influenced me as a teacher in nurse practitioner education. For example, I encouraged students to take an active role in their professional organizations and to share their ideas about clinical practice. I mentored those with outstanding papers to submit them to peer-reviewed journals where a number were accepted, and many were published in the Journal of AANP. I trust several of them are now leaders in the NP movement.

JSL: What advice do you have for the present Fellows?

EA: Mentoring new Fellows continues to be an important goal of the Fellowship. I would like the Fellowship to use the 'think-tank' methodology to be responsive and innovative as we

forge a pathway related to our role in health care delivery and policy development in this century. This could be a dynamic interdisciplinary process to enhance health care for our patients perhaps resulting in a published monograph. We need to be thinking about where we want to go as a professional group and how we relate to others.

JSL: Is there anything else you would like to share with the Fellows?

EA: Although we faced many challenges and worked hard, we had fun and built long lasting relationships. I hope that this sense of camaraderie can continue as the Fellowship grows.

JSL: How are you finding retirement?

EA: I do not know how I ever found time to work full time! I work part time as an FNP in a private family practice and volunteer for Respite care. I enjoy being closer to family and having time to travel. I am busy with theater, art, music, golf, and playing bridge.

JSL: Thank you, Elizabeth, for spending this time with me.