

Anita Taylor, President of the National Communication Association, 1981

By Anita Taylor, from *Review of Communication*, 6(3),204-216.

The middle child of three girls, born during the dust bowl on a farm in southern Kansas near the small town (abt 2,000) of Caldwell, I had no brothers. After high school my mother had a few months of “normal school” training whereupon she taught in a local country school until marrying two years later. My father had college agricultural school education (2 semesters over two years), after which he farmed 160 acres his father (and the bank) owned.



In my life are a variety of countervailing influences, and I rarely deliberately sought the paths followed. In this respect, I reflect the *Composing a Life* phenomenon described by Catherine Bateson, with influences from family, culture, and the times. I characterize my life as driven by three “mottos,” two of which I lived before I’d read or heard either. The first I recognized as fitting me when I heard it in, of all places, a beer commercial: “You only go around once in this life, so grab for all the gusto you can get.” The second came from Robert Frost, “. . . Two roads diverged in a wood, and I— / I took the one less traveled by / and that has made all the difference” (The Road Not Taken). Whatever the source of these dispositions, they characterize my life. I’ve had only one long-term goal in my life: to go to college, even though I had no clear conception of what to study or what I’d do with the degree. Therein lies the story, a story that I will narrate with names, thereby singling out people of great influence.

As a child, one important influence was that my father, no feminist, had little choice but for his daughters to help with the farmwork. We did the kind of chores that all farm children did, with no “sex roles” for the daughters. We depended on a big garden for much of our food, so all members of the family, including my father, worked at it, although only mother and daughters canned. Somewhere in grade school we daughters learned to milk the cows and helped with annual fence fixing; and about high school we learned to drive tractors and do field work. High school and college summers I drove a wheat truck and was a field hand and paid for college by being one of my dad’s hired help.

We were quite young when our parents started giving us an allowance. My earliest recollection of that was of earning \$.10 a week, of which we had to save one-half. We understood we were saving “for college.” In our family (and in most families of our acquaintance) parents felt no responsibility for our education beyond high school. We knew we were supposed to go to college and that we would pay for it. We earned small bits of money in many ways: picking up nails (another story), cutting thistles and sunflowers, occasionally waiting tables or doing nurse aide work in town.

Another important influence was reading. My “big” sister, three years my elder, loved school and decided to teach me to read as she learned—and our mother, the former school teacher, encouraged us. I’m especially fortunate in this respect since our little one-room country school had doozies for teachers my first two years. In first grade (1941) we spent much of every day running outside to watch the planes on training missions from the air force base and Boeing factory in then very far off Wichita (60 miles). The next year we had a fresh out of normal school

young woman barely older than some of the big boys who were having some difficulty getting out of 8th grade, there being no automatic passes. Though a couple years older than the biggest of the boys, she was much smaller. More than one time our days were disrupted as they stole her shoes and ran outside with them while she sat at the desk and cried. (Why the shoes were off I haven't the foggiest!) By third grade or so, I'd read every book in our school library (a wall case of about six by six), along with some Nancy Drew books we had at home. Mother encouraged the reading habit by taking us regularly to the town (Andrew Carnegie) library. In retrospect it's clear I vicariously experienced worlds far from our farm and small town, experiences that doubtless contributed to the sense I soon developed that neither Caldwell nor Wichita was the place for me.

My pre-high school years included little group activity. One-room schools don't have clubs. Mother saw to it we took part in 4-H; and both parents approved when my projects ranged from the expected sewing and cooking to raising and showing cattle. I stayed active in 4-H through high school years, doing a couple projects that required a presentation, though I now have little recollection of what they were. I didn't participate in many "groups" in high school. My older sister was a cheerleader; I tried out but wasn't selected (and never tried again; I never responded well to not getting something I wanted). Fifties Caldwell schools had no girls' sports, something I much resented as one of the stories mother loved to tell was of playing on a girls' basketball team that traveled by train to two interscholastic national tournaments (1920s). We kids loved to look at the medals she won. I loved basketball myself, PE being probably my favorite high school class. One year I was in a school play; and as part of my senior English class (which was our "speech" class) participated in a local forensic event, giving a "dramatic" monologue—a wonderfully funny piece by Dorothy Parker. I did regularly participate in school and church choirs, and did both piano and chorus in high school music festivals.

