

Virginia “Ginger” Anthony, Executive Director of AACAP Retires After 39 Years

■ **Diane K. Shrier, M.D., AACAP News Contributing Editor**

This article is based on a recent interview with Virginia Q. Anthony and incorporates material from AACAP staff and from articles prepared about and by her for the 50th anniversary issues of AACAP News (2003).

Virginia “Ginger” Anthony, the only executive director AACAP has ever had to date, will retire in 2012 after 39 years with the AACAP. Ginger has overseen and implemented major changes and growth within the organization. Those of us who joined AACAP around the same time as Ginger know how much the AACAP owes to Ginger’s skills and personality and how much Ginger herself has changed and grown as a result of her work and relationships with the AACAP and its members and staff.

As AACAP searches for an irreplaceable replacement for Ginger, it might be useful to examine what her role has been and what qualities and values she brought to the table. It is only in hindsight that we can reflect on what it was about Ginger as executive director that allowed both Ginger and AACAP to thrive and grow in the wonderful way both have. Ginger was very young (28 years old) when she was hired and looked even younger in her youthful attire surrounded by child psychiatrists over 50.

Ginger grew up the middle of three children in a large extended fun-loving Irish Catholic family in Hingham, Massachusetts, a small New England harbor town 20 miles from Boston. Her father and uncles ran the family bike and gasoline shop. Her mother was from a factory town in Pennsylvania and was encouraged by neighbors to become a nurse. Her mother became an army officer during World War II and met and married her husband during the war.

Ginger was a sailor, an excellent high school student, graduated from Mount

Holyoke College, married young, had a son (Justin Bausch), and was independent and self-supporting. Her second marriage in 1984 to **E. James Anthony** (President, 1981-1983) has thrived.

AACAP, which until 1988 was called the Academy of Child Psychiatry (ACP), was founded in 1953 and was only 20 years old itself when Ginger was hired. Originally, the ACP had been established as an elitist and exclusive organization with membership by invitation only and non-transparent criteria, but in 1969 the ACP leadership wisely agreed to reconfigure itself into a professional medical society that accepted members by application with criteria of child psychiatry training and professional emphasis. By 1973, the ACP had grown from 400 to 1,000 members and outgrown two office locations. In hindsight, hiring Ginger changed the entire future trajectory of the organization.

Currently, AACAP has approximately 8,600 members, 60 regional organizations, 34 staff in nine departments, and multiple task forces and committees led by our active and involved members. Our organization has made prudent decisions resulting in a very stable financial situation and dues have remained quite reasonable over many years. AACAP is highly respected in the professional and national and international community as the leading organization in the child and adolescent mental health field for a wide range of issues: clinical, educational, research, and advocacy. While our reputation is due in large part to the dedication and initiatives of our leadership and membership and staff, I would not underestimate Ginger’s role in establishing an atmosphere that enables us all to do and be the best we can in furthering the AACAP’s mission.

Here are some of Ginger’s qualities that have worked so well for the AACAP:

- Ginger is clear about roles and boundaries. The officers determine policy and planning (with staff input and expertise when appropriate) and the staff implements. The staff report to the executive director NOT to the members or officers. Ginger knows the issues and is secure enough to address leadership when necessary for the sake of the AACAP and its mission.
- Ginger sees her job as making each president the best president he or she can be. Ginger has been asked how she can stand having a new boss/president every two years, but she sees it as a gift to her education. She says she gets the equivalent of an MBA in a different area every two years. She sees it as an opportunity to learn and grow as each new president brings different strengths and weaknesses, knowledge, and experiences to AACAP. As **Michael Jellinek, M.D.**, (Treasurer 1991-1993) noted, “Ginger has the capacity to maintain a balance between the interests and needs of many people and has been able to work effectively with a series of presidents, many of whom were strong-minded, some who brought their own agendas, and each with a unique leadership style.”
- Ginger totally believes in teamwork and in delegating but also expects dedication. She tries to recruit the



Irving Berlin, M.D., (AACAP President, 1975-77), Virginia Anthony, AACAP Executive Director



George Tarjan, M.D., (AACAP President, 1977-79), Virginia Anthony, AACAP Executive Director, and E. James Anthony, M.D., (AACAP President, 1981-83)

best people and then supports them to do their job. She believes that makes for strength in an organization

