

Celebrating the Life of a Friend and Colleague

Adrienne Yazijian introduced thousands of people to medical transcription as a career and to the American Association for Medical Transcription as a professional organization. As the first *real* AAMT President in 1979-1980 (two others having held the office briefly before her in 1978), she was the dynamic leader who applied executive leadership skills to the fledgling association and put it on the national map. She believed that medical transcriptionists were professionals and deserved recognition as important members of the healthcare team.

A medical transcription service owner for over 25 years in Fresno and San Diego, California, Adrienne Yazijian brought her enthusiasm and love for medical transcription to her position as President. She was a founding member of AAMT and a director for four years, during which she hosted the first annual business meeting of AAMT in Fresno in September 1979. At that time AAMT had 1400 members and 6 local chapters. With Jackie Hagedorn of Chicago, Adrienne worked tirelessly to establish chapters all over the country. By the fall of 1980 AAMT had 56 local chapters in 29 states. Jackie remembers “how vital we all were in those days 25 years ago, so full of hope, and spirit, and fun! We were true crusaders in the name of AAMT and the profession of medical transcription.” She remembers Adrienne as “always charming, interesting, and full of humor and wit.”

In the early 1990s Adrienne was also a founding member and director of the Medical Transcription Industry Alliance (MTIA). An entrepreneur, she recognized kindred spirits at the 1994 MTIA conference in New Orleans: “I saw again and again that spirit, that drive, that enthusiasm, that determination, that courage that clothes the entrepreneur.”

Adrienne Yazijian was a dynamic motivational speaker who touched the lives of many medical transcriptionists, students, and teachers over the years. In all her professional activities, she demonstrated an inherent self-confidence, an optimism for the possibilities and opportunities open to all of us, a zest for living, and a vision for personal greatness as individuals and as a dedicated group of professional medical transcriptionists. She made us feel we all had potential as leaders. Joanne Yanni of Philadelphia remembers meeting Adrienne, who greeted her with open arms as “new blood” as a new AAMT director.

Adrienne was a Renaissance woman who faced every challenge with energy and enthusiasm. Hazel Tank of San Diego says, “Adrienne never simply walked into a room. She ‘burst’ into any area, making her presence felt without a single word. Such was her commanding personality.” She brought those qualities to all her professional activities, and after selling her transcription company in 1995, she had sev-



**Adrienne Yazijian
1940-2004**

eral other successful careers—first as a sales executive for a corporate giant; a consultant to physicians, HIM directors, and medical transcription companies; advisor to more than one college medical transcription program; CEO of a company providing speech recognition software; and a real estate broker in Palm Springs and San Diego. She was excited about living and life and expected to have many more years of interesting work ahead of her, before a brief illness resulted in her death on December 1, 2004.

When I met Adrienne in 1976, I remember being impressed that she was a *businesswoman*. We both owned medical transcription services—hers in Fresno much larger than mine in Modesto—but running a small medical transcription company was, for me, just something I did in response to a need in the community. For Adrienne, running a business was a *business*. She was very good at it and the results showed in her professionalism, her businesslike approach to managing employees, negotiating with clients, and delivering top-quality medical transcription day in and day out for many hospitals and clinics. She had a good sense of who she was and what she wanted to do, and she pursued her goals relentlessly and with style and flourish. In the days when most of us just tried to stay ahead of payroll demands and slow-paying clients, she had a business plan and a vision of her company in a growth industry.

Along the way, she was a prolific writer and authored many articles in periodical publications on a wide range of topics, including professional development, leadership, time management, listening skills, team playing, corporate culture, entrepreneurs, organizational skills, customer relations, project management, developing best practices, creativity, self-help activities, the joys of meaningful work, work as more than a necessary evil, goal setting as adult magic, passion and satisfaction in work, strategic planning, “tangential” (“running off on a tangent, which stalls productivity”), new techniques in business management, and the clean-your-office retreat as a means of sorting through clutter (“the key to realizing what you now want and who you now are”). I could go on and on, or I could provide an extensive bibliography of her published works. The point is that, of all the many things Adrienne did well in her professional life, writing was one of them and one that gave immense pleasure to her and to many of us. She touched many lives and has left a powerful legacy in print as well as in our hearts.

She applied life lessons to her business, and business lessons to her life. Take skiing, for example. She wrote a wonderful column on “balance.”

I rarely fall, even though I ski the steep and the deep. Not that I view falling as failing . . . it's just that I have pretty good balance and an insatiable need for a little danger, adrenaline rush, or endorphin push once in a while. . . . If you fall frequently [in life], figure out why. If you haven't fallen in a long time, figure out why. . . . What is certain is that life is full of obstacles and unforeseen hazards, and if any of the major areas of your life fail, it is good to know the others are strong enough to keep you upright. Balance. It's a good thing to contemplate.

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"We will not see profits grow if we do not learn how to grow people," she wrote in "The Corporate Culture." In her "wrong jungle" analogy, she draws distinctions between effective leadership and management:

Management is efficiency in climbing the ladder of success; leadership determines whether the ladder is leaning against the right wall. You can quickly grasp the important difference between the two if you envision a group of productive transcriptionists cutting their way through the jungle of transcription with machetes. They're the producers, the problem solvers. They're cutting through the undergrowth, clearing it out. The managers are right behind them, sharpening their machetes, writing policy and procedure manuals, holding "How Not to Get Carpal Tunnel Syndrome" seminars, bringing in improved technologies, and setting up work schedules, compensation and benefit packages, and incentive programs. The leader is the one who climbs the tallest coconut tree, surveys the entire situation, and yells, "Wrong jungle!"

As individuals and business owners, we're often so busy cutting through the undergrowth, we don't even realize we're in the wrong jungle, this being especially true of one who owns a mid-sized business (grossing between one and two million a year) and is still involved in the day-to-day operations of the company. In the rapidly changing environment of technology (equipment), effective leadership is more critical than it has ever been before. Adopting the new technology is like exchanging the machete for an automatic jungle cutter that can mow down acres in minutes. Part of the challenge of change is for former machete cutters to learn the new technology.

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Whether Adrienne was telling a roomful of medical transcriptionists in Santa Barbara in 1981, "You are all professionals," as Clare Terrill remembers, or laughing and gasping for breath in a wild helicopter ride over the Capitol, as Marcia Gaffney recalls, everyone remembers her as gutsy and a lot of fun. After all, she sued Lanier and WON!

Her distinctive laugh always rang out with delight and warmth, and the mischievous gleam in her eye evidenced her unfailing good humor. Her upbeat jazzy style is even reflected in her signature, which graces hundreds of membership and Certified Medical Transcriptionist certificates dated December 31, 1979, and thereafter.

In 1998 Kathy Rockel asked Adrienne what created the "passion" she sensed in the early newsletters and journals of AAMT. Adrienne said, "It's simple. We had a purpose. Find the purpose and you will find the passion." Powerful words. Adrienne always felt that helping to found AAMT and nurturing it through its first decade was one of her greatest passions and finest achievements. She wrote in 1996, "Never let your fire of urgency go out." She never did.

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