A final important childhood influence was a family friendship, in which the father was a person who'd take the opposite side of any opinion anyone stated. Harry was clearly a person high in argumentativeness; and I guess I was, too, because we'd engage in long arguments just for the fun of it. This family had no daughters and the boys had trouble standing up to their dad. I cannot even begin to imagine the damage to their psyche he must have inflicted, because while he and I could do friendly arguments, he wasn't capable of that with them. So, naturally, they encouraged me. Quite unconsciously I received early training for debate—convenient since our school had no debate team.

During high school years I attended a couple state 4-H camps and some church camps. Having become quite the dedicated young church goer, I became a leader in church youth group, conducting sessions, leading prayers and services. Our Methodist church wasn't much for demonstrative worship except in song, so we didn't do much "witnessing." But sometime in these latter high school years I decided to become a missionary (the inner traveler perhaps?), which led me to a nearby (small) church college (Southwestern College, Winfield, KS). There, it took only the first year to decide such a life was not for me and I transferred to Kansas State University. During the first college year I did take a speech class in which the teacher interested me in debate (after, that is, she cast me as Grumio in her production of *Taming of the Shrew*). At K-State, I joined the debate team and that, as Frost said, "made all the difference." I did not major in speech in college. In fact, after deciding the missionary life was not for me, finding a life goal became a real problem. Never had our parents suggested anything other than that we'd need a college education . . . they made no efforts to shape what we needed that education for, although I suspect they were quite pleased with my early missionary goal and quite saddened when it was abandoned. What was the alternative to be? This was the 50s; my family were good conservative souls; no women's roles I knew of interested me. I'd hated high school, being bored beyond belief, and rejected the idea of being a teacher. For a while I

thought I would become a doctor, but working part-time as a nurse aide changed that; I didn't like blood! I never considered nursing. Even then I could tell nurses only took orders and cleaned up messes, neither of which I was (nor am) any good at! Half way through the sophomore year, I romanticized about becoming a foreign service officer and headed to Washington, DC (naïve child that I was), thinking I'd work and finish college at George Washington University, an idea abandoned when I learned the tuition. In DC I flirted with journalism, but upon learning that the copy "boy" job offered at the Washington Post paid the princely sum of \$20 a week while I was then being paid \$50 a week as a payroll clerk for a construction company, I started saving and headed back to K-State where what kept me going were two years of intercollegiate debate.

Finally after a battery of aptitude tests (which, surprise, showed I like to work with people), an academic counselor advised me to finish the B.S. as quickly as possible and look to some experience in the world to help me decide on a life course. I loaded on sociology classes, made up for time lost in DC with overloads and correspondence courses, and graduated with my class—never having been classified as a senior! I lined up a job as a probation trainee in Chicago, and my perceptive debate coach (Charles Goetzinger) "just happened" on the way to a tournament to drive through the neighborhood where I'd be working. On the trip home he suggested I could go to graduate school in speech via an assistantship in debate. Gutsy guy—along with the dept head who approved the scheme (John Keltner)—at the time I had 9 college credits in speech. But they knew I was a quick study and had been relatively successful as a debater, so it wasn't really much of a gamble for them.

The grad school option had never occurred to me. Our parents encouraged going to college, but the idea of graduate school just wasn't part of our universe (unless it was medical school, which one of my (male) cousins had done, an idea I'd long ago rejected). But I loved it, the classes, the teaching, the coaching. Quite without intention on my part, I'd found my place, on a university faculty. Within two years Goetzinger and Keltner had moved from K-State and I became the debate director, not just someone's assistant. Perfect!

Only in retrospect, years later, did I realize the early turmoil over "career" resulted from role conflict. My childhood experiences developed the nearly perfect androgyne; but the world in which I lived had no formulation of such a person. I can now see that many pioneer and farm women exhibited these same characteristics, but no one among my contacts had conceptualized the idea. Indeed, in those days ('49-'57) only a few had conceptualized such ideas.

