

Carolyn Stieber, UCOA's historian, who is ombudsman emeritus at Michigan State University, sketched a brief history of the organization for those attending the banquet of the seventh annual meeting in Lawrence, Kansas.

As it emerged from its midwest beginnings to become national in focus, she noted that informal one-day "war story" gatherings gradually evolved into meetings with more structure and wider interest. Rather grandiose plans of Leon Miller from Northern Illinois, which envisioned a national headquarters building on his campus, were molded in a more pragmatic way by Ingrid Clarke from Southern Illinois.

Clarke shepherded the fledgling group through bylaws formulation, incorporation in the state of Illinois, and election of officers after nominations at a Wayne State University meeting in Detroit on September 27, 1985.

Some of the merry and not so merry incidents in UCOA's early years were highlighted, including a scary bus trip up a mountain in Colorado, tensions with the California Caucus over meeting dates and membership, and what Carolyn called the Great Dues/Vote Rebellion in October 87 in Cincinnati. Originally worried about seed money, 2-tier membership with differential dues and voting privileges had been established for the approximately 13 "institutional members". At a very lively business meeting UCOA members changed this to equal rights and similar dues for all members, who could then vote on all matters.

The only other bylaw change of significance occurred at the Columbus, Ohio meeting, held jointly with the Association of Canadian College and University Ombudspersons in April 1992. UCOA voted to substitute ombuds for ombudsman in an effort to assure gender neutrality.

In her account Carolyn took note of the fact that accommodation on meeting dates eased tensions so that all groups---UCOA, Californians, Canadians---have experienced membership growth, with UCOA enriched by the presence of two overseas representatives at its Kansas meeting, from Ireland and from New Zealand.

Traditions have marked each annual conference: a variety of venues for the meetings, a board meeting prior to the conference, a general business meeting scheduled during the conference, and a workshop for those establishing new offices.

Although the historian did not deliver her entire talk in rhyme, as she had in Northampton at the conclusion of her presidency, a small rhyme marked the end:

I must advise
The Nobel Prize
For Peace is not yet won.
But persevere,
Those gathered here---
Our work is not yet done.

UCOA's History -- Abbreviated

I find myself in an ironic role as UCOA's historian -- Never dreaming I would someday have this responsibility, upon retiring from 17 years as MSU's ombudsman, I tossed out virtually everything relating to UCOA in the files except bare bones information about the organization, in the belief that my successor could hardly want old minutes, old budgets, old copies of programs, or membership lists. Former UCOA presidents, unlike former U.S. presidents, are not awarded space for presidential libraries.

I regret this miscalculated housecleaning. But fortunately, many others were more prudent and shared their files with me. Happily I too still have a few notes and strong memory of prior events, so the task which the Board has given me isn't easy but it isn't impossible. I intend to chronicle as comprehensive a history as I can, but not tonight!

Since I was asked to share something with you at this festive banquet occasion, I shall briefly sketch a very few highlights from our mere 7 years of history--and a few years before that, which I will label the pre-historic mid-west period, for that is where the germ sprouted.

Because of my own antiquity, I begin with me. A few months after I was appointed ombudsman, I had a telephone call from a counterpart at another university, who is now deceased. Thus he cannot correct my account of that call, but I assure you it is accurate. He invited me to join an informal group that would meet in a few weeks in some motel room near Bowling Green University where they would sit around and pass a bottle and share

experiences. It was, he said, a lot of fun. It didn't sound like very much fun to me, having never been much of a bottle passer, much less in a motel room with strangers.

I offered the excuse, which happened to be true, that I was still overwhelmed by the complexity of my new job as well as continuing to teach 2 large classes. Regretfully, I just couldn't make it to Bowling Green but try me next time. I was certain I could think of a new excuse the next time he called.

But the next call, about a year later, was not from him and not like that. Several of the college and university ombudsmen in Michigan, Ohio, and other midwest states began to communicate with each other and arranged to meet, once or twice a year, at or near each other's campus. Now and then someone from as far away as Pennsylvania and even California joined us. These were 1 day affairs, very informal. We had a lunch or a dinner together. If the host school had some money, we ate on the campus, otherwise in a restaurant. Mostly it was War Story Time -- boring or fascinating depending on whether it was your war story or someone else's.

I recall a meeting I arranged in East Lansing in 1977. My boss, the president, was very generous, proud of the fact that our school had pioneered the first significant position of ombudsman. We not only had a very good lunch on the president's budget but even what was euphemistically called a "hospitality suite" at our Kellogg Center on campus, at a time when East Lansing was as dry as Kansas and the campus even drier. The meeting I hosted was the first to have some structure, with a program and speakers.

A few years later, the ombudsman at Northern Illinois in Dekalb, Leon Miller, and Ingrid Clarke, ombudsman at Southern Illinois, threw out the idea of forming an official organization, with members, officers, dues -- hoping to attract people beyond the midwest. Leon was a dreamer, with grandiose plans. He identified a building on his campus that might serve as our national headquarters, and brought photographs of it to show the rest of us at our meeting that year in Lincoln, Nebraska. The year was 1982. I remember it well because Leon and I spent a lot of time talking about this at the airport when both our planes were very late.

Originally I was among those somewhat skeptical that we had enough of a critical mass to be a viable national organization, but I kept my misgivings to myself.

