

JANE W. KESSLER, PH.D.

PRESIDENT

AMERICAN ORTHOPSYCHIATRIC ASSOCIATION

Fitting and fortunate it is to have Jane Kessler as our new Ortho President. She has a long history of effective dedication to the goals of the American Orthopsychiatric Association, evidenced both by her work within the organization and endeavors in the community-at-large. In these complicated times, when almost every day produces unprecedented problems which must be met with acumen, we are indeed in good hands. Jane is well schooled in the functions of the organization, and has a keen sense of how the organizational structure can be made to work. She is a Fellow of our Association, Chairperson of the Council on Child and Youth Issues, and has been a member of the AOA Board of Directors; Ortho annual meetings record her frequent participation. Knowing Ortho from the inside, she is well aware of the struggles and goals of the vigorous and prestigious professional organization she is to guide. Particularly because of our multidisciplinary membership, the wide range of professional roles represented, and the diverse political views included, being the President of Ortho presents a special challenge. It seems almost impudent to assume that such an organization can continue to work on causes big and small at a time when the majority of our professional organizations find it necessary to build their identity and programs on sameness and isolation from wide-ranging memberships. Our new President continues the lineage of sagacious

leaders. It is no place for the timid soul, nor is it a place for the autocrat at the Board meeting. It requires a courageous, creative leader who accepts the responsibility because of a lifelong dedication to the highest quality of human service.

Jane's professional concerns range from prevention to treatment of the acutely disturbed patient. She is equally at home formulating a national policy or conducting intimate therapeutic relationships. Jane is of the old school, where one's immediate role is merged with broad political and social concerns. Helping is not a confined occupation, it is a way of life.

We are pleased to recognize her demonstrated administrative skill, but there is a factor still more important.

It has to do with both Jane Kessler's professional stance and her style. In a time of fads soon out of favor and confessionals which bespeak the shallowness of prior convictions, Jane has maintained a position as a leading exponent of the psychodynamic point of view. This has been not as a zealot but as an ever-growing and evolving professional who always subjects a theory to the pragmatic test of how it helps to serve people. She has a basic investment in diagnosis as the point of beginning, and her diagnosis has included not only an analysis of the person but of the setting as well. Because of her profound respect for human beings, she is as concerned for their deep inner life as for their immediate dilemmas. The only time I have



seen ire or scorn is when she is confronted with someone who advocates an action which bespeaks arrogance about children or adults, or when someone is eager to manipulate others. She does not accept those who shortchange the magnificent and complicated beings that we are with superficial explanations. It is comforting to have a person who stands up for what she has found to be useful, and has added new insights without dumping the old and essential. Jane has a profound sense of the human dilemma, balanced by hope and belief that she should be doing something about it. She has never heard of energy conservation when it comes to the way she works.

Jane Kessler's leadership has earned the respect of those who have worked with her over the years. This comes from the fact that her code is built upon respect for others. She listens well. But be not deceived by her pleasant, somewhat quiet and thoughtful listening. It is not passive listening. Once she has assimilated the ideas, she moves in with her ability to analyze. Rather than authoritarian, her leadership style is one of reason and sensibility played over against basic goals and values. I have never known her not to listen, not to incorporate the wisdom of others, and not to end up with a vigorous and convincing advocacy for what she believes to be true.

Jane's academic career started at the University of Michigan, where she took her undergraduate degree. From there she went East for her M.A. in psychology at Columbia University. Jane served as a psychologist in the WAVES from 1943-1946. In 1951, she was awarded the Ph.D. in clinical psychology from Western Reserve University. Recognized as a young person with high professional promise, she was kept near the home base, where she became the chief psychologist at University Hospitals in Cleveland. In 1958, she was made director of the Mental Development Center, a post which she still holds.

Her responsibility as chief psychologist included teaching in the department of psychology at Case Western Reserve Uni-

versity, where she has been a full professor for over a decade. Jane's teaching has garnered accolades that parallel those given her clinical work: authoritative without being autocratic, excellent scholarship, deep clinical insights, and breadth that reaches beyond the confines of particular dogma. Perhaps one reason for her unusual breadth is the multiple functions in which she has been engaged: university and institute teaching, private practice, consultant, and clinical director; she has served on many university and community committees, as well as community boards and advisory councils. She has published a series of informative articles for the PTA over the last twelve years.

Such a career of professional service is reason for satisfaction, but it is quality of performance that marks Jane. She was recognized as outstanding in her academic role when appointed as a distinguished professor, the Lucy Adams Leffingwell Professor of Psychology, as a result of her work on developmental and behavioral problems of children. She is also an instructor in the Cleveland Child Analytic Program.