After graduation, I had a summer job at Yellowstone National Park (waiting tables, what else?). On the way, I visited my sister and her husband where I met the man for whom my brother-in-law worked. Skipping the mostly irrelevant details, I'll report only that I married the guy (Walt Taylor) one year and two months later. Walt thereupon became a significant influence in my life. He professed to want no part of a traditional marriage—and to be fair to him, he really didn't, in some important respects. He supported my completing the master's degree, was willing to move so that I could begin a Ph.D. program at another school, and expected to have a "career" wife—though at the time neither one of us really knew what that meant. So in one way, I had the ideal situation for a woman like me at that time (1958): I was married (and hence a "legitimate" woman in the eyes of many in my world); I soon had more education than the vast majority of women; we didn't have or want children (Walt had children by a previous marriage; I wasn't the motherly type). I had few home life interferences with a career I loved.

Another factor I didn't realize until achieving a raised consciousness over a decade later: I settled into a life full of several countervailing pressures. Teaching in an institution with an M.S. degree earned from that institution (a big school in a small town), I could easily have become one of the "permanent" instructors—of which K-State had a lot—who were mostly place-bound women. I'm not sure how long it would have been before I realized how exploited I and others in that position were destined to be, but fate and my well-honed inability to take orders soon intervened. The speech department needed to "beef-up" its faculty credentials, so they hired a (man with a) Ph.D. and gave him the title of "Director" of Forensics. I was given to understand (perhaps I wanted to hear) that he'd do it in title only; that he was a scholar and didn't really want to do debate: I would continue to run the program. Guess they didn't give HIM that understanding. When we met the first day, our different ideas of who was to be in charge became clear; I went home that night and told Walt to begin planning for a move; I was quitting. I had by then realized that should I really want some status in my future as a university faculty member, I'd need the Ph.D. This situation crystallized the need, and four years later I was ABD, with one change of jobs in between—again because a man in a position of authority had interfered with a decision that I believed was mine to make. (There's a gender pattern here, one which I saw only retrospectively: I was being "supervised" by men who thought they deserved to tell me what to do but didn't know as much as I did; and I wouldn't put up with it.) Significantly, my motivation for graduate school was not to become a scholar. I wanted to teach at the university level and needed the "union card" to have some control over my life. This motivation dictated my choice of schools and programs. U. of Missouri was close to home; its Ph.D. was rhetoric and public address, which fit my interest in debate.

Having lived six years with a full income (though it wasn't much, it sure beat a T.A.'s salary), I was not willing to stay on at the university until the degree was done. But, not a lot of folks in 1967 were looking for an ABD female faculty member even if she did coach debate. It was May before I got called for a job interview, at Florissant Valley Community College in St. Louis, a serendipity in many ways. They wanted a teacher, not a scholar. It was close to Mizzou so I could finish the degree—and then move on to a university where we all want to be, right? And, given their salary structure, the unfinished degree didn't hurt. I started the job that fall at a salary that exceeded the one being earned by the full professor (female) with over thirty years teaching who was directing my dissertation. Was I beginning to see a pattern? Yes, but it turned out not to matter for a while. We fit in many ways, Florissant Valley and I. It was the first place anyone spent any significant amount of time helping me learn to teach. It was a new school, short on traditions and long on enthusiasm. We had, for a little while, a wonderful administration. For the first time since Goetzinger and Keltner, my experiences with male "supervisors" were positive. The guy who hired me, Art Meyer, recognized talent, supported the development of the faculty, regardless of sex or race, as did the college dean, the president and the system chancellor. I loved the place, had great opportunities and learned a lot. At FVCC I taught twelve years, became an administrator, first a department chair, then a division dean.

Loren Reid, at Mizzou, stressed to Ph.D. students that being a university professor meant being involved in the profession. We were to participate in professional associations, so as soon as I had money again, I did just that. I even went to business meetings (!). SCA became important because at Florissant Valley I had few disciplinary colleagues. Association work became my "continuing" education. I also developed good friends in the Association, partly through women's caucus, but as of my presidency mostly through the community college group and people I knew through debate. My scholarly interests came after my presidency.

