

1992 Presidential Address**“Back to the Future: SCA Time Capsule”**

Dale G. Leathers, SCA Immediate Past President

**Editor's Note:** The following Presidential Address was delivered by Dale G. Leathers on October 31, 1992 at the annual convention of the Speech Communication Association at the Hilton and Towers Hotel, Chicago, Illinois. In accordance with SCA tradition, the text is carried in *Spectra*. Leathers is currently serving the Association as SCA Immediate Past President.

In 1930, young speech professor Loren Reid was about to attend his first large speech convention. He writes that:

When I learned that the [Speech Communication] Association was to meet in 1930 in Chicago, one of my favorite cities, and at The Stevens, the world's largest hotel, I was eager to go. I wanted to meet the people I had heard about whose books and articles I had read. Everybody remembers his or her first large convention... On the first morning, in the lobby of the Stevens, I saw striding down a corridor, three huge men; six feet tall, broad-shouldered, bulky. I asked a stranger, "Who are those big fellows?" He laughed and said, "They are big fellows in more ways than one. They are James M. O'Neill, James A. Winans, and Frank Rarig, three of the Founding Fathers of this Association" (Speech Teacher: A Random Narrative, p. 5).

You may not know it but you are seated this morning in what once was the Stevens Hotel. Yes, the name has changed, renovation and expansion have occurred several times, the Hilton and Towers is no longer the world's largest hotel but this *is* where young Loren Reid watched with fascination as he first observed the three men who are arguably the most important Founding Fathers of our Association.

This morning I want you to exercise your imagination. *I want you to go back to the future with me.* Basil McDermott (1990) argues in his brilliant essay entitled, "The Future as Metaphor," that we conceive of the future in metaphorical terms: *the future as challenge, the future as destination, the future as judgment and the future as an answer to unanswered questions.* These metaphors allow us to view the future

through different lenses. Obviously, our choice of lenses affects what we are apt to see in the future.

The metaphorical view of the future as the source of answers to questions which are presently unanswered is undeniably attractive. Few can really dispute the appeal of this metaphor on either logical or pragmatic grounds. I find this view of the future immensely appealing because it essentially looks at the future through the eyes of the optimist rather than the pessimist. In the words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "the essence of optimism is that it takes no account of the present; it enables a man to hold his head high, to claim the future for himself and not to abandon it to his enemy" ("After Ten Years," *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 1953, tr. Eberhard Bethge).

*In my view, real insight as to what the future of our Association will be and should be must begin with an understanding of what we were in the beginning.* I categorically reject the position that the study of our history is a fruitless exercise. Indeed, I do not stand alone in this view.<sup>1</sup>

Jim McBath wrote in 1982 that "In a significant sense, to accept the presence of an academic field or profession without reference to its coming into being is to diminish its potential. We study the past to enrich and illuminate the present, so that we may comprehend the future" (*The Southern Speech Communication Journal*, p. 115).

Let's start our time travel this morning by going back to the beginning of our Association to see what we can learn about the future of our Association. Sit back and relax. Imagine that you have joined Loren Reid and me to attend your first SCA convention here in the Stevens Hotel in 1930. Imagine also that the doors of this ballroom suddenly swing open and "three huge men, six feet tall, broad-shouldered, and bulky" come walking in to join us at this meeting.

These three men might seem unfamiliar to you at first; you might not even know their names. They would seem like old friends to me, however, because I have spent the last six months reading accounts of their actions as SCA Presidents, studying their publications, talking to and corresponding with Loren Reid and others who knew them personally (and called them, respectively, Jim, Chief, and Frank). I have also listened to the absorbing interviews done by Bill Howell of the University of Minnesota with Rarig four decades ago.<sup>2</sup>

In Loren Reid's words:

If their names seem unfamiliar, think of them as Matthew, Mark, and Luke. O'Neill was the first president of the Association and also the first editor of *The Quarterly Journal of Public Speaking*, and department head successively at the University of Wisconsin, the University of Michigan, and Brooklyn College. Winans taught at Cornell University and later at Dartmouth College, and wrote one of the four or five most successful texts ever written for the beginning course in speech. At Dartmouth he became interested in Daniel Webster and wrote a book about Webster's famous murder case. Rarig was for thirty years or more head of the Department of Speech at [The University of] Minnesota. On that campus a fine theatre building is named for him (Reid, *Speech Teacher* p. 15).

### **FORMATIVE YEARS WITH THE BIG THREE: O'NEILL, WINANS, AND RARIG**

#### **James O'Neill: The Founder and 1st President of SCA**

In the beginning there was James O'Neill: SCA's first visionary, nationally-respected spokesperson, and fearless leader. In order to understand the magnitude of the man and his accomplishments I think that it is important to have at least some understanding of the historical context in which he found himself in 1915.

In 1915 Americans were literally in the transition from horse-and-buggy days to the automobile. It is of course possible that Jim O'Neill

Continued on next page



Continued from previous page

owned and drove the famous three-horsepower, curved-dash, topless Oldsmobile that was first made in 1904. It is doubtful, however, that a university professor could afford this Olds since only 5000 were sold throughout the United States in 1904. If O'Neill owned a car in 1915, it is much more likely that he drove one of Henry Ford's famed Model T Fords—first produced in 1909.

Jim O'Neill obviously did not get any of his early insights from listening to radio since the first radio station to broadcast regularly in the United States—KDKA in Pittsburgh—did not start operations until November, 1920. Indeed, the Golden Age of national political broadcasts on radio was still two decades in the future in the year 1935. Television was not considered a practical possibility until the 1940s and did not overtake radio in importance until the 1950s and 60s.

World War I was underway in 1915. The Germans had just begun engaging in dreaded submarine warfare. Woodrow Wilson was President, the Lusitania was sunk by a German submarine with a loss of 124 American lives, and Einstein discovered the theory of relativity.

It was in this historical context that Jim O'Neill lived and led. Jim O'Neill was unquestionably the *leader* of the speech field as the second decade of the 20th century began. When O'Neill joined the faculty of Dartmouth College in 1909 to teach public speaking and debate, he did not become a member of a department of public speaking. He was forced to become a member of the Public Speaking Section of the English department. Thus, O'Neill was like a majority of his speech colleagues around the country. He had no choice but to become a member of an English department where "speech was provided as a minor aspect of the English curriculum" (McBath, p. 109).

The frustrations of speech professors during these years were greatly exacerbated by the oppressive attitudes of many, if not most, of the English professors with whom they had no choice but to interact. In fact, one of the leaders of the National Council of Teachers of English had the insensitivity and gall to state in public that "If a man can write, can he not also speak? Does not the greater encompass the lesser?"

English professors at this time, then, had an attitude toward speech professors which can best be described as superior, supercilious, condescending, and contemptuous. For example, Frank Rarig noted that the English Department at the University of Minnesota was glad to get rid of speech when speech got its own department in 1927. Rarig said that "Elmore Stole, [head of the Department of English at the University of Minnesota in 1927] did stipulate that I should *not* be a professor of English. He insisted that Speech was not a fit subject for a University." To make matters worse, the English professors acted in ways seemingly designed to make the life of speech professors as miserable as possible. To put it delicately, English professors were a pain in the ass.

Into this demanding, foreboding, and even intimidating historical context stepped James O'Neill. He was not intimidated. Far from it, O'Neill sought confrontation with the leaders of the National Council of Teachers of English. He did not approach them timidly or with trepidation. No wimp was he. He challenged them; he goaded them; and in the end, he bested them.

In March, 1913 Jim O'Neill gave a speech at the Public Speaking Conference of the New England and North Atlantic States. It was here that O'Neill first advocated the secession of speech from English. In a speech appropriately entitled "The Dividing Line Between Departments of English and Public Speaking," O'Neill noted that "The situation of our work throughout the country is in an unorganized, unsystematic, chaotic state . . . [yet we] must bring order out of this chaos before we can expect to be generally recognized as on an equal footing with teachers of other departments."

A few months later, November 28, 1913, Jim O'Neill accepted an invitation to speak to the National Council of Teachers of English who were holding their annual convention in Chicago. Any serious student of the history of the Speech Communication Association must study this speech carefully. *This was the Declaration of Independence* of the field of speech.