A Fellow in the American Psychological Association, Jane Kessler holds an American Board of Examiners in Professional Psychology diploma in clinical psychology, the highest status for her professional discipline. She is a Fellow in the American Association for Mental Deficiency, and has served as president of its Ohio chapter. Her immediate colleagues have long recognized Jane's leadership. Even when they emigrate from Ohio, members of her profession retain close ties with Jane and continue to call upon her for advice and consultation on programs.

Jane was elected president of the Ohio Psychological Association in 1969-1970. At the national level, she is on the Council of Representatives of the American Psychological Association. In addition to other work in that association, she has served on the American Psychological Association Ethics Committee, and is the chairperson of its Ethics Revision Task Force. It is difficult to imagine a position fraught with more contention. One who is given

such responsibility must be both judicious and embody the highest level of ethical standards.

In addition to the quality of her work, it is her innovative nature that provides Jane Kessler with the stature to be Ortho's leader. When one thinks of Jane, it is in term of being there "first" in so many instances. Not the least of these is her stalwart role as a professional, combined with being a wife and mother. While this combination still constitutes a contention for many, to Jane it was just in the nature of things one does to enjoy life to the full. Because she carries her sensitivity and concern with her as a person, and not just in a professional role, Jane has found these commitments a normal part of living.

Another "first" for Jane lies in her leadership of the Mental Development Center at Case Western Reserve. She began to work with preschoolers before they were "discovered" by the national movement. She has been an early leader in the emancipation of the mentally retarded. In 1959, when she organized the Mental Development Center, there was an artificial distinction between disturbed and retarded—one to be helped by clinical attention, the other to be given benign care but little else. Jane's efforts anticipated the national wave of "Kennedy" clinics that eventually brought general attention to the plight of the retarded.

The center was organized with a staff of three. Like many first ventures, it started operating in basement quarters and after several moves to accommodate expansion now has its own home. The first preschool program for disturbed and retarded children in the region began at the Center, under Jane Kessler's direction. Her staff now includes two pediatricians, eight psychologists, four social workers, two teachers, and a speech therapist. A micro Othopsychiatric Association in itself! There are four group programs for preschoolers starting at age three.

The work of the Center has spread through its trainees, who have gone out to work in centers for the retarded and disturbed in many parts of this country and in Canada, Mexico, and Japan. Basic to their training is interdisciplinary dedi-

cation to astute diagnosis, vigorous intervention, and realistic planning for each child through close liaison and cooperation with the family. Again, family involvement was pioneered at the Center before this methodology became the popular front.

Another early effort was the Center's outreach programs, which went where the people naturally gathered and offered needed services in the most convenient and natural settings. The outreach program started in one of the area churches. In addition, consultation was offered to various agencies through a central supportive unit. The goal was to help retarded children who might be missed if required to come to the central office. The present work of the Mental Development Center is equally concerned with children who are emotionally disturbed and mentally retarded. Before it was the law of the land, Jane plunged into new working relationships with parents not only in connection with their own children, but with parent groups as well.

The depth of her investment in mental health services for the retarded child is indicated in a recent article by Jane Kessler and colleagues in the 1976 *Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*. It comes from a service center which finds the energy to do research and to publish its findings. The article notes the relative lack of attention currently paid to the generic effect of retardation on personality development. It points out how easy it is to confuse the goal of a happy retarded child and the expectation of normality. Parents are dealt "a double blow" when they find that their child is both defective and disturbed. Parents are also uneasy giving their child over to someone else, and they are certainly upset at the aggression often directed toward them by the child while in treatment. The whole article deals with adapting therapeutic skills for counseling the retarded child, still a relatively unexplored matter.

What has kept Jane at the forefront of the profession is her continual activity in direct work with severe problems of clients, day by day. She sensed very early the critical need to follow her youngsters

into school settings. The demands of direct service in the contemporary style kept her reformulating old practices and evolving new ones. Working in a metropolitan area, she sensed the changing times. I can remember, again before the urban plight was a celebrated cause, Jane organizing a conference "to get us on the stick" before the magnitude of the condition overwhelmed us. She saw what was coming and made every effort to mobilize the conscience and skill of the community to meet a complex problem head on.

One of the first to express concern for the rights of children, Jane organized an

Ortho workshop on the then unheralded subject. Its panel, including legal representation, was organized with utmost care. Jane went to considerable pains to be certain it was representative, even though some of the participants must have made her wince. But that is the way Jane is—she'll wince, but move ahead with intellectual honesty.

In Jane Kessler, the American Orthopsychiatric Association can look forward to a year of significant direction and solid leadership.—*William C. Morse, Ph.D., Professor of Education and of Psychology, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor*