

EULOGY -
MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR DR. VIRGINIA APGAR
RIVERSIDE CHURCH - SEPTEMBER 15, 1974

BY MR. JOSEPH F. NEE, PRESIDENT
THE NATIONAL FOUNDATION-MARCH OF DIMES

(1)

VIRGINIA APGAR WAS SIMPLY -- AND GENUINELY -- INTERESTED
IN EVERYONE AND EVERYTHING. SOMEONE ONCE DESCRIBED HER ABILITY TO
CONNECT INSTANTLY WITH INDIVIDUALS AND WITH AUDIENCES AS "UNCANNY".
THERE WAS NOTHING UNCANNY ABOUT IT FOR SHE NEVER MET A STRANGER.
SHE VALUED EXPERIENCE WITH ANOTHER HUMAN BEING, WHATEVER HIS OR HER
STRENGTHS OR WEAKNESSES, MORE THAN SHE CHERISHED IDEAS OR MUSIC OR
ANY OF HER MYRIAD OTHER ENTHUSIASMS.

ONE OF HER HIGHEST COMPLIMENTS WAS TO CALL A COLLEAGUE A
"PEOPLE DOCTOR". SHE HAD GREAT RESPECT FOR THE LABORATORY SCIENTIST,
BUT GREATER EMPATHY WITH THOSE WHO DEALT PERSONALLY WITH PATIENTS IN
NEED OF HELP. IT WAS OBVIOUS DURING HER RECENT SABBATICAL AT JOHNS
HOPKINS THAT, ALTHOUGH THE CHALLENGE OF LEARNING MORE ABOUT GENETICS
WAS MENTALLY STIMULATING, HER GREATEST SATISFACTION CAME FROM THE
OPPORTUNITY TO WORK DIRECTLY WITH THE CHILDREN AND FAMILIES WHO BROUGHT
THEIR PROBLEMS TO THE MOORE CLINIC.

I LIKE TO THINK THAT A VOLUNTARY

Health agency

I LIKE TO THINK THAT A VOLUNTARY HEALTH AGENCY MORE THAN
MANY INSTITUTIONS, ATTRACTS PEOPLE WHO SHARE A SIMILAR ORIENTATION
TOWARD OTHERS, ALBEIT TO VARYING LESSER DEGREES. AND THAT THE
GRANTEES, MEDICAL ADVISORS, STAFF, VOLUNTEERS AND BENEFICIARIES OF
THE NATIONAL FOUNDATION-MARCH OF DIMES FORMED A NATURAL CONSTITUENCY
FOR VIRGINIA -- ONE WHICH NOT ONLY APPRECIATED HER UNIQUE QUALITIES,
BUT ALSO SATISFIED HER OWN NEED TO BE NEEDED BY HER FELLOW MAN.

CERTAINLY ALL OF US EXPRESSED OUR NEEDS TO HER TIME AND
AGAIN, MAKING PRODIGIOUS DEMANDS ON HER TIME AND ENERGIES. AND SHE
RESPONDED IN KIND UNTIL HER LIFE BECAME ONE LONG JUGGLING ACT TO FIT
SPEECHES AND SITE VISITS, PROFESSIONAL CONSULTATIONS AND CHAPTER
MEETINGS, MEDIA INTERVIEWS AND INTERNATIONAL CONGRESSES INTO HER
IMPOSSIBLE SCHEDULE.

IT WAS OFTEN DIFFICULT TO TIE HER DOWN LONG ENOUGH TO
ARRANGE A STAFF MEETING AT WHICH HER PRESENCE WAS ESSENTIAL BECAUSE
SHE WAS ALWAYS MORE CONCERNED WITH THE PROBLEMS OF A CHILD IN FARGO,
NORTH DAKOTA, THAN SHE WAS WITH ADMINISTRATION IN NEW YORK.

HER WIDE-RANGING PERSONAL INTERESTS

HER WIDE-RANGING PERSONAL INTERESTS SOMETIMES CONFLICTED,
TOO. SHE ALWAYS CARRIED AN INTERNATIONAL DIRECTORY OF AMATEUR
CHAMBER MUSIC PLAYERS TO CONTACT FOR AN EVENING OF MUSIC WHEREVER
SHE WENT. BEFORE BREAKFAST, SHE MIGHT HAVE A DATE TO BICYCLE ON
THE BOARDWALK WITH A COLLEAGUE'S CHILDREN. ON A FREE AFTERNOON,
SHE'D TAKE OFF TO VISIT A FORMER STUDENT, CALL ON THE AGED MOTHER OF
A FRIEND, AND LOOK UP THE NEAREST FLYING INSTRUCTOR TO ADD ANOTHER
LESSON TO THE LOG SHE HAD TUCKED IN HER LUGGAGE.