Consider the situation in which Jim O'Neill found himself on the day of November 28, 1913 as he was about to deliver the speech in which he would enunciate our declaration of independence. He was Daniel about to go into the Lion's Den; he was the unprotected runner about to encounter a whole host of ravenously-hungry pit bull dogs; he was Jonathan Edward's sinner suspended over the fiery ravages of hell by the most insubstantial of support systems.

Jim O'Neill did not cower in the face of such circumstances; he did not equivocate; he did not prevaricate; he did not evade; he did not temporize. He attacked. He told it to the English professors like he *knew* it was. He asked the assembled English professors:

If this is the situation, who is to blame? You are—the teachers of English? If the work in elocution and oratory is a side show in most American colleges, it is because you have made it so. If Public Speaking functions today are degenerate representations of a strong and sound tradition, you are responsible. You have the keeping of tradition in your hands, and you have failed to keep it worthily.

This was Jim O'Neill's in-your-face confrontational style. And Jim O'Neill reveled in it. Now that O'Neill sensed that he had those uppity English professors down for the count, he concluded by saying that "I trust you will not think me ungracious in these remarks. I have acted on the assumption that since you asked me to speak you would like to hear my frank opinion. This is it. Pray, take it for what it's worth. . . . If I have said anything that I am sorry for, I'm glad of it!"

O'Neill's Declaration of Independence led directly to the founding of the Speech Communication Association one year later—November 28, 1914. This was O'Neill's most triumphant moment. In Weaver's judgment,

[O'Neill]. . . more than any other man deserves the title, Father of our Association. Clear-headed, hard-hitting, loving argument and controversy, he preached and practiced a strategy of overwhelming assault against the entrenchments of whatever he considered wrong. Never dismayed by reverses, never plagued by doubts concerning the righteousness of his crusade, he drove straight forward to his goals. [He was an] irrepressible optimist. . . . (The Past is Prologue, p. 115).

#### *James Winans: Second President of SCA and Chief Ideologist.*

Jim Winans, SCA's Second President, was a brilliant man who was known as "Chief" to many of his friends. Winans became the chief ideologist of the Speech Communication Association in the early days. He proved to be a determined and eloquent advocate for two positions which were vitally important to the growth of speech as a field: (1) the credibility of the field of speech must be built on respected scholarship, and (2) respected graduate programs in speech should be developed quickly to serve as the foundation for scholarship in the field.

In 1915 Winans wrote in *The Quarterly Journal of Public Speaking* that:

I have no great humility before teachers in other lines. Toward them we bristle with defiance. But that is just the trouble—we do bristle. We are not yet able to take ourselves for granted. We shall feel better and do better . . . and teach better, when we have more scholarship (p. 119).

In addition to his early article in *The Quarterly Journal of Public Speaking*, entitled "The Need for Research," Winans' two most noteworthy books are undoubtedly the previously-mentioned textbook on public speaking and a fascinating book on Daniel Webster's efforts for the prosecution during the Salem murder trials.

Winans' book, entitled *Daniel Webster and the Salem Murder*, is a fascinating book. This book focuses on the efforts of Daniel Webster to convict two brothers of murder. The diabolically sinister, loathsomely vile, and indescribably evil brothers were the Knapp brothers; Mark L. Knapp and John Francis Knapp. Correction—sorry—it must be my glasses. The brothers were John Francis Knapp and Joseph Jenkins Knapp. As George Bush would say, given the fact that I am a man of great moral turpitude—ah, I mean moral rectitude—I certainly do not want to accuse Mark L. Knapp of anything *sleazy*—although he is undoubtedly a direct descendent of the nefarious Knapp brothers.

Continued on next page



Continued from previous page

Winans led the successful fight for graduate programs in speech at Cornell University. Nonetheless, his first efforts to gain support for graduate education in speech at Cornell were initially rebuffed by the Dean of the Graduate School who told the "Chief" that "You cannot do graduate study in your field; you have no literature."

Winans was not easily discouraged. When the first issues of *The Quarterly Journal of Public Speaking* came from the press, Winans slapped a copy on the desk of the Graduate Dean and said, "Now we have a literature." (Reid, p. 120). At that point, the Graduate Dean and the members of the Graduate Committee at Cornell smiled at Winans both literally and figuratively. They approved graduate programs in speech at Cornell University.