Leon Miller's plans didn't work out quite the way he had proposed them. He was in fact replaced as Northern Illinois' ombudsman a year or so later. I don't know what happened to him after that but I do know he died a few years ago, at a very young age. UCOA owes some tribute to his memory, even though he was not our Founding Father. As it turned out, UCOA had a Founding Mother. With enthusiastic support from several others, Ingrid Clarke shepherded the new creation from incorporation in the state of Illinois, October 24, 1984, to the formulation of bylaws in April, 1985. UCOA was officially born at a meeting held at Wayne State University in Detroit, September 27, 1985. Those in attendance already came from regions far outside our old midwest nucleus. Ballots to select officers for 1986 were tabulated by Prof. Larry Hill of the University of Oklahoma; he was one of the best known and most prolific writers on the subject of ombudsmen throughout the world.

Ingrid Clarke was chosen to be the first president, with Ed Sharples of Wayne State as president-elect. Don Perigo from the University of Michigan was Treasurer, Kay Peter from University of Michigan-Dearborn was secretary. Pat Williams from Ohio State and I, from MSU, were board members, along with Howard Gadlin from University of Massachusetts-Amherst. Except for Howard, you may note it was a little heavy with Michigan and midwest representation.

The original midwest meetings had been held in September or October, but there was rumbling of powerful tectonic plates from the California Caucus, then already in existence 16 years. They sponsored a meeting each November in Asilomar near Monterey. With the proximate conflict in meeting dates we were told few Californians would join UCOA. Nonetheless, 41 people, including a few from California, participated in UCOA's first annual meeting, in Boulder, Colorado, October 1-3, 1986. Boulder was memorable for several reasons: Fred Ermlich offered us an Ombudsman's Prayer, perhaps inspired by the solemn majesty of the Rocky Mountains. The prayer was as follows: "Let there be strife amongst thy people, Lord, lest thy servants perish." Then there was the bus.

We were almost wiped out in a single evening when a fair number of us, bound for a restaurant, were aboard a school bus winding up a steep and narrow mountain road, in the dark, enveloped in fog so thick that the driver could see only when some of the passengers got off the bus and walked in front of the bus headlights. The prospect of the next day's headlines about a whole profession being eliminated in a single night afforded some merriment in what was otherwise very frightening. (At an earlier meeting, in Manitoba, both Howard Gadlin and I had been on a disabled bus -- so eventually, fearful of evil synergism, he and I tried not to

share any conveyances -- but I am happy to report we did share a taxi in Pittsburgh at the last SPIDR meeting and nothing untoward happened. The bus demons are resting.)

However, the scenic Rocky Mountains were not the only rocky part of that Boulder meeting. Tensions, already apparent over the issue of the calendar scheduling, were further strained by a flippant newsletter distributed after the conference. References meant to be humorous were not taken that way by several Californians and a flurry of explanations and apologies flew back and forth. Happily, some cordial discussions occurred in the more neutral setting of a conference in Montreal the following June (1987). Ultimately this led to conciliation: if substantial numbers of Californians would join UCOA, UCOA in turn would try to change the date of its meetings to Spring. They did and we did, although it took another year to work out the details.

New countries often have to put down revolts from dissenters and so do new organizations. Cincinnati, scene of UCOA's second annual meeting, was also the scene of The Great Dues/Vote rebellion, which had been heating to the boiling point. Worried about seed money for the new organization, UCOA's bylaws initially set up a 2-tier system of affiliation and dues, with voting privileges reserved for the approximately 13 "institutional members" who paid much more than individual members -- \$60 as opposed to \$10.

In Cincinnati, October '87, a demand for voting reapportionment was inevitable, not least because it was logical! Participants at that meeting came from across the U.S. and across Canada. The bylaws were changed so every member now voted on everything. But in order

to balance the books all members had to pay somewhat more, a change that was strongly supported. \$10 became \$35; the dues have not increased since that time.

The date for the third annual meeting, to be at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst was set for spring '89, to accommodate the California Caucus schedule. This meant that I, now President III, would serve an extra long term of 18 months. That meeting was notable for the presence of an ombudsman from Cork University in Ireland, our only overseas counterpart as far as I know, whom I invited when he visited my campus. It had been decided, not by me, that UCOA's president should give a farewell address, sort of like George Washington. I delivered mine in rhymed couplets, and received the only standing ovation of my lifetime, which was very nice.

UCOA meetings kept getting bigger and better; those in attendance saw interesting buildings on some beautiful campuses. A few traditions were followed for each conference: a variety of venues in each location, a board meeting before and after each conference, a general business meeting, lively and well attended (perhaps aided by sometimes being scheduled in a "captive location",) and a workshop for those establishing new offices. The atmosphere was always collaborative --- how to code, office procedures, forms to use, computerizing data. You may have been solitary on your campus, but there were always counterparts to turn to for help or advice.

Ann Arbor and Dearborn, Michigan were the site of meeting IV. Although it was April, with all the daffodils in bloom, it snowed.

Lexington, Kentucky in 1991 added horses and bluegrass; Columbus, Ohio was the setting for a joint meeting of UCOA and the Canadian group, ACCUO, with the added cachet of some French and separate business meetings for each organization. At that sixth year's business meeting UCOA voted to change its name for gender neutrality. Which brings us to Lawrence, Kansas and tonight, where one of the California Caucus stars is now your president. Our growth has not been at the expense of other groups; the others are not only alive and well -- they too are thriving.

The men and women of UCOA range from under 20 to the 70's in age and represent diverse ethnic and racial groups. There have been marriages, babies, divorces, injuries, illness, deaths. Ombudsmen have been replaced, resigned, retired, been terminated, or had their offices closed. Some accepted different administrative posts or returned to teaching if they had academic appointments. Others carry multiple titles or wear different hats at different times of the day or year. At least one has moved laterally, from east coast to west; there has been some lateral movement in Canada also, but this is still rare. It may become more common in the next decade if professional experience is rated above local knowledge.

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I am done. Thank you very much for your attention.