Once again, however, I noticed that status thing. In this case it was that I had identified with the community college movement, believed it important within the system of higher education . . .

but quickly learned that most of my professional colleagues considered those of us who worked in such institutions a lesser rank of professional. By now I had the title of Dr.; I had experience in both kinds of institutions, and while I knew most of my community college colleagues were not in the same league as traditional scholars with many of our university counterparts, I also knew most university faculty couldn't hold a candle to most of us as teachers. So I quickly agreed when Art Meyer asked if I'd join a task force to work on community college issues that SCA National Associate Executive Secretary, Robert Hall, was shepherding. I'm not sure whose idea it was to form the task force, but we became quite the activist little group and earned some visibility (notoriety??) within the Association.

I also became active in the organization of department chairs that Bob Hall fostered; I was president for a couple years. Thus, by now several folks in the Association came to know who I was—as many in the debate community already did. In response, I'm sure, to pressuring by our community college group and that of the newly formed Women's Caucus (of which I was always a part though never an elected leader), I was among the few women invited to the Airlie conference--after all I was a super token—female AND a community college representative. I also served on a committee, placed there I suspect by Bob Hall, that suggested movement to an open placement service. The committee wrote the guidelines to be followed when the association agreed to the new system. I suspect affirmative action was again at work in 1973 when the SCA Committee on Committees asked if I'd accept appointment to the Finance Board. None of us had any idea what was about to happen.

I was having a grand time working at achieving what I thought were important goals: gaining respect for teaching among my professional colleagues, opening doors for women. After the Finance Board, the obvious next step seemed to be the chain to the presidency. I wanted the powerful (male) nominators at least to have to consider a woman community college presidential nominee. In character, I wrote the committee in 1977, nominating myself. Referencing the rhetoricians and big university dominance of the Association, I suggested I wouldn't accept a nomination if slated against someone from a Big 10 institution, because it wouldn't be a fair fight. To no one's surprise, they did not nominate me. I was more than a bit irritated, however, when I learned that of the two candidates one WAS an “affirmative action token,” a very nice young man from a Minneapolis high school certain to garner no more than a few votes against the other candidate (Phil Tompkins), a representative of the rhetoric and research university establishment. I was irritated, but willing to wait and renew my candidacy the next year.

Then “the” critical incident occurred. In those days, the annual awards were given at a luncheon, and the Association's various officers would sit at a raised dais head table. During this particular ceremony, all faces arrayed along the high raised table were male save one, second vice-president Jane Blankenship. She herself had quite shaken the Association establishment when she'd “unexpectedly” won election over their candidate for whom, most of us believed, Jane had been nominated as a sacrificial lamb. Bob Hall claimed at the time her win was because the women of the association always returned their ballots, and when given the opportunity to vote for a woman, did so. I grew increasingly distressed with the lineup on the dais as each successive (male) award winner's name was called. Finally, for the last one, the distinguished service award, a woman's name was called, Marie Hochmuth Nichols. The passage of years leaves me not completely clear why she was called up although other aspects of that scene are still vivid to me. Hochmuth Nichols had been given this (relatively new) award the previous year and probably was presenting the 1977 winner, Carroll Arnold. Her presence was pleasing. How could the association NOT have recognized a person of her caliber? Or of Carroll Arnold's? By any criteria, both were then and are now giants in our field. But as she spoke, Nichols

commented on one of the many controversies at the time. This was, after all, the convention during which we debated the wisdom of holding our meetings in states that had not ratified the ERA, of which Illinois was one. In her remarks, she said something to the effect that she knew some people claimed women were discriminated against in the Association, but she didn't believe it. For one thing, she said, she'd never experienced discrimination in all her years with SCA.