In Weaver's words (1989):

[Winans'] intimate and accurate knowledge of the contemporary currents running in the academic world was an immense asset to our organization in its formative years. His was the clearest voice raised in support of the thesis that research was prerequisite to recognition in the university. (*The Past is Prologue*, 1989).

### **Frank Rarig: 14th SCA President and Political Strategist.**

Frank Rarig did not become SCA President until 1929—fourteen years after SCA was founded. He was, however, at or close to the center of decision-making in SCA from 1915-1940 the vitally important formative years in the development of SCA.

Frank Rarig, an oral interpreter by specialization who had a mesmerizing voice, organized the Speech Department at the University of Minnesota in 1927 and was made a full professor in 1930. In addition to all of his other achievements as a leader, Rarig is remembered for building, and chairing for over thirty years, a speech department at Minnesota that became one of the nation's finest.

If you doubt that Frank Rarig was a shrewd political strategist, consider the following incidents from the early days of speech at Minnesota. Frank Rarig was hired to teach public speaking at the University of Minnesota and he had no intention of coaching debate. However, Rarig noted in his interview with Bill Howell:

When I came here, Meriah Sanford took me into her room and told me I couldn't do any teaching because she said you will have to spend most of your time coaching debaters and orators. Because if you don't win these contests you and Gesserson (a colleague of Rarig's at the time) can't hold your jobs. Well sir, I said I would go over to talk to President Northrup, and to Dean Downy and if they agree with you I'll go back to Chicago and you will never see me again. [Predictably the President and the Dean gave Rarig their unequivocal support and presumably that was the last time that Rarig had to suffer an indignity at the hands of the condescending Meriah Sanford].

In 1931 Rarig was determined to get Dramatics moved out of Student Activities and into the speech department. More specifically, he wanted to get authorization from the University of Minnesota administration for a theatre professor he was trying to recruit to produce plays every night in the week with two matinees. Not surprisingly, Rarig went directly to the top to talk with Dean Johnson, who was Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. Said Rarig to Dean Johnson:

At the present time you are paying for dramatics [but it] is . . . controlled by Dean Nickolson. But you furnish the budget." [Nickolson, the Dean of Students, was clearly the evil force in Rarig's clever social construction of reality]. Well sir, for the first time in my acquaintance with Dean Johnson I saw him become slightly angry and I told him that Dean Nickolson had just made a speech down at the University of Iowa, in which he said that he was building a Department of Dramatics at the University of Minnesota. Well that clinched it so far as Dean Johnson was concerned. And, 'Well alright,' he said, 'we will go to the next meeting of the Senate and I'll make the statement of what we want, but you'll have to do most of the talking'. . . . Well the members of the senate that were present listened—Dean Nickolson and the Dean of Women, Dean Bletz,

argued against the change—but the Senate voted unanimously with the exception of those two votes for the change."

Rarig's voice was of course a strong and respected voice for over three decades both at the national level of the speech field and on campus at the University of Minnesota. In fact, I can almost here Rarig's voice now.

Can we learn anything from the Big Three as we consider what SCA will look like when it celebrates its 100th birthday in the year 2015 or its 150th birthday in the year 2065? You bet. O'Neill, Winans, and Rarig were leaders who had a clear vision of what the Speech Communication Association could and should become. They did not believe that leadership consists of sticking one's finger into the air to determine which direction the wind is blowing. They were willing to lead by getting out ahead and clearly articulating an agenda for the future that was both bold and challenging. These were leaders who did not fear change. They were effective agents of change. Indeed, they frequently put their own careers at risk by speaking out forcefully and defiantly against the prevailing powers of their time.

Settle back now as we begin our time flight into the future. I am going to stop first at SCA's celebration of its 100th anniversary in 2015. As we shall see, many of our current members will still be active in 2015. I feel duty bound to give a report on what a number of prominent members of the communication field will be doing in the year 2015.

