

## An Interview With Harold F. Cottingham

**D**r. Cottingham works in an office filled with books, filing cabinets, papers, and memorabilia. Even a brief contact shows him to be a gentle and talkative man, with deep respect for individual freedom and choice. He has held numerous leadership positions in local, state, and national professional organizations. Someone who has been both president of the American Personnel and Guidance Association (APGA) and the National Vocational Guidance Association (NVGA) might, indeed, be expected to be more aggressive in his relationships with others.

Dr. Cottingham was educated in the Midwest during the Great Depression and World War II eras. He has been a teacher and professor in over 15 schools and universities, a director of guidance in high schools and colleges, and has been writing, teaching, and doing research at Florida State University since 1948. Although he is the author of over 50 articles, reviews, books, and special chapters, he continues to give much time to his many doctoral students and colleagues.

While his professional life has moved in many directions—teaching, administration, further education, a new position—there is a sense of continuity and progression. Dr. Cottingham's career gives hope to those of us whose life plan has been subject to alterations. His integration of personal style and professional goals is enviable.

### AFFECTIVE EDUCATION

*NSG:* I think counselors and guidance people would be particularly interested in some of your innovative ideas or futuristic thoughts.

*HFC:* OK. Let me comment on one of my pet concerns. I have just returned from doing a one-day workshop on affective and humanistic education. I guess I was somewhat disappointed that so many teachers, counselors, supervisors, and other types of human interventionists were so unwilling to take responsibility for their own learning. This is particularly true when the activity dealt with experiential exercises, affective learnings, or self-growth material. What I am so unhappy about is the fact that people have been conditioned over the years by their educational backgrounds in two ways. One of these is their unwillingness to take risks and, by the same token, to need structure that tells them what they should do and when to do it. Their dependence on external motivation for learning is somewhat unfortunate, to say the least. Along with this is their passive acceptance of supervised intellectual learnings and ideas as opposed to experiential types of growth. The second way in which they have been conditioned by the culture and by

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the educational system is their unwillingness to deal with affect. They seem to find it difficult to deal with feelings.

*NSG:* What's the picture going to be in such areas as affective or humanistic education in the future? With your enthusiasm for this area, I am wondering if you feel any pessimism about what might happen down the road.

*HFC:* I believe that humanistic and affective education, as is true with any other innovation in the field of education, may be subject to modification as the financial constraints and severity of economic policy are felt. On the other hand, I think that we have come a long way with our publications, our research, and services. I feel that there is enough demand for materials, ideas, and resources to indicate that the movement will survive in spite of criticisms and limited financial support. There is clear evidence also that students at all levels need a personal growth component despite the fact that they are learning cognitive information and skills in their educational experiences.

*NSG:* As you are talking here, I am thinking that most of us in counseling and psychology fields probably couldn't agree with you more. But there are a number of people who are dissatisfied with these humanistic concepts such as personal development, self-growth, and self-actualization. They aren't very precise. They do not seem to be measurable.

*HFC:* Yes, I am aware of the criticism from the measurement people and some of those in the field of behavioral objectives. However, I think we must make ourselves accountable for the assessment of behavior in the affective or personal growth area. This may present problems, but as Art Combs has pointed out, even though measurement is difficult and full of

unknowns, we must still keep working at the assessment of humanistic behavior outcomes and attitudes. Books such as Mager's *Developing Attitude Toward Learning* are a big help. While these affective behaviors are very complex and seemingly not measurable, I think we should continue to adapt our creative research methodology to the evaluation of affective outcomes in individuals. Our basic philosophy, our concern about the needs of man should guide what we study; we need not wait for the perfect research instrument or the ideal technique.

### STUDENTS, FAMILY, AND MENTORS

*NSG:* From what you have said so far I would guess that you do not like to control people but prefer to give them freedom.

*HFC:* I guess that's right. I like to let people take initiative themselves so that when they become intrinsically motivated to do something they will learn the maximum from courses, books, or individuals with whom they are associated.