That was too much. I stormed out of the room, not even waiting for her to finish to much applause (well earned but for the remarks about women and discrimination). In my furious and raving state I literally almost ran into Herman Cohen, SCA ex-president with whom I'd become acquainted during the Finance Board years. When he heard from me the cause of my fury, he questioned me in total "I don't get it" candor (of which there was a lot in those days; Herm WAS well intentioned). He wanted to know, why was I so upset? "After all," he said, "you've got Jane!" I'm not sure Herman Cohen ever understood why that resulted in a even greater level of fury. Almost immediately thereafter, I ran into another ex-president, Bob Jeffrey. Upon hearing the tale, especially about the 2nd VP candidates, he said I should run a write in campaign. He knew (probably was a member of the group that wrote the constitution) that a candidate who presented a petition with 500 names would automatically be on the ballot. Bob Kibler happened upon the scene, as did Robert Hall. Both joined in urging me to do it; Kibler and Jeffrey volunteered to carry petitions around at parties that evening and the next. Hall and I went to the SCA office space, prepared and duplicated the petitions later passed out among a small legion of helpers. Thus it is that I've often said I owed the presidency to three guys named Bob. We left the convention with well over 300 names (although some were illegible—probably intentionally). I mailed petitions to my many friends from debate days and to every member I knew in a community college. We collected well over 500 names and achieved the ballot. With three names on the ballot no one earned a majority, and in the run-off with Tompkins, I won, not much to anyone's surprise. Given the mode of my nomination, and the fact fingered by Bob Hall that women in those days voted, and voted for women, my election was probably a cinch once my name was on the ballot in a fair two-way race. So I was the first community college person to be elected to SCA's highest office and the 7th woman.

I was 45 the year of my presidency, and married with no children (I had step children, only one of whom lived with us while she was in college), reflecting a pattern of women in workplace management. What credibility problems I had were from the perspective of those who thought the president should be a leading scholar and couldn't do what the Association needed unless s/he were such a person. Since most of those folks still needed our journals as outlets for their publications and our conventions for their meetings with friends and showcases for their graduate students, I found their attitudes no hindrance to anything I wanted to do. We had some membership problems in those days, but they had little to do with whoever might be president and in any event considerably preceded my presidency.

I think I was seen as dedicated to opening up the association—and I was. Some people saw this as a strength and others thought it a weakness. Other than showing that a woman and a community college representative could be elected, opening up the Association was probably my only "goal" as an officer. I also was seen (accurately) as a strong-minded person and one who made a difference, however fleeting, for the "little people" among us. Prior to the presidency, I suspect my being a woman caused some people to under-estimate me and others to be irritated with my more than assertive manner. But given the times (70s & 80s) the Association included a lot of people who agreed with the goal. Sometimes I even benefited from being underestimated—and from being seen as an outsider.

I tried to achieve my goal in two primary ways. One was presidential appointments and nominations. I remember no specific ad hoc committees or task forces I appointed, although a check might show my involvement in getting an affirmative action “officer” and statement. Through my years on the Committee on Committees I insisted on appointment of women, people of color (although then we always said minorities), and folks from other than the big name universities. Another was to make sure my voice was heard, all through my service on Legislative Council and Administrative Committee, before, during and after the presidency. Given that one way the establishment keeps women and others of lower “rank” in their “places” is to mute their voices (silence or distort those voices), I always insisted on being heard. Fortunately, years of experience in debate and academic politics helped me do more than be heard; I could not easily be dismissed.

One additional action I took takes on interest in retrospect. In planning the convention, I stated up front that we would accept as many programs as the hotel would accommodate. I knew that many people can attend the convention only if on the program. Because the number of programs at conventions now exceeds what I scheduled in 1980, my action seems minor. But, at that time programs were tightly controlled (and during a few conventions after my presidency as well), with the ostensible goals of emphasizing the “scholarly” nature of the session and ensuring quality of programming. Even if those were actually the goals of such limitations, they had the effect of keeping “certain” people out of sight. Twenty years later many of us have lamented the proliferation of programs requiring us to choose among desirable concurrent sessions. Nonetheless, we have clearly chosen the option of being more open than closed in convention programming, a factor having a substantial effect on the exceptionally high percentage of members who attend conventions. I am pleased to claim some responsibility for our coming to that choice.

