

## Richard K. Harding, M.D., One Hundred Twenty-Eighth President, 2001–2002

R. Dale Walker, M.D.

**I**t is my highest pleasure to introduce to you the President of the American Psychiatric Association. Dr. Richard Harding is a man of vision, dignity, patience, and intelligence. This year he has been described as a calming influence, a “go to” man, and the right person for these times. He maintained the organization’s commitment to our patients, our profession, and our members. Capable leadership in a year of national crisis is his gift to our organization.

Dr. Harding came to APA well prepared for leadership. He is a member of a family that has long been committed to public service and service to our country. He is married to Sally Asbaugh Harding, a pathologist. They have two children: Katherine Harding Johnson, a graduate of the University of South Carolina School of Social Work, and Richard Harding, Jr., a graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point. Katherine is unable to be here because she is part of a hospital team undergoing a site visit by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations, and Richard is “on assignment” in Afghanistan. The next Harding generation is well on its way to achieving its own commitments and extending the family’s tradition of service. Our prayers and best thoughts are with you both.

In the Harding family there are 13 psychiatrists over four generations, six of whom still practice. One outlier to the family medical and psychiatric tradition was newspaper editor and U.S. President Warren G. Harding.

Dr. Harding has a deep and wonderful love for the profession of psychiatry. Throughout childhood and his medical training years at Loma Linda, the Harding Hospital, and Johns Hopkins, he developed an ability to hear and accept health problems as workable and solvable difficulties. Today he expands those skills and his optimism through his work with the administrative, economic, and political problems facing our profession. He has a remarkable ability to confront difficult issues fairly and directly.

Within the American Psychiatric Association, Dr. Harding has had a long history of dedicated and effective service. Of special note is his personal and genuine working relationship with the APA members and staff. Dr. Harding has made numerous contributions to the governance of APA. His leadership, along with that of Dr. Bill Weitzel, established the Assembly’s Profile of Courage Award to honor meritorious conduct and service to our profession. In 1996 the Assembly elected him Speaker. In 1998 he was elected Vice-President, and in 2000 he became our President-Elect. He was named a member of the President’s National Committee on Vital and Health Statistics, then chairperson of the committee’s subcommittee on privacy.

This year of Dr. Harding’s presidency was marked by major international, national, professional, and personal agenda. He met with APA members in 24 district branches, and he provided congressional and national testimony four times. He made 270 flights in 2 years and has made over 100 since 9/11. He established a principle of goodwill and good relations with district branches, APA central governance, and the international community of psychiatry. He reached out to the special populations of psychiatrists and established a work group to support the Surgeon General’s Report on Mental Health: Culture, Race and Ethnicity. In these difficult times, Dr. Harding was there and advocated tirelessly on the issues of access to care, parity, reduction of stigma, and quality patient care. Stepping back, picture his life: all these issues and a day job at home, a family growing up, and a son in Afghanistan! Such a balancing act comes only from the commitment and support of a loving family. To the Harding family: we thank you for letting Richard come out to play.

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Dr. Walker is a former Speaker of the APA Assembly and is Director of the Center of American Indian Health, Education and Research, Director of the Addictions Psychiatry Fellowship, and Professor of Psychiatry, Public Health and Preventive Medicine, Oregon Health & Science University. Address reprint requests to Dr. Walker, Department of Psychiatry, Oregon Health & Science University, M/S GH 156, 3181 SW Sam Jackson Park Rd., Portland, OR 97239-3098; walkerrd@ohsu.edu (e-mail).

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