

IN HONOR OF PAST PRESIDENTS OF THE ASSOCIATION FOR VOLUNTEER ADMINISTRATION

Presented by AVA President, Sarah Jane Rehnborg, CAVS, at the

AVA Luncheon
Holiday Inn
Minneapolis, Minnesota
October 14, 1980

I heard an analogy describing the work of the administrator of volunteers. The analogy relates to that of a top - the type of a top that a child spends time spinning. The reason this analogy makes sense is because it is the role of the volunteer administrator to keep many tops spinning simultaneously. We know that it takes considerable experience to keep only one top spinning but to spin multiple tops requires great expertise. And it is this expertise in spinning tops that relates to the work that has been done by all of the Past Presidents of this Association. Not only must they spin the tops of the persons who are closest to them geographically but they must also keep the work going of persons who are spread all over the country. And they keep those tops spinning through letters, through telephone calls, through periodic board meetings as well as the meetings of the Association and its annual conferences. It takes a great deal of knowledge to spin a top. You must know where the point of balance is, the amount of pressure that it requires for different tops to spin, whether or not one needs a gently nudge or whether another one needs a great deal of attention and a lot of momentum to keep it going. We all remember from our childhood experiences that spinning a top is not easy. And spinning many of them is quite difficult. But we also know from our jobs as administrators and particularly when we are administrating volunteers and are volunteers ourselves that that task is also not any easy one. It is with the analogy of the spinning top in mind that I would like to take you through some of the tops that our presidents kept spinning, have kept active and have kept in balance in order for the Association to move to where it is today.

It was in 1958, prior to the American Psychiatric Association Mental Hospitals Institute that the founders of AVA first met. Miriam Karlins became our first president and a small group of charter members identified the top which we now call AVA. The original purpose of the Association was to stimulate, coordinate and integrate community volunteer services in mental health organizations. AVA was officially organized and held its first conference and annual meeting in 1961 and called itself at that time "The American Association of Volunteer Services Coordinators". Work immediately began on standards, on salary surveys, on certification and on newsletters. And it was in the first year of the organization's existence that 150 persons identified themselves as members. It was from 1961 til 1963 that Miriam Karlins kept the tops of AAVSC spinning.

Following Miriam was Glenna Kent, President from 1964 to 1965. Although much was happening, it is a quote from Glenna that I would like to share with you today. Glenna said that "the mark of a profession is measured by the extent to which its members are involved in its professional organization". Involvement in that professional organization cost at that time \$10.00 annually!

Jane Phillips presided over the Association from 1966 to 1969. Membership reached 250. The nation was divided into regions and regional groups were formed. A pre-conference institute to assist new coordinators was begun and it is interesting that in that time there was a newsletter which reported on a volunteer's observation of the work of volunteers in English hospitals for the mentally ill. Perhaps that first article predicted the AVA international involvement we find today. During Jane's tenure the membership adopted a certification plan. The 1967 conference was held in Minneapolis, Minnesota where it was again held this year in 1980. It was in 1968 that AAVSC

questioned its purpose and began to look at expanding its membership to include volunteer administrators from all fields. During that same time a master's degree program in volunteer services program administration began in September of 1969 at Southern Illinois University. That program owed much to the dedication and work of AAVSC.

Magdalen Fuller and Syd Zweig led the Association between 1970 and 1973. The national headquarters was moved to Chicago and membership grew to 400. There were a few interesting developments that should be drawn to our attention. There was a resolution from the membership in 1973 to the National Governor's Conference requesting the establishment of a cabinet level coordinator of volunteer services. Also during that time AAVSC gave formal notification to the APA Institute of Hospital and Community Psychiatry of its decision to become independent. Fellow Awards were initiated and the Public Policy Committee was formed. In 1973 AAVSC became a generic professional association as it opened its membership to salaried volunteer administrators from all programmatic settings.

Miriam Jeffrey took the helm and kept the multiple tops spinning from 1974 through 1975. It was during her tenure that affiliate group memberships were initially discussed seriously. AAVSC was represented in discussions with the Lilly Endowment who later provided the money to create the Alliance for Volunteerism. AAVSC became a member of the Alliance for Volunteerism and remains one today. During Miriam's term AAVSC changed its name and became the Association for Administration of Volunteer Services. During that time the word 'salaried' was dropped from the requirements for active membership and the membership criteria was opened to involve those actively involved in the field of volunteer administration, educators and researchers in the field.

Under Betty Blackburn's leadership in 1976 and 1977, AAVS moved its administrative office to Boulder, Colorado. Martha Martin was hired as our Executive Secretary. Active members began to receive subscriptions to Volunteer Administration and Voluntary Action Leadership as part of their dues and our first annual collaborative conference was held.

In 1978 and 1979 Carol Moore took over as the lead top spinner. Certification was examined. An organizational consultant was hired. Issues sessions became part of the conference. Outside funding was sought and our first grant from ACTION was received. But perhaps the highlight of Carol's term was the fact that AAVS became AVA, the Association for Volunteer Administration, with a new set of bylaws governing the Association.

Each of these persons have been instrumental in keeping the top of AVA moving, alive and spinning. As the late Peter Marshall said in a prayer before the U.S. Senate, "Give us clear vision, that we may know where to stand and what to stand for, because unless we stand for something, we shall fall for anything". AVA does stand for something today because of the work of these persons. We stand for the promotion of volunteer administration as a profession, exchange of knowledge and experience, the creative use of volunteer services administration, and for the promotion of professional education development.

We thank you and as a token of our thanks, we have a small momento of today's events.

Thank you.