- Ginger is not afraid of mistakes, seeing mistakes as an inevitable part of learning and growing, but she does expect all, including herself, to learn from those mistakes. While mistakes and disappointments and failures are inevitable and sometimes painful, Ginger has the resiliency to refocus her energies and move on to another project with renewed enthusiasm.
- Ginger is very goal-directed, business-like, and knowledgeable in her interactions with a wide variety of people: AACAP officers, members, directors, and staff; those representing organizations with which AACAP does business; benefactors and potential benefactors; legislative representatives; governmental policy-makers; and the press. She has maintained a positive environment where hard work and good humor are both prioritized. She has a keen sense of judgment, an excellent memory, and her exceptional length of service has provided the continuity that keeps the entire organization moving despite frequent changes in leadership. When Joseph Noshpitz, M.D., was at the end of his presidency (1973-1975), he gave a tribute to Ginger. He likened Ginger to the watch spring of a watch that keeps everything going and without which the watch would not work.
- Ginger is not comfortable in the spotlight and does not seek it. She is a

“behind the scenes” person, without vanity or ego. Ginger underplays her contributions. She sees her role as moving things forward when they get stuck. While she often listens more than she speaks, when she does intervene in a meeting it is to move the agenda forward. **Irving Berlin, M.D.**, (President 1975-1977) stated that “one of her most

important assets was her capacity to keep a discussion focused and her willingness to gently redirect even senior members or officers when they wandered off the subject without appearing intrusive or overbearing.”

- She has the capacity to see humor in her own behavior and in that of others and does not take herself too seriously. She has a childlike sense of fun and playfulness ideal for a child and adolescent psychiatry society and brings good humor and laughter to many AACAP activities, while also having a sense of responsibility and dedication to the vitally important work of the AACAP. She encourages “AACAP Olympics”, scavenger hunts, games, skits, songs, poetry, and nonsensical awards. Ginger talks about her work as fun and sees playful activities as a way to further relationships and create an environment in which productive work can be accomplished.
- Ginger talks about AACAP as a family, rich in affection and respect. While AACAP is not devoid of conflict, it is also full of joy and of sorrow, with memories of accomplishments, disappointments, and special people; each unique yet sharing a common bond – a compassionate dedication to children and an allegiance to AACAP.
- Ginger has an unusual capacity for warm, deep, and lasting relationships and friendships with staff and with AACAP members and leaders.

She has a remarkable memory and knows the names of spouses and details about families; is genuinely happy at their successes and important events in their lives. She is a friend ready to provide comfort in times of stress or personal tragedy. She takes real pride in the development and accomplishments of each individual and the successes of the staff and the AACAP as a whole. She takes seriously the concerns and trials and tribulations of each staff and AACAP member and makes time to help them with their personal, as well as professional, concerns. She has a knack of saying or doing just the right thing at times of accomplishment or celebration and when tragedy strikes.

When Ginger gave her resignation, she stated that she would not participate in any way with the Council and the Officers in the search process but she did assist President **Martin Drell, M.D.**, in establishing the process. She thinks the AACAP is very strong and she is proud of the team of staff she has brought in with clearly established lines of authority.

When asked what she will do next, Ginger says she has never been a planner. On looking back, she modestly sees

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Harold Koplewicz, M.D., Virginia Anthony, AACAP Executive Director, and Dr. Ruth Westheimer

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U.S. Senator, Charles E. Schumer (D-NY) and Virginia Anthony, AACAP Executive Director

herself as a “drifter through life,” open to what unfolds, including her impending retirement. She knows she wants more time to be involved in the lives of her beloved husband (**E. James Anthony, M.D.**) and her son Justin, his wife Elizabeth, and her grandsons William and Quinn. When asked, Ginger said

her ideal job would be in development and fund-raising. She enjoys helping people use their money to advance child and adolescent psychiatry and promote a range of research, advocacy, clinical, and educational mental health initiatives for children, adolescents and families.

With the announcement of Ginger’s impending retirement, members and prior and current staff have been responding by sending Ginger tributes and heartfelt stories about what she has meant to each of them. Due to space constraints, I have not been able to include more than a small number, but they are all read and appreciated. ■

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Upcoming **EVENTS**

May 5-9, 2012

**American Psychiatric Association
Annual Meeting**
Philadelphia, PA
www.psych.org

May 11, 2012

AACAP Advocacy Day
Washington, DC
www.aacap.org

May 15-18, 2012

**17th International APPAC Confer-
ence (Association of Psychology and
Psychiatry for Adults and Children)**
Athens, Greece
congress@appac.gr
www.appac.gr

July 21-25, 2012

IACAPAP World Congress
Paris, France
www.iacapap.org

October 23-28, 2012

AACAP Annual Meeting
Hilton San Francisco Union Square
San Francisco, CA
www.aacap.org

November 2-3, 2012

1st Asian Congress on ADHD
Seoul, Korea
www.2012adhdseoul.org

November 2-4, 2012

**ABPN Part II (Oral) Examination
In Child and Adolescent Psychiatry**
San Antonio, TX
www.abpn.com

November 9-11, 2012

**ABPN Part II (Oral) Examination
In Child and Adolescent Psychiatry**
Houston, TX
www.abpn.com