### **Time Flight To The Year 2015: SCA's 100th Anniversary**

Let me begin with Michael Burgoon. He is now a Professor Emeritus of the University of Arizona living in Baghdad, Iraq. Michael is not really retired, however, since he thrives in a new career. He was personally recruited by Saddam Hussein to come to Iraq. When they first met, Hussein winked at Burgoon and said "trust me."

In this year 2015 we find that Michael Burgoon is as modest, selfless, and self-effacing as ever. Thus, Burgoon requested only two things from Saddam Hussein in the tough negotiations that preceded his agreement to come to Iraq: (1) an annual salary of two million dollars, and (2) and a pledge from Hussein that his Red Guard would carry Michael Burgoon around in a Pope's chair through the streets of Baghdad each afternoon at 5 p.m. so that Burgoon's many camp followers—primarily graduate students from Baghdad University—can genuflect as the great one passes by. At the moment, Michael Burgoon continues to fill the distinguished position of Dean of the Baghdad School of Charm Training for Iraqi Diplomats.

Noted communication researcher James McCroskey fully intended to be present at this 100th annual convention of the Speech Communication Association. Jim could not come, however, because he finds himself in a serious predicament at the present time—October 31, 2015.

McCroskey gained fame decades ago for his many articles on the measurement of, and devastatingly negative effects of, high communication apprehension. Strangely enough, McCroskey never bothered to develop a solution for the problem of High CA. Now in his Golden Years, McCroskey has become a quiet, guilt-ridden, and meditative man.

In fact, McCroskey has recently spent many hours pondering what for him is the ultimate question: What has been the most rewarding, the most comforting, and the most-deeply moving experience of his life? Suddenly the answer came to him: With the possible exception of Virginia Richmond on a good day, nothing has been as important to Jim McCroskey as listening to the sound of his own deep, resonant voice.

Being the altruistic person that he is, McCroskey concluded, therefore, that the best therapy for high CAs would be to listen to the sounds of his voice as recorded on audio-cassette. Accordingly, McCroskey immersed himself in his hot tub and began humming into the microphone of his audio tape recorder. Unfortunately for Jim, he became so fascinated with the sound of his own voice that he threw himself into a deep hypnotic trance in which he remains at this moment.

Now for some news directly from the convention site. Yesterday,

Continued on next page



Continued from previous page

October 30, 2015, the SCA's Legislative Council held an important meeting. Frank E. X. Dance, SCA President in 1982, was in attendance. Although Dance is now in his dotage, there are times when he is reasonably lucid. Even at his advanced age, Frank E. X. Dance remains a handsome and dynamic man who is the very picture of virility. In fact, one of his many admirers was heard to remark back in the 1980s that it was unfortunate that Dance's mother named him Frank rather than Sam; if his mother had named Frank E. X. Dance Sam, then Dance would have been known as sex dance.

At precisely 10 a.m. on the morning of October 30, 2015, Frank Dance pounded his cane on the floor of the meeting room of the Legislative Council and demanded to be heard. Rising resolutely Frank tottered toward the front of the room. His avowed intention was to introduce a motion which would change the name of the Association back to the National Association of Academic Teachers of Public Speaking. Unfortunately for Frank Dance, he nodded off to sleep at the podium in the front of the room before he could remember why he was standing at the podium.

Finally, you all know that the last ten persons elected President of SCA (covering the years 2005-2015) have been women. In fact, the present female President of SCA recently appointed a Committee to Examine the Emasculated State of SCA males with the charge of determining whether there is an association bias against upwardly mobile men.

The rapid deterioration of the self-concept of male members of SCA has been alarming. This may be attributed in part to findings from recent empirical research. This research shows that men are frequently interrupted by women, men are often prevented from interrupting women by the exaggerated length of women's "ums" and "uhs," it is unusual for a man to protest being interrupted by a woman, and men smile and laugh out-of-context much more than women.

To put the matter directly, a significant percentage of the younger male members of SCA are now perceived to be wimps. The current Chair of the Feminist and Women's Study Division of SCA was recently quoted as saying that "the reason that so many male members of SCA are perceived to be 'Wimps' is because they are wimps."

In order to deal with the male's serious self-concept problem, Past SCA President Anita Taylor has moved forcefully to the front. She is now running an Assertiveness Training Boot Camp for SCA Male Wimps and Assorted Pansies. Although the boys know that Taylor's rough training techniques border on sexual harassment, they refer to her affectionately in public as "Sarge."