*NSG:* When you were a child were you given this kind of freedom?

*HFC:* Well, I was given some freedom but I don't know that I was given too much freedom. I always seemed to know what the general constraints were, yet I guess I felt in my own head that I had a number of alternatives open to me. I didn't seem to have any serious home problems or relationship difficulties with parents or friends. At least I don't remember any severe confrontations, so I guess I was fortunate to be in a kind of family where there was a balance between independent choices and some acceptable restrictions.

*NSG:* Some structure . . . and the amount of freedom and responsibility

that you could handle at each level as you grew older.

*NSG:* Of course when I grew up in the Depression I felt that a lot of decisions were made for me by economic conditions which were automatically confining. There weren't a lot of options on what to do and where to go except with a lot of effort and planning. Nevertheless, you still had some choices such as trying socially acceptable or personal behaviors that were contrary to your parents' standards or to the expectations of the neighborhood. Yet there were always consequences.

*NSG:* What stands out for you as you think back to growing up in the Depression? I mean in terms of some of those factors that bear on your personal growth, your professional development in later years?

*HFC:* I don't know that I can remember many specific key events. I suppose subconsciously a part of my behavior derived from adults around me, and I am sure that my mother had more positive influence on me than my father. I guess that was because she didn't put a lot of little restrictions on me but was always supporting me and encouraging me. She had more interest in my day-to-day activities than my father. For example, I remember my father did not even attend my high school graduation which was a little disappointing. My mother didn't have many expectations of me that I couldn't deliver. On the other hand, she backed some of my early business adventures such as working in Chicago, selling watermelons, or taking trips to seek jobs.

*NSG:* Can you be more specific about what her influence was in terms of your style and what you are like as a person, and your later professional growth as a teacher, educator, and counselor?

*HFC:* I don't really think she ever imposed heavy controls on my life because as I recall I made a goodly number of decisions, especially after high school, on my own. Naturally I talked these things over with my folks, but I didn't seem to have a lot of headstrong notions that conflicted with their values. My mother always gave me much encouragement and yet offered me an implicit model of openness, tolerance, and patience. I guess many of my humanistic values could be due to this type of exposure.

*NSG:* How did you decide on what you wanted to do?

*HFC:* Well, it was a kind of trial-and-error proposition. For example, my mother always wanted me to go into journalism because I had done some editorial work on the school paper in high school. She hoped I could go to the University of Missouri, which had a good journalism school, although she didn't have the money to send me. Prior to that she always thought if I couldn't go to college I should go to a business college, because an uncle of mine had done very well by starting out as an accountant. However, accounting did not appeal to me as a profession. I actually just went to college because the school was in my hometown. Going to college was expected of high school graduates, and my parents felt that this would be a good experience for me in getting a job. The school in my hometown of Charleston, Illinois, was a state teachers college, so naturally I didn't entertain wild fantasies about being a business executive or even an educator. In fact, I wasn't sure I would like teaching. However, after college I took a teaching job which involved social studies and business education. I should mention that in the meantime I spent a year at business college to be-

come fully qualified in the field of business education. In my early teaching I started the school newspaper which gave me many experiences working with students. I had been involved in news writing in high school and college along with some public relations work with an area radio station. I was also involved in student activities such as being class treasurer, president of the journalism club, and a member of the college band. I even worked in a filling station on the side and later, with a friend, opened up a wholesale grocery.

*NSG:* So you taught in high school after college and seemed to enjoy teaching even though you hadn't planned on it years before.

*HFC:* Yes, I taught in one high school for five years and at another high school for one year, after which I was a guidance administrator in a public school system for three years before moving into higher education.

*NSG:* Do you recall what led you to this transition?

