

Sandra L. Gardner Memoriam

By LuAnn Hall, MSN RN CNS

Sandra L. Gardner, RN MS CNS PNP, passed away unexpectedly in July 2020. While the name is familiar to almost every neonatal nurse in the country and world due to her pioneering work in neonatal nursing, she was Sandy to me. Not only was Sandy a colleague that I had the privilege to work with throughout my career, but also a close friend. We knew the first time we met, that we would be best friends as we had on same outfit, similar jewelry, nails, and our curly hair pulled up in ponytails with the only difference being our hair color. How could you not become friends with the person who shared your style choices as well as having a passion for caring for the smallest and sickest of babies!

Sandy, a longtime member of NANN, began her nursing career in 1967 when she graduated from St. Mary and Elizabeth Hospital School of Nursing and began working at Methodist Evangelical Hospital in Louisville, Kentucky as a Premature Infant Coordinator. In 1971, she accepted a charge nurse position at the Children's Hospital in Louisville and began working on her BSN, which she finished in 1973 from Spalding College with a Magna Cum Laude. At that point, Sandy moved to Denver, Colorado, where she worked as a staff and charge nurse, then Perinatal Outreach Coordinator at the Children's Hospital in Denver. In 1975, she graduated with her MSN from the University of Colorado with a specialty as a Clinical Nurse Specialist, then obtaining a PNP in 1978 also from the University of Colorado. In her career, Sandy was a founding member of the Colorado Care Council, Assistant Professor at the University of Colorado School of Nursing, Co-Founder and Vice Chairman of the Board of Directors for the Denver Birth Center. Since 1980, she has been the Director and Consultant for Professional Outreach Consultation and in 1982 founded the Neonatal Nursing Education Foundation.

Other highlights from Sandy's long and illustrious career consist of presenting at many neonatal nursing conferences, including NANN's annual conference, and being an author and editor of many manuscripts and book chapter, most notably Merenstein and Gardner's Handbook of



Neonatal Intensive Care. She co-edited this book with Dr. Merenstein until his death in 2007, then continued as the editor until her death. In addition to this book, she also authored Legal Aspects of Maternal Child Nursing Practice in 1997 and Care of the Well Newborn in 2016. Sandy worked with Abbott Nutrition as a presenter, was the editor of their publication NICU Currents, as well other publications for them.

Sandy loved teaching nurses and other health care professionals about both healthy, sick, and premature newborns and traveled the country and world to do it. She was also a neonatal educator for the U.S. Army going overseas many times to assure that military personnel had the same education as those in the US on how to properly care for newborns! Because of her expertise, she was also called upon as an expert witness on the standard of care in both neonatal and pediatric nursing.

In addition to NANN, Sandy was also a member of the American Nurses Association. She received the Gerald L. Henceman Award from the Colorado March of Dimes in 1978 and the American Nurses Association Book of the Year Award in 1986.

I am sure that I have not covered all of Sandy's great work, but at least hit the highlights of her long illustrious career. As former NANN President Jean Grazel stated in my Facebook post to Sandy, neonatal nursing has lost a Super Star! She has left an amazing legacy for neonatal nursing, but she also was a kind person that loved her family and her little dogs.

Sandy will be deeply missed by all of those that personally knew her as well as the neonatal nursing community! So cheers to you my dear friend, for your friendship and the amazing knowledge that you willing shared with an uncountable number of past, present, and future neonatal nurses and colleagues over your life. We will all miss you!