### Time Flight To The Year 2065: SCA'S 150th Anniversary

Now I would like to turn serious for a moment if I may. I want you to prepare to take a flight through time with me forward to the year 2065, the year of SCA's 150th anniversary. Originally, my plan was to have a DeLorean equipped with rocket thrusters sitting out on the mall in front of this hotel this morning. I was going to offer every person who voted against me for SCA President a one-way time flight—back to the Dark Ages. Sadly, I realized after careful thought that I might need a train rather than a car to accommodate a group of that size.

Before we take our time flight to the year 2065 and SCA's 150th anniversary celebration, I think that we should take a brief but candid look at where SCA is now at the end of the year 1992. Let me say that in many respects SCA is a great organization now. Sometimes I think we do not realize how good we have become in an organizational sense. Three years ago I wrote to the members of SCA that "I know that the professionals who make up the membership of SCA are a warm and talented group of diverse individuals." This conviction was reinforced for me during the past year as I traveled widely representing SCA as President.

I have literally traveled to every corner of the United States, to Puerto Rico, Frankfurt, Germany, Moscow and St. Petersburg, Russia, Tallin, Estonia, and Helsinki, Finland. I have traveled by plane, train, boat, ferry, and taxi. Indeed I have flown well over 30,000 miles representing SCA as President.

I have been highly impressed with my fellow officers and with the members of the Administrative Committee who have worked hard and effectively this past year. The major accomplishment is the development of the first Strategic Plan for SCA. Major changes in the management structure of SCA will be made as a result of that plan—and each change is designed to extend the scope and number of membership services provided to SCA members.

My own work as President has focused on the development of a comprehensive domestic and international outreach program. Thus, SCA's new Outreach Department will be charged with making a systematic effort to recruit in substantial numbers students and faculty members who are members of minority groups. The international outreach effort will facilitate cooperative communication research efforts among scholars all over the world. Specifically, the Speech Communication Association will co-sponsor the First International Communication Research Colloquium. As a result of my recent negotiations in the Office of the Dean of the Faculty at Moscow State University there is a good chance that first Communication Research Colloquium will be co-sponsored by Moscow State University and held on the campus of that university in two years. If I can ask one thing of you, it is to read carefully about our new domestic and international outreach efforts (in upcoming issues of *Spectra*) and give SCA's outreach efforts your strong personal support.

Although SCA has great potential and has already accomplished much, SCA and its members are not perfect. Indeed, we must work to correct a set of behaviors and attitudes that are presently exhibited by enough SCA members often enough to imperil the great potential of this organization. One of the most important measures of SCA's greatness in the year 2065 will be how many of these deleterious behaviors and attitudes have been eliminated.

In order to try and focus your attention on what is presently wrong with SCA I am going to spell out for the first time SCA's Bill of Wrongs—I will not try to identify all of SCA's wrongs but the ones I do identify are serious ones that need correction. While I state each "Wrong" in the affirmative form, I want to emphasize that each "wrong" is undesirable and needs to be eliminated.

**Wrong #1: SCA members should be narrowly preoccupied with selfish attempts to put the interests of their own SCA unit (their division or section, for example) before the broader common interests of SCA as a whole.**

To become preoccupied with one's specialized interests within SCA is of course shortsighted. As Carlyle wrote so insightfully, "No man sees far; the most see no farther than their noses." Or to paraphrase Theodore Reik, the small share of happiness attainable by human beings exists only insofar as we are able to cease thinking of ourselves (*Of Love and Lust*, 1957).

How often have we heard someone say, "If SCA does not become more supportive of my division or satisfy my demands immediately, I am quitting"? During the past year, a young member of the Mass Communication Division wrote to me. He said in part "First, I have associated with SCA through the Mass Communication division because my particular interest in the communications discipline is electronic media. As you might imagine, I enthusiastically supported the recent attempt to change SCA into the American Communication Association to correct the impression that SCA elevates 'speech' above other aspects of the discipline . . . I have concluded that the benefits of SCA membership are not substantial enough to warrant my continued affiliation with an organization so dominated by its speech communication and rhetoric constituencies. Accordingly, I will not be renewing my membership in SCA."