*HFC:* Well, let me see. I took my master's degree at the University of Iowa mainly to qualify as a business teacher. I really wasn't sure I had the potential to complete doctorate work but was anxious to get graduate skills and knowledge in the area of guidance. In fact, I wasn't sure that I necessarily wanted or needed a doctorate, but when the war came along I began teaching storekeeping to Navy personnel in Indiana University in Bloomington. There, I had the opportunity to take more graduate work in guidance and counseling. At first I wasn't too happy about the variety of offerings at Indiana. However, as I got into courses in measurement, philosophy, and educational psychology, they were much more exciting than I had anticipated. The graduate program in

guidance was sponsored by Professor Melvin Lewis who was quite a scholar but actually a specialist in vocational education. Guidance work then was a subsection of the vocational education field. I guess this was natural, because state guidance programs were supported by federal vocational funds back in the 1930s and 1940s. Dr. Lewis was a very helpful person, so I naturally sought his advice and went ahead with the doctoral program while I was teaching for the Navy at Indiana.

*NSG:* You worked and furthered your education at the same time. I guess you always were interested in seeking new experiences, apparently to give you a new outlook on life.

*HFC:* That's a fair statement, Norm. I remember when I was teaching at Paris, Illinois, I initiated local occupational surveys and follow-up studies. I also taught courses in occupations, business education, and social science. In addition, I was tennis coach and adviser for the school paper. I began developing guidance programs focusing on career days, college nights, and counseling activities, with the emphasis primarily on vocational and educational guidance. I worked with the Kiwanis Club and some parents and students in developing these projects. At the time I was quite excited about acquiring more knowledge of the guidance field as well as more skill in working with students, teachers, and parents. I can remember writing to several schools like the University of Chicago, the University of Iowa, the University of Illinois, and Indiana State to see what graduate work they offered in personnel work or guidance. However, I found that there was not much available at that time. For example, the University of Chicago said, "We don't have much in that area; it maybe belongs to psychology

and they are just beginning to develop it." The University of Iowa said, "We have something in college personnel but very little in school guidance." However, I went to the University of Iowa because they had some business education work that I needed for certification and found that I could take enough guidance courses for a major. Here I was exposed to Bob Hoppoek, a visiting New York University professor in the summer of 1937, who reinforced my interest in vocational guidance, primarily because of his own enthusiasm. That really got me on the road. I knew then that I wanted to get into guidance and counseling or some sort of student services as opposed to traditional classroom subject matter teaching.

*NSG:* Any other significant teachers or mentors?

*HFC:* Another person who had a big impact on me at that time was a psychologist, Dewey B. Stuit, who was later Dean of the Liberal Arts College at the University of Iowa, with whom I had a personnel foundations course. He strengthened my interest in making some sort of guidance service my career emphasis. Part of my high school guidance work in Illinois involved contacts with Dan Feder, who was at the University of Illinois and provided another leadership model. I had also had the great experience of hearing W. V. Bingham, the famous aptitude test authority and vocational psychologist at an early American Vocational Association meeting in St. Louis. Many writers contributed to my excitement, such as E. G. Williamson, John Darley, and Carl Rogers.

## THE PROFESSION

*NSG:* What caused you to become involved in professional organizations early in your career?

*HFC:* I guess what influenced me to join professional groups was my need for greater stimulus, information, and knowledge about what the guidance field was like. Although some of this came from my reading, I also wanted to become more active in organizations, committees, and broader professional groups. I guess I wanted to be part of a big, exciting movement that was just emerging in the late 1930s and early 1940s. I needed, too, to learn if what I was doing in my high school guidance work and vocational counseling was sound. I joined the National Vocational Guidance Association in 1939. At that time, it was the only national guidance organization in existence. I was stimulated too by the magazine *Occupations* which they published. I enjoyed the service materials, committee studies, and professional projects they sponsored.

*NSG:* Do you have interesting recollections about the transition from the NVGA days to the APGA of today?