My administrative experience included many years as a director of forensics, as a department chair and 3 as division dean at Florissant Valley; and at the time of the presidency I was a university department chair. I don’t think I ever really had a mentor. I thought of some folks as role models, including Norma Bunton, the woman who chaired the speech department at K-State for a while and Anabell Hagood, long time director of forensics at the University of Alabama. Art Meyer was a source of good advice on many occasions, and I learned much about leading meetings of fractious colleagues from Dave Campbell, who chaired our compensation committee at the St. Louis Community College. These relationships were not mentorship, although valuable. And while I greatly admired the intellectual ability of my doctoral dissertation adviser, Frances McCurdy, and liked her a lot, but she was far too self-effacing and willing to accept discounting by the university for me to consider her either a role model or a mentor. I considered the president at Florissant Valley for the first 10 years I was there, Ray Stith, a role model. The two SCA presidents I most admired and attempted to emulate as association leaders were Sam Becker and Ron Allen.

In important ways, my husband was a mentor. He had an unerring ability to judge character when he met people. I admired that talent and wished my ability to pick personnel could reflect such skill. His skill was intuitive, so I never learned any techniques from him, but I did often go with his judgment (and sometimes regretted it when I didn’t). What I did ultimately learn from him—a hard lesson for a debater and academic—was to trust my “instincts.” Though short on formal education, Walt had a wonderful way with words, and was a great critic of memos, reports and speeches I would write. He also had a great talent for humor. Many things about living with him taught me to be less serious and more fun. I believe a sense of humor to be a survival skill. Walt helped me develop that skill.

The symbolic meaning of the presidency puzzles me a bit. Clearly the office is an important symbol, especially to the membership. That's precisely why some applauded my presidency while others considered it a travesty. I represented a part of our profession that too many academics (still today, inside and outside our field) consider of lower rank. Prior to the 80s we pretty overtly valued male over female as well as masculine over feminine. At the time I was elected, being female was also to be lower-ranking. Today (the year 2001), we in academia no longer value male over female, although we clearly still value masculine over feminine. Certainly when I was president, and to some extent still today, women who "made" it in our field, and inside our Association, predominantly had ties and identifications with with big name institutions and powerful male mentors or sponsors. Occupants of the top office generally reflect the male-identified values of the Association and their representation powerfully reinforces and perpetuates those values. Thus, the person who holds the office "represents" the Association. When s/he happens NOT to reflect the prevailing image, the symbolic presence is even stronger. Just as the fish doesn't notice water as long as it's swimming, when something IS different about the representative, the presence of that "different" quality whatever it is, increases the power of the symbol. Thus, I was an important symbol. Indeed, the presidency is both symbolically and actually important, though each of us who's been there knows how limited we are when in the role to actualize fully the goals that we had.

My scholarship over the years of my professional activity illustrates well the feminist principle that the personal is political. I shifted focus immediately when I moved directly from my Ph.D. studies in rhetoric and public address to employment in an institution where teaching quality was the primary value. I quickly realized that I'd had virtually no formal preparation for teaching, and certainly none for work in an environment where the range of student preparation and goals was vast. My scholarly activity quickly focused on what Kenneth Boyer (*Scholarship Reconsidered*) helped us recognize as scholarship. With no incentive to pursue rhetorical studies, and much need to attend to ways to adapt to the variety of students, I worked at learning and developing instructional materials and methods appropriate for different learning styles and situations. This work led to publication of two textbooks, some individualized learning packages and structures; creation of a speech laboratory on campus; helping bring special programs for deaf students to campus; helping develop AV materials for integrating listening skill development into communication classes. We developed the first interpersonal and group communication classes in the district, and helped other schools implement our models. When, twelve years later, I moved back to the university atmosphere, it was primarily to do administrative duties. Again circumstances shaped new directions of scholarship. I quickly realized that as a university administrator, even one at a relatively "low" level, I worked in a different world from most of my colleagues, of whom most were (not incidentally) men. By this date (early 80s), the Second Wave Feminist movement was well underway, a movement I had for some time been involved in at the level of seeking to open our field to women. One of my early publications, for instance, was an essay in *The Persuader* arguing for elimination of the women's division in intercollegiate debate. But, working in a community college with a high proportion of women even at "high" levels of administration and in a division that was predominantly female, I had limited personal contact with gender bias in the workplace. That changed in the university environment. And while I remained interested in instructional development, gender issues became the center of my scholarship. In 1989 I assumed editorship of the small, interdisciplinary research periodical, *Women and Language*, (which had begun life as a newsletter linking those in several disciplines working on gender and language issue). In some ways, in the later years of my career, my work came full circle as this late scholarship involves preparation of learning materials to be used by English and Communication teachers, at both high school and university levels, to integrate knowledge about gender, language and communication into their classes. These will be in CD & DVD media, making them widely