In responding to him, I wrote that "When I was a candidate for the office of Second Vice President of SCA, I stressed my commitment to cultivating a sense of inclusiveness rather than exclusiveness in SCA. I believe that a good part of our strength comes from the diversity of our membership. I think I have a responsibility to say, therefore, that we should not be too quick to forget our roots. Without question, the intellectual roots for virtually everyone I know in SCA, including a

Continued on next page



Continued from previous page

high proportion of the members of our mass communication division, come from 'speech' and 'rhetoric' . . . Surely, we should have learned something from our recent history. More than one prominent 'communication scholar' was highly critical of 'speech' and 'rhetoric' in the 60s. In my view such attitudes had a divisive and deleterious impact on the entire field of communication; incidentally, those who directed such unsolicited criticism at their peers in 'rhetoric' have often suffered a significant loss of esteem in the eyes of those scholars to whom the criticism was directed. Indeed, the unpleasant memories of such unseemly criticism by some communication scholars of others in the same field are with us still."

We must stop being primarily concerned with our own narrow interests and think in terms of a larger "vision" of what SCA can become in the year 2065. In the words of William Hazlitt, "a great mind is one that can forget or look beyond itself" ("Commonplaces," *The Round Table*, 1817, p. 67). If we are both to articulate and achieve a larger vision for SCA we must much more frequently ask, "What we can do for SCA as opposed to what SCA can do for us."

**Wrong #2: SCA members should resist, however subtly and covertly, efforts to make SCA a much more culturally-diverse organization.**

Although I am convinced that racism and sexism are rarely manifested by SCA members intentionally or in overt forms, there is a tenacious and conservative attachment by some SCA members to the status quo. This fixation with the status quo has had the effect of making it much more difficult to reach out actively to solicit as members people of different races, gender, nationality, culture, and educational background.

To be sure, I received wonderful cooperation from the vast majority of SCA members in organizing the 1991 convention in Atlanta. On more than one occasion, however, I have found resistance to my proposal to recruit black graduate students for SCA membership, by having SCA officers, staff members, and other SCA representative go to Black campuses and colleges for purposes of recruitment. The response is often, "I am not sure that will work," or "it could be quite difficult," or worst of all "they can be quite difficult."

Oliver Wendell Holmes once observed that a homogeneous organization or "society is always trying in some way to grind us down to a single flat surface." We must actively resist being ground down as an organization into a homogenous mass of WASPs and little else. On the contrary we must work aggressively to make SCA the multi-racial, multi-cultural, multi-national organization it must become if it is to achieve greatness.

**Wrong #3: SCA members should pick out at least several individuals and groups whom they can look down upon and patronize as their perceived inferiors.**

A latent desire has been manifested from the beginning by some SCA members to look down upon other SCA members. It is an historical fact, for example, that the founders of SCA had a highly superior attitude when it came to the elocutionists; they often treated the elocutionists in their midst with ill-concealed contempt.

Boswell once observed that, "There is no being so poor and so contemptible, who does not think there is somebody still poorer, and still more contemptible," (*Life of Samuel Johnson*, February 15, 1766.) Since this is an inimical attitude that seems to be an inherent part of the human condition, it is perhaps not surprising that it has become an SCA problem.

On more than one occasion, for example, I have heard an SCA member who characterized himself or herself as a "scholar" say publicly that clearly scholars have made a disproportionately larger contribution to SCA than any other group. How do you think such a sentiment of superiority—if not outright contempt—makes teachers or practitioners in our midst feel? As Paley (*Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy*, vv. 2, 1786, pp. 5-9) has written, "Who can refute a sneer?"

**Wrong #4: SCA members should remain dogmatically committed to their view that SCA's name must be changed to meet their exact preference or they will simply drop their membership.**

In retrospect, it seems to me that the recent skirmish involving the attempt to change the name of our organization has been strikingly ill-advised and counterproductive. Struggles to change the name of our organization have persisted from the beginning, of course.