*HFC:* Well, it is hard to remember all the specific details and I don't want to bore you but these were exciting times as NVGA became CGPA, the Council of Guidance and Personnel Associations, and then in 1952, APGA. The problem was that many related groups had similar interests but had not yet reached the point of merging into a national organization. However, it was very interesting to be a part of the formation of APGA because it put me in touch with college personnel people, counseling psychologists, deans of women, rehabilitation counselors, employment counselors, and many other helping professionals. This did a lot to broaden my interest in the whole guidance movement and helped me to see beyond the vocational counseling thrust which had occupied my energies up to this time.

*NSG:* This leads me to ask you what you think about the role APGA should have as a professional group in our whole profession. I know that you have feelings on the mission of APGA.

*HFC:* Yes, I believe that APGA has a clear-cut mission even though it is made up of a conglomerate group of professionals who have a range of special skills, work in different settings, and serve a variety of clients. I believe our strength is that we have broad common bonds in terms of philosophy, skills, and client services. In spite of the fact that APGA has grown by increasing its number of affiliated groups, this has served to strengthen our organization rather than weaken it. I believe our task is to further the guidance and counseling movement at all educational levels, in multiple settings, making possible an improved helping function for individuals, agencies, institutions, or organizations.

*NSG:* I can see that you consider APGA to be a broad organization and that this is probably a good thing in general. What do you think, however, about the special interest groups that often have talked about splintering off from APGA, yet still seem to hang on in the large federation now characteristic of APGA?

*HFC:* I feel that we ought to remain a coalition of interest groups exercising leadership for a diversity of helping professionals. I do not think we should become too selective or restrictive. This tends to make us more exclusive with less social influence.

*NSG:* You don't want to see it get any more exclusive than it is.

*HFC:* No, nor do I want to see a split arise. Several years ago, we had some internal dissension within APGA. At different times in APGA's history, both the American College Personnel Association and the Ameri-

can School Counselor Association apparently have thought about forming their own independent organizations. The expense arising from this move would be great. It would also be counterproductive if we were to continue our efforts to work together for any sort of governmental action, professional direction, or national impact.

*NSG:* What was it like for you personally to have experienced being president of major professional organizations such as NVGA and APGA?

*HFC:* Well, both of these were quite rewarding experiences. I had a lot of unique opportunities to meet famous people. For example, I have shaken hands with Vice President Humphrey, President Kennedy, President Johnson, and testified before senate committees chaired by Robert Kennedy and Albert Morse.

*NSG:* Pretty exciting stuff. . . But it interests me as to how you planned for this responsibility in your own professional movement.

*HFC:* That's an interesting question, one about which I have thought occasionally. In retrospect, I don't think you can prepare for this type of assignment except by volunteering for and accepting responsibilities as you move ahead professionally. Working with lobbying groups or other professional organizations is a unique experience; some of these occasions were very satisfying but others were very trying. I am not certain that I would want to be head of a national association again. At the time, the experience was exhilarating, challenging, and valuable for me personally.

*NSG:* Maybe this could then lead us to what you think APGA has been doing recently with regard to certification, credentialing and licensure. I guess that is a current interest of yours and an area of concern for APGA.

*HFC:* Yes, I will be glad to pick up on that. APGA has been reacting to a lot of pressures in the field and has exerted strong leadership in the licensure movement, especially in the last few years. Four or five years ago, this was not an issue. Last year our Licensure Commission budget was \$4,000; this year I understand that it is around \$5,000, one of the more highly funded commissions within the APGA structure. This indicates the magnitude of the goals that the commission and APGA board members have in mind. The response of the membership to some of our activities, such as the convention programs and work with other professional organizations, has been great.

*NSG:* I guess you are saying that the national organizations' response to the licensure issue is a good thing and you approve of it.

*HFC:* Definitely. I only wish we could do more for individual members at the state level but also have a stronger influence nationally in this whole area.

*NSG:* The struggle for professional identity apparently is somewhat reminiscent of the early conflict between psychiatry and clinical psychology back in the fifties. I guess at that time one could be licensed in psychology in a few states and perhaps certified in others. But the movement was still quite young.