available and easily used. I consider this among my most important work, as it is clear now, thirty-plus years into the twentieth century women's movement, that what we know about gender, communication and language is mostly distorted or incompletely applied in classrooms and in lives. Even though gender is a central structure of English thought and language, attention by teachers to helping students become aware of its role is minimal, a tag on at best. The materials a colleague (M. J. Hardman, University of Florida Linguistics Professor) and I have been workshopping since mid 90s and are now preparing for e-publication, will provide usable means of filling the void and correcting the distortions.

I append a selected list of my work that illustrates the range of the scholarship I have described.

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Additional Author's Note

Recently a scholar preparing a piece for publication wrote me inquiring about an erroneous statement in one of these essays about women presidents. She urged me, as the nominal editor of these pages, to post a correction. She is right; in the future scholars will not be able to talk directly to those of us "who were there"; and while we all know eye-witness accounts are notoriously unreliable, they tend to be accepted. Hence I here add an additional statement about the 1977 convention, during which our Legislative Council voted to break a hotel contract and meet the following year in a state that had ratified the Equal Rights Amendment to the U. S. constitution.

Jane Blankenship's essay briefly reports on the debate leading to the decision. She writes with as even a hand as is possible for someone involved in the debate. In 1977, Jane was first vice-president, and in 1978 as president shared the responsibility of administering the move. The portion of my essay discussing the 1977 meeting focuses on another issue, the one that propelled me to mount a write in campaign for the 2nd vice-president nomination. Had I written more about the convention debate, in which I was deeply involved, my report would not have had the even tone that Jane uses. What I add here will give you some sense of those times and that debate. I try to be fair; I cannot be unbiased.

The debate in 1977 about moving the 1978 convention was heated and it, like the times, raised strong emotions--on both sides. I was among those who argued passionately that we should move, that we should not meet in Chicago. We understood the arguments of those who believed we should stay with our Chicago contract in spite of the decision by the Illinois legislature. We knew that Chicago itself was not responsible; and that our moving a big convention out of the city would harm many people. But we strongly disagreed that those arguments outweighed the reasons to move. We believed it important to take a position in support of equal rights for women. We knew that many SCA members felt as we did and they would not attend a meeting in Illinois. They would not do so as long as any possibility of the legislature changing its position existed. The Association was going to be financially harmed, whichever decision was made.

Jane does not mention another issue in this debate: an issue of whether a "scholarly" organization should involve itself in "politics." Many SCA members believed it should not. That

argument had been and was being used to argue against the move and to resist other efforts to turn the organization's attention to discrimination; it justified our late response, as an organization, to the civil rights and peace movements that occupied the 60s & 70s. Those of us pushing SCA to take stands on civil rights, the ERA, affirmative action, the Vietnamese (undeclared) War believed that the claim to stand "above" politics itself reflected a politics. Those with the power to structure and define, to say what issues we pay attention to and which we ignore themselves enforce a politics. We were challenging that--very (very) slowly pushing it back and changing the organization.

These are only some of the events that made 1977 / 1978 watershed years. To have moved that convention, in the same year we elected a recognized outsider to the presidential chain, was huge. That's why it is critical that the record be presented accurately. Bill Work, SCA's Executive Secretary who had the responsibility of making the move work, subsequently noted that ours was a more principled stance than organizations that merely chose a state other than Illinois for a convention site. Our decision came at considerable cost both of time and money. To use a phrase meaningful at the time, we walked our talk.