



The Training of Residence Hall Deans:

An Interview With **Buddy Keubler** and **Lynette Bates**

Adventist education includes boarding schools (9-12 and college level) with dormitories directed by professional personnel known as “residence hall deans,” a job description with complex challenges. For the dean, every day is different and unique, but there are also predictable routines. Successful deaning requires a high sense of maturity and responsibility, flexibility, commitment, and skills development. While many have found great satisfaction in deaning as a long-term career, others have become disillusioned and quickly left the profession.

Historically, the abbreviated careers of deans have been a problem. In a 1969 study, Weir found the average tenure for an academy dean of boys to be about 2.5 years, and for a dean of girls, about 1.5 years.* I do not know of any recent study about tenure and attrition, but there is still a sense that deans, especially academy deans, have short careers. It is also true that many deans were hired with the expectation that they would not last long. They were worked hard and much was expected of them; but not much value was placed on pre-service or in-service training. Many have believed that “deans are born, not made”; and while there may be some truth to that, both natural abilities and training are needed.

On the other hand, there have been some efforts to increase the tenure of deans through training. The General Conference Department of Education sponsored the first organized training efforts. It was at one of these, in 1942, that a decision was made to produce a publication for deans. *The Dean's Window* was published bi-monthly by the General Conference from 1942 to 1986. Sum-



Buddy Keubler



Lynette Bates

mer gatherings, which provided important in-service opportunities for deans, continued to be organized by church educators.

In 1957, the General Conference made a decision that provided a huge advance in the training of deans. Mercedes Dyer of Columbia Union College was asked to hold a deans' workshop that would provide academic credit through the Potomac University Theological Seminary. When Dyer moved to Andrews University in 1961, the workshop went with her. Starting in 1963, the deans' workshop became part of the regular summer session. Because many residence hall deans were completing a degree, having the workshop as part of the university's summer session made it possible for them to take advantage of other class offerings on campus. Residence hall deans' workshops are still offered at Andrews University, and in alternate years at La Sierra University.

Training for deans took another quantum leap in 1975 when Dyer urged those at the workshop to consider building a structure to stimulate professional growth. Three men and a woman responded, and the work to create a professional organization for residence hall deans began. As part of that process, it was decided to create an organization for all Adventists who worked in student services. By 1978, the Adventist Student Personnel Association (ASPA) had been organized.

ASPA was founded because of a realization that student services professionals needed to keep current in their field in order to be more faithful in their service. There were scriptural and Spirit of Prophecy principles and insights to be integrated, but they also needed a better understanding of the context of their

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work. From the beginning, ASPA had four goals:

1. Inclusiveness would be a fundamental principle. Because ASPA was far more than a "deans' organization," everyone involved in student services was invited to become a member;

2. Secondary and collegiate personnel would intentionally come together to learn from one another;

3. The organization must have a worldwide scope. International membership has been made available to the Euro-Africa, Euro-Asia, Inter-American, Trans-European, and South Pacific divisions. Expansion to other divisions is needed.

4. ASPA, from the beginning, would assume responsibility for pre-service and in-service training. Professional growth was not something they could leave for others to plan. This was a major step forward from what had been done before.

The original mission and purpose have remained tightly focused over the years. ASPA members desired to (1) promote the principles of Christian education, with primary emphasis on student development; (2) nurture Christian growth and integration in every dimension; (3) strive toward the goal of ethical and professional development; (4) lift up the name of Jesus, trusting that He would draw all unto Himself; (5) identify and communicate to its members' various methods and materials for professional development; and (6) serve as a voice for its members in dealing with issues and trends in the profession.

The current co-presidents of ASPA are Otto "Buddy" Keubler and Lynette Bates, the senior residence hall deans at Loma Linda University. I invited them to share their thoughts with readers.

Murray: It's now been more than 30 years since Dr. Dyer's call for professionalism that led to the organization of ASPA. How has ASPA affected the student services profession and Adventist education during these years?

Keubler: Over the years, ASPA has greatly impacted Adventist student services. It started by providing a yearly professional conference where growth occurred through seminars and networking with colleagues from other schools. ASPA has helped train numerous student personnel for the Adventist system. We serve professionals in all areas of student services, including residence hall deans, security personnel, counselors, health services personnel, administrators, activity directors, and more. We provide a professional venue that directly influences every boarding academy and college in the system.

Murray: How has ASPA's sense of mission been adapted to meet the realities of the 21st century?

Bates: Over the years, ASPA has continued to strive toward its original goals. We strive to stay current in dealing with

issues that affect Seventh-day Adventist students in today's ever-changing world. Currently, ASPA provides professional certification, a yearly conference, summer workshops for new professionals, networking, and student sponsorship to the annual conference.

Murray: Certainly, the publication of your newsletter and the service awards given each year, which recognize those who have made extraordinary contributions to the empowerment of students and the building of the profession, are also important accomplishments. Please identify the other current officers by name, office, and school where they serve.

Bates: Yes, we are proud to serve with these men and women.

ASPA OFFICE	NAME	SCHOOL
Past President	John F. Mentges	Atlantic Union College
President Elect	Bunny Reed	Walla Walla University
VP for Student Services	Gloria Roberts	Northern Caribbean
University VP for Finances	John Foote	Walla Walla University
VP for Academy Residence Hall Programming	David Isawa	Gem State Academy
VP for College Residence Hall Programming	Chamra Otto	Atlantic Union College
VP for Guidance and Counseling Programming	Wanda Johnson	Canadian University College
VP for Communications	Natan Vigna	La Sierra University
VP for Public Relations	Jennifer Burrill	Andrews University
Historian/Archivist	Kari Shultz	Southern Adventist University
Certification Review Chair	Donene Caster	Union College

Murray: In closing, what else would you like to share with the readers of the *Journal of Adventist Education* about ASPA and your view of Adventist education?

Keubler: ASPA is here to help train Adventist professionals to better serve the students of our schools. We recognize that the students that we serve today will be the leaders of our church tomorrow. Our main purpose is to serve Christ through educating youth, encouraging them to serve Him in their chosen professions.

Murray: Thank you. May God continue to bless you, your officers, and the ministry of ASPA through student services.

Donald W. Murray is a retired Adventist educator who is considered one of the founders of ASPA. He served as a residence hall dean for almost 42 years, and writes from St. Joseph, Michigan.

* C. Weir, "Why Deans Quit," *The Dean's Window* 28 (January 1969), pp. 6, 7.