*HFC:* That's true, Norm. As early as 1955, for example, only 9 states had psychology licensure laws and now all 50 of our states have such legislation. We have moved rapidly in the last 20 years on the licensing front but it has been a struggle. One of our problems has been that of "counselor identity" as related to psychologists, just as psychology has had its troubles with psychiatry. As you know, even psychia-

trists are not too highly regarded by some medical professionals.

*NSG:* Do you think our professional societies could do any more than they are doing in accreditation programs?

*HFC:* The problem here, Norm, is that we do have Association for Counselor Education and Supervision standards which we have had for about 15 years, but these have only served the purpose of optional accreditation of counselor education programs. Because we have not used these regularly with any sort of national mandate, these standards have not had much impact either on the quality of counselor education programs or on the practices or licensure of graduates. APGA, including its divisions such as ACES and ASCA, has not had the same concern for licensure at the state level that the American Psychological Association has had.

*NSG:* Do you think some clarification of the ACES criteria and wider application of them might help to convince state psychology boards in medicine or psychiatry of the validity of the training in counseling?

*HFC:* This would help some, by certifying graduates through program approval. The problem seems to be that administrative heads of universities are reluctant to look at a single program, such as counseling psychology or counselor education, apart from the total university. It is very difficult to get a specific program accredited by national accrediting bodies unless the whole university is undergoing this process. There are also problems as to which national accrediting bodies should approve counselor education programs.

*NSG:* So we have some administrative resistance as well as national confusion as to how to accredit institutional programs in counselor education?

*HFC:* Right. But I think in time we are going to have to move down this route to get respectability. Psychology departments and the medical profession have had association accreditation programs for a number of years. They have developed accreditation standards and used site visitation teams to check on quality. So has social work. However, in counseling we have never gone this far.

*NSG:* Would you also agree that national organizations have found it very difficult to provide the right kind of leadership in the areas of credentialing, licensure, and accreditation?

*HFC:* Yes, I believe this is true. I think APGA must continue to exert leadership in legislative matters, social issues, and educational change. Our dual task in APGA is to be responsive to the membership but at the same time to take an aggressive stance on national issues and movements that can affect the provision of helping services for mankind. We must be both responsive and proactive.

## SUMMARY

*NSG:* You have given me a lot to think about. I am not sure where to go from here. Maybe it would help me if you would try to pull together some of your thinking on our discussion here this morning. Would you care to give this your best try?

*HFC:* Norm, I am not sure what I can do with that charge, but let me offer a few summary comments. I feel that our previous attempts to train counselors and other helping professionals has been too restricted. I believe that my role as a facilitator of growth in counselor trainees must be one that permits equal emphasis on the development of skills, knowledge,

and personal development. My approach to this is to model openness, use professional behaviors, and stress the mutuality of the learning task, building on the intrinsic motivation of the learner. I also attempt to exemplify helping skills, academic knowledge, and a willingness to grow personally myself. In addition, I would like to think that I have opportunities to demonstrate to the counselor-in-training that I am a helping person myself and that he or she can discern these skills through our professional relationship or even on a private helping basis if necessary. I believe that students take greater responsibility for their own learning through independent means. Classroom settings could then be reserved for knowledge acquisition and discussion of broader social issues. I want to give students not only an awareness of the challenges they face, but also help them build their own resources to become professionals and to provide organizations with leadership or community agencies with services.

In this process, I hold myself highly accountable both for content and process. I firmly believe in the potency of feeling both in instruction and in helping; I want to use them to enhance the learner's growth wherever possible. In essence I want to respond to student concerns, model helping skills, attend to affect, and constantly reassess my attempts to follow these principles. Students, clients, and community service consumers are invaluable collaborators in this process. These are my responsibilities, my challenges, and indeed my professional obligations. I guess that kind of puts it together for me.