



Margretta Madden Styles

A reprint of Styles's 1982 'Declaration of Belief About the Nature and Purpose of Nursing.'

EDITOR'S NOTE

In recognition of the Year of the Nurse and the Midwife initiative, *AJN* will periodically highlight the works of key nursing leaders. Sometimes it will be in the form of articles from our archives, at other times it will be excerpts from or summaries of nurses' work with related commentary. Here, courtesy of Margretta Madden Styles's daughter, we've reprinted Styles's "Declaration of Belief About the Nature and Purpose of Nursing," originally published in her book, *On Nursing: Toward a New Endowment* (C.V. Mosby Company, 1982). We hope it will inspire you.

I was aware of Margretta (Gretta) Madden Styles long before I met her. Our work together began when, as its president from 1986 to 1988, she led the American Nurses Association (ANA) through a transformation starting with an organization-wide evaluation known as the Core Report. As chair of the bylaws committee, I worked closely with her to transform the report's recommendations into structure, and it was during that time that our relationship began. Years later, when I became president of the ANA, I called on Gretta many times and she always stepped up. Her love of nursing shone through.

Gretta was one of the most impactful nurses of the 20th century. In 1983, she was appointed the American Nurses Foundation's first distinguished scholar, and in that role she studied and wrote about the development of specialization in nursing, which led to her recognition as the "mother of specialization." Her work became the foundation for the establishment of the American Board of Nursing Specialties, and in honor of that contribution, the annual celebration of specialty certification is held on March 19, Gretta's birthday. She was dean of several colleges of nursing, including the University of California San Francisco, and held nine honorary



Margretta Madden Styles. Photo courtesy of Meg Styles.

doctorates. In addition to the ANA, Gretta also served as president of the International Council of Nurses (ICN) and the American Nurses Credentialing Center. In 2005, she was awarded the Christiane Reimann Prize by the ICN, its highest honor. There is not enough space here to describe all of Gretta's accomplishments.

Perhaps the best way to describe Gretta is to tell you that as president of both the ANA and the ICN, she, as other ICN presidents before her, had a watch word. Gretta's was "MARCH!" Gretta wanted us to march, in all that that word implies—action, coordination, unity, and sense of purpose. Gretta loved connection and she

loved nursing. She saw in nursing the compassion, power, and purpose that was needed then and is needed now. She once challenged people to "imagine a world without nurses." It is perhaps her most recognized quote. I think Gretta would like the word *impactful*. She would like its strength and its sense of action because that's the kind of leader she was. Fifteen years after her death and 20 years into the 21st century, she still influences nursing, as the declaration that follows demonstrates.—*Barbara A. Blakeney, MS, RN, FNAP, president, American Nurses Association, 2002–2006* ▼

DECLARATION OF BELIEF
ABOUT THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF NURSING

- I. I believe in nursing as an *occupational force for social good*, a force that, in the *totality of its concern* for all human health states and for mankind's responses to health and environment, provides a distinct, unique, and vital perspective, value orientation, and service.
- II. I believe in nursing as a *professional discipline*, requiring a sound education and research base grounded in its own science and in the variety of academic and professional disciplines with which it relates.
- III. I believe in nursing as a *clinical practice*, employing particular physiological, psychosocial, physical, and technological means for human amelioration, sustenance, and comfort.
- IV. I believe in nursing as a *humanistic field*, in which the fullness, self-respect, self-determination, and humanity of the nurse engage the fullness, self-respect, self-determination, and humanity of the client.
- V. I believe that nursing's *maximum contribution* for social betterment is dependent on:
 - A. The well-developed *expertise* of the nurse;
 - B. The *understanding, appreciation, and acknowledgment* of that expertise by the public;
 - C. The organizational, legal, economic, and political *arrangements* that enable the full and proper expression of nursing values and expertise;
 - D. The ability of the profession to maintain *unity* within diversity.
- VI. I believe in *myself* and in my *nursing colleagues*:
 - A. In our *responsibility* to develop and dedicate our minds, bodies, and souls to the profession that we esteem and the people whom we serve;
 - B. In our *right* to be fulfilled, to be recognized, and to be rewarded as highly valued members of society.