

Association for Volunteer Administration Distinguished Member Service Award Acceptance Speech

October 26, 1990

Christine G. Franklin, CVA

At the 1990 International Conference on Volunteer Administration, Christine G. Franklin, CVA, was presented with AVA's Distinguished Member Service Award. Ms. Franklin is currently the Director of Alumnae Affairs at Simmons College in Boston. Prior to that she had a 15-year career in Human Services, including serving as Executive Director of a local Camp Fire Agency and Vice President of Community Services for the United Way of Massachusetts Bay. Ms. Franklin is Certified in Volunteer Administration, conferred by the Association for Volunteer Administration. She chaired the Association's 1981 National Conference on Volunteerism in Philadelphia, was on the Board of Directors for nine years, was President of the Association from 1985 to 1989, is presently the Chair of the Past President's Council, and serves on the Certification Committee. Ms. Franklin has done training in volunteer administration for the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE). A graduate of Wellesley College, Ms. Franklin remains active in alumnae and community programs with volunteer commitments which include church and educational related organizations.

The highest honor one can receive is to be recognized by one's peers and colleagues in one's chosen field and I am humbled to be selected to stand among AVA's leaders. My service to AVA has always been rendered as a contribution, to enable others to do their best on behalf of a cause important to them. I am gratified to know that my service and efforts have made some small mark on the long road which AVA and the profession have to travel.

I want to take this opportunity to specifically thank two persons who have stood by me through this exciting and demanding time in my career:

Bob Franklin is the one who is consistently there when I stumble, nudges me when I hesitate, and always, gently, encourages me to grow. As many of you know, after attending several of these conferences with me, he can well articulate the vision for AVA and volunteerism as well as any of us mired in the trenches—and does so when called upon—and even sometimes when not called upon!

[AVA Executive Secretary] Martha Martin has been a bountiful source of perspective, constant faith, and unstinting willingness to help me attempt to fulfill my dreams for the Association. I am indebted to her for her steadfast confidence, both in me and in AVA, and for the innumerable moments of laughter we've shared, even in the direst of times!

As you might suspect, Harriet Naylor, for whom this award was named, was a role model and visionary, as well as a pioneer—a determined woman who would not give up until she had us on the map. Indeed, I learned much from Hat.

In fact, I've worked and learned from many of you—those named Distinguished Members before me, VAC directors, consultants, authors and program directors, agency executives, fellow Board members, Region Chairs, *Journal* editors, conference chairs and committee members—all professionals with a commitment often far greater than mine. It amazes me that I should receive this award when so many have been alongside.

Having moved out of the 360 degree vantage point of a volunteer center to managing the activities of a small college alumnae constituency, I have realized after a year that it really doesn't matter where you are in the hierarchy of an organization. You can make an impact as a leader anywhere. I am not planning to launch into all the attributes of leadership this noon, but simply to make some observations on leadership—yours and ours.

To bear this out, I looked up the word "lead" and found it has 33 definitions as a verb and 22 as a noun (according to the Random House Dictionary of Modern Languages, printed back in 1967). Additionally, the word "leader" has 13 definitions, some of which are quite relevant, if your sense of humor is intact:

For instance, "leader"—

- an insulated single *conductor* used between two pieces in an electrical apparatus (ever felt that way? perhaps more isolated than insulated?);
- a short *summary* serving as an introduction to an article (I've certainly been used that way before);
- a *base runner nearest to scoring* (oh, that we should be there more often);
- a *pass thrown ahead* of an intended receiver to allow him to catch it while running (an everyday occurrence in our business);
- a *duct for conveying* warm air from a hot air furnace to a register or stack (I certainly have been accused of that).

Or, on a more serious note, a conductor, as in an orchestra. As I once said to my close friend and colleague Helen Mahoney, it was my hope, as President of AVA, that we would all be playing from the same score, no matter if we individually resembled trumpets, percussion, violins, or oboes. It was my hope that soon we would share the complete piece and produce a sense of harmony as yet unheard in volunteerism.

You, too, may be any or all of the above! But regardless, all of you are leaders in volunteerism.

In fact, I'm quite proud of AVA's leadership because it:

- elects a grassroots board that understands the issues in the field; everyone on that board is considered a leader, regardless of title, discipline or occupational setting;
- has begun a bank of qualified leaders to serve at all levels of responsibility;
- created standards of excellence for the field and continually urges us to attain and acknowledge our own high standards of competence;
- And, AVA has the courage to stand on its own in the belief that a professional association is needed and viable in the field of volunteerism. I think of AVA as the base runner nearest to scoring.

Anatole France once said: "To accomplish great things, we must not only act, but also dream, not only plan but also believe." We certainly are believers.

Sure, there have been internal changes and challenges this past year to make us all reflect on what AVA's priorities need to be. If we are creative, we will recognize these challenges as "innumerable opportunities brilliantly disguised as impossible hurdles." But no organization moves ahead without pain and introspection. We are in this together, and our volunteer leaders have reached out to us in an unprecedented way, inviting comment, written and verbal, as well as our participation.

"Leaders are us," to paraphrase a popular toy company name. You and I are leading the shaping of leadership in the field of volunteerism for the next decade, if not the next century. In fact, I wonder: while AVA is in the process of critiquing itself, why not call us the "Association for Leaders in Volunteerism"??? Isn't that really who we are?

In any event, I hope you will continue to lead, along with AVA, in whatever way is the most fulfilling and proactive and challenging for you. But please never let up; start now if you've never felt you could. For as Goethe said: "Whatever you can do, or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius and magic in it."

Let *your* leadership be bold.