

## **The History of PGA, APGA, AACD, and ACA from the 50 Past Presidents**

### **Dr. Robert H. Shaffer, 1951-1953**

Probably the “highlight” of the first years of the American Personnel and Guidance Association was just the fact of its creation. Its birth had been difficult, and it faced daunting challenges. It had to operate on an extremely limited budget, satisfy the varied interests of its current members, initiate programs and activities to reach out to new populations and prove itself to many skeptics. Many professionals doubted that such a new umbrella group could contribute anything valuable to a rapidly developing field.



One of the first important decisions was to select a national office site and to decide upon its staffing. Many members felt it was too expensive to locate an office in the Washington, D.C. area and that, in addition, a physical presence there was not particularly important. Conversely, others felt strongly that it was very important for APGA to be in the nation’s capital, thereby having access to other professional associations as well as government agencies. After exploring possible alternative locations, such as university campuses and midwestern cities, the decision was made to remain in the Washington, D.C. area. Willa Norris, first executive secretary, and Frank Fletcher, the first treasurer and third association president, practically performed miracles and devoted scores of hours to locating possible sites. Finally, space near DuPont Circle was rented from the American Trucking Association.

Another major decision related to the establishment of a professional journal. A grant from the Carnegie Corporation to NVGA to support its longtime journal, *Occupations*, had just ended. The prospect of bearing the entire cost of publishing a new journal seemed prohibitive to the young organization. Yet, it was finally decided to commit the funds necessary to create the journal and to name it *The Personnel and Guidance Journal*, with Professor William Wilkins of New York University as its editor and Nancy Shivers, managing editor, shifting from *Occupations* to the new journal. Its editorial policy attempted to cover the broad field of guidance, counseling, student affairs and human services.

A third area of major decisions related to discussion and appointment of association committees. A major goal was to involve as many members as possible not only in association mechanics but also in specific aspects of the professional field. One measure of success of these committees was their subsequent evolution into divisions of the association.

It is difficult to assess the impact of a large, multi-faceted professional association upon a total field as opposed to that of smaller associations of specialists. Probably the answer is that the complex field of individual development requires both types of associations to meet the needs of the wide variety of clients and practitioners involved. Certainly, the history and development of APGA, through AACD to ACA, indicate the organization and its members were and are doing something right.

Obviously, there were a myriad of other decisions that had to be made; however, the preceding examples illustrate the nature of the early months of APGA’s existence. Recalling these events from a perspective of over 50 years emphasizes the strong, dedicated teamwork and valuable contributions made to the fledgling organization by so many distinguished leaders from various fields.