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IN MEMORIAM
VEON G. SMITH
(1915–84)

DEAN W. HEPWORTH, Ph.D.

A leader in social work and in marital and family therapy, Veon G. Smith passed away suddenly on November 28, 1984 in Salt Lake City. Veon was loved by all who knew him well. He was a prominent and highly respected educator, author, therapist, and leader in his profession and church.

Veon was born in Malad, Idaho, where he grew up on a dry farm. He humorously attributed his efforts to achieve an advanced education to a compelling desire to escape from that dry farm. Veon earned his bachelor’s degree from BYU; and after serving with the military as a counselor in World War II, he completed graduate study at Western Reserve University, where he was awarded the MSSA degree. He subsequently joined the faculty at the University of Utah, where he played a key role in developing the master’s program in the Graduate School of Social Work, and remained throughout his career.

As an educator, Veon provided leadership in developing curriculum and teaching courses in casework and marriage counseling. Recognizing his leadership and expertise, his colleagues affectionately referred to him as “Mr. Casework.” Students sought his classes because of his expertise in blending theory with the practical application of that theory to clinical situations. His scholarly attainments included a number of articles in professional journals, co-authorship of the book *Improving Therapeutic Communication*, and numerous presentations to national, regional, and local meetings of professional organizations.

Veon was respected by his faculty colleagues not only for his knowledge but for his wisdom. When the faculty was immersed in difficult and controversial issues, Veon typically provided a thoughtful and reasoned perspective that tended to defuse emotionally charged situations. Veon achieved the rank of full professor and was honored by being appointed Professor Emeritus when he retired in 1981.

Successfully combining the role of educator and clinician, Veon was one of the first social workers to engage in private practice in Utah, a role in which he continued until his death. He was also a member of the traveling mental health team that provided monthly clinical services to five counties in southern Utah for over 15 years. In addition to teaching, Veon served as Director of the Marriage and Family Counseling Bureau of the University of Utah for 20 years. The bureau achieved national recognition under his able leadership.

Veon’s contributions to his profession and to the field of marital and family therapy deserve special mention. He was an early organizer and leader of the AAMC (now AAMFT) in Utah and soon attained prominence in the national organization, which led to him being appointed to a national position and later becoming chair of the accrediting body of AAMFT. During the period of his leadership, the Department of HEW vested AAMFT with sole authority to accredit training programs in marital and family therapy in the United States.

It was largely due to Veon’s leadership that legislation was passed in Utah regulating the title of social worker and the practice of social work. Subsequent-
ly he successfully spearheaded efforts that culminated in the regulation of practice in marital and family therapy in Utah. Utah was among the first states in the nation to regulate the practice of these professions, and we are indebted to Veon for his dedicated and tireless efforts that resulted in the elevation of the standards of practice and the greater protection to the public. After securing the legislation, Veon served for many years as a member of licensing boards that formulated policy, reviewed applications, and acted upon complaints.

Utahns are also indebted to Veon for the inauguration of marital enrichment programs in our state. Recognizing the value of marital enrichment, Veon invited David and Vera Mace, international leaders of the Association of Couples for Marital Enrichment (ACME) to Utah, where they presented a workshop and instituted procedures to train couples as ACME leaders. A number of local couples completed the training and have since conducted marital enrichment sessions in Utah. Foremost among this group were Veon and his devoted wife, Clyda, who subsequently led many ME sessions for students, faculty members, members in their ward and stake, and other groups.

In AMCAP, Veon participated through the years as an active member, convention presenter, and Journal contributor. (Note his article, "From the Years," in the April 1983 AMCAP Journal.) He was a strong advocate of the principles of AMCAP both in public and private. His presence and supporting voice will be much missed.

Veon’s leadership abilities extended into his church activities. He gave generously of his time, talents, and resources, serving as a bishop, a stake high councilor, and holding many other positions of leadership in the Church. He published several articles in Church magazines and also served as a writer for the Church Correlation Committee, collaborating in preparing instructional manuals for the Church. Veon was a spiritual person who inspired others and was beloved by his associates because of the example he set.

In his marital and family life, Veon was a devoted husband, father, and grandfather. He and Clyda achieved a high level of companionship and devotion to one another. During Veon’s short years of retirement he and Clyda were inseparable, sharing in leading enrichment groups, counseling together, grandparenting, and traveling. It was obvious to those who knew them well that they mutually enriched their own marriage and rejoiced in being able to help others to do the same. They reared six children and relished their roles as grandparents. One of their children, Gladys, preceded Veon in death. Another son, Veon, Jr., has followed in his father’s career footsteps, becoming a clinician, educator, and leader in marital and family therapy. The Veons, Senior and Junior, joined as coauthors of a book on marital therapy, which was nearing completion when Veon, Sr., passed away.

Veon G. Smith was a humble and unassuming man. His legacy to his profession, his students, his clients, his fellow church members, his family, the Graduate School of Social Work, and his many associates, however, attest to his true stature.