IF SHE WAS NEEDED FOR AN EMERGENCY DECISION BEFORE THE NEXT
SCHEDULED EVENT IN THE HAGUE OR PHOENIX OR WHITE PLAINS, LOCATING HER
COULD BE QUITE A VENTURE.

HER ZEST FOR LIFE AND HER ABILITY TO COMMUNICATE ON EVERY
LEVEL GAVE HER HIGH VISIBILITY. SHE DREW AND HELD THE ATTENTION OF
WRITERS, BROADCASTERS, TALK-SHOW HOSTS AND THEIR AUDIENCES LIKE A
MAGNET. RIVETING THEM WITH A QUIP, SHE WOULD PROCEED TO PROVIDE MORE
EFFECTIVE PUBLIC -- AND PROFESSIONAL -- EDUCATION THAN ALL THE LEARNED
TRACTS, LEAFLETS OR FILMS WE COULD PRODUCE. WE OFTEN COMPLAINED THAT
SHE TALKED TOO FAST -- BUT SHE GOT THE MESSAGE ACROSS.

MOST OF US ARE FAMILIAR WITH THE

MOST OF US ARE FAMILIAR WITH THE CHRONOLOGY AND MANY
REVEALING ANECDOTES OF VIRGINIA'S LIFE. FILCHING A SHELF FROM A
TELEPHONE BOOTH BECAUSE IT WAS THE RIGHT WOOD FOR THE BACK OF HER
FIRST HAND-CRAFTED VIOLA CARRYING A CHILD WHO FEARED ELEVATORS
DOWN THE STAIRS FROM HIS HOSPITAL BED TO SURGERY ENCOURAGING
MOUNT HOLYOKE GIRLS TO GO INTO MEDICINE, THEN PROUDLY FOLLOWING
EACH CAREER CARRYING INSTRUMENTS IN HER HANDBAG TO ENABLE HER
TO MEET ANY MEDICAL EMERGENCY ANYWHERE VIOLENTLY ROOTING FOR
THE METS IN A COMPETING TEAM'S BALLPARK

EVERYONE WHO CAME INTO HER ORBIT -- AND THAT INCLUDES AN
UNTOLD NUMBER OF AIRLINE PASSENGERS WHO FOUND THEMSELVES SEATED NEXT
TO HER AS SHE CRISSCROSSED THIS COUNTRY -- CAN INTERWEAVE HIS OWN
PERSONAL THREAD INTO THAT EXPANSIVE TAPESTRY IN PRAISE OF LIFE.

THE BREADTH OF HER INTERESTS AND THE DEPTH OF HER CONCERN
FOR PEOPLE MADE VIRGINIA INESTIMABLY VALUABLE TO ALL THE INSTITUTIONS
SHE SERVED.

BECAUSE OF HER DRIVE AND VISION,

BECAUSE OF HER DRIVE AND VISION, THE NATIONAL FOUNDATION
HAS MADE GREAT PROGRESS TOWARD ITS GOALS IN RESEARCH AND SERVICE,
AND IN THE RESOURCES TO MAKE THEM POSSIBLE. TO OUR NATIONAL FOUNDATION
FAMILY, SHE WAS -- AND WILL ALWAYS BE -- NOT THE "LEGEND" THAT SHE
HATED TO BE CALLED, BUT A SYMBOL OF OUR ASPIRATIONS THAT IS VERY MUCH
ALIVE.

ONE OF OUR VOLUNTEERS SAID IT ALL A FEW YEARS AGO:

"WHEN SHE TALKS TO YOU, YOU KNOW SHE'S TALKING
TO YOU -- MORE IMPORTANT, LISTENING TO YOU -- AND
DOESN'T HAVE HER EYE OR HER MIND ON SOMETHING OVER
YOUR SHOULDER. HER WARMTH AND INTEREST GIVE YOU THE
FEELING THAT HER ARMS ARE AROUND YOU, EVEN THOUGH SHE
NEVER TOUCHES YOU. DR. APGAR IS AN EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE."

Pause
SHE WAS, INDEED.