My point is *not* that we should never change our name. My point is that the precise name of our organization has little to do with its intrinsic merits or potential for greatness. You all know of course that Shakespeare asked, "What's in a name? That which we call a rose / By any other name would smell as sweet" (*Romeo and Juliet*, 1594-95, 2.2-4.3). Indeed the recent and past struggles over a name change have been pernicious because they have tended to divide rather than unite us.

Let us stop fighting over our name. By the year 2065 we will probably have adopted a simple, unpretentious name such as *The Communication Association*.

**Wrong #5: SCA members should commit themselves irrevocably to the belief that there are conspiratorial forces at work within SCA that seek to frustrate them and prevent them from achieving their personal goals.**

A characteristic feeling of distrust is, in my opinion, one of the most corrosive and destructive feelings that we can allow ourselves to experience. In some cases, conspiratorial feelings and thinking have reached the point of the absurd. For example, I have heard more than one member suggest that conspiratorial forces have been at work recently among members of the Nominating Committee. Preposterous!

I would suggest that such thinking is highly injurious to SCA if not downright irresponsible. Surely, "suspicion begets suspicion" (*Moral Savings*). Henri Amiel (*Journal*, December 26, 1868, tr. Mrs. Humphry Wared) has pinpointed the essence of the problem by observing "He who is too much afraid of being duped has lost the power of being magnanimous."

**Wrong #6: SCA members should develop a narrow, rigid "SCA First and SCA Only" mentality while vehemently opposing international outreach efforts.**

Shakespeare (*As You Like It*, 1599-1600), observed nearly four hundred years ago that, "All the world's a stage." Much more recently Samuel Butler stressed that "The world is a gambling-table so arranged that all who enter the casino must play. . . ." (*Note-books*, 1912).

The world must now become SCA's stage. SCA must become a central player if it is to achieve its potential. With the recent fall of the Iron Curtain there can be little doubt that SCA has unprecedented opportunity for international outreach. Because SCA is the largest and most influential professional communication organization in the world, it should become the central player in international outreach.

Now we should be ready for our flight through time to the year 2065. You realize, of course, that time is the fourth dimension along which human beings may move backward and forward. At this precise moment, I would like to have you join H.G. Wells's Time Traveller (*Seven Science Fiction Novels of H.G. Wells*, 1895) and get into the Time Machine with him. We know that in order to start up the Time Machine, the Time Traveller:

Took the starting lever in one hand and the stopping one in the other, pressed the first, and almost immediately the second. I seemed to reel; I felt a nightmare sensation of falling. For a moment I suspected that my intellect had tricked me. Then I noted the clock. A moment before, as it seemed, it had stood a minute or so past ten; now it was nearly half past three! (Wells, *Seven Science Fiction Novels of H.G. Wells*, 1895, p.15).

As we complete our time trip, we recognize that we have traveled forward to the year 2065; this is the year that SCA will celebrate its 150th Anniversary. What do we find?

The Speech Communication Association has become a multi-racial, multi-ethnic, and multi-national organization that is the envy of many other professional associations with homogeneous memberships which are narrow because of their lack of diversity. Fully 38% of the SCA membership is now comprised of minorities—the large Hispanic

Continued on next page



Continued from previous page

and Black membership in SCA is growing rapidly. Moreover, SCA now has members from over 50 different countries. Membership from Russia alone now exceeds 1200 and the number of members from mainland China is approaching 500.

In fact, the Speech Communication Association has been recognized as the dominant international association for communication professionals for a number of decades (incidentally, the name of the Association was changed to The Communication Association during the first third of the 21st Century). Because of its broad-based international character, The Communication Association now has a branch office that is only minutes away by subway from the Eiffel Tower in Paris, France. The Paris office of our association is concerned most directly with providing a wide array of services for the large membership in northern Europe.

Brian Gaudino, Jr., grandson of former SCA Executive Director Jim Gaudino, is manager of the Paris office. His grandfather Jim Gaudino was a driving force in the spectacular development of our Association in the early part of the 21st century—both because of his unshakable optimism and incomparable interpersonal skills. Jim Gaudino, a consummate salesperson and proponent of the power of positive thinking, is now living in Nome, Alaska where he sells air conditioners to Eskimos.

One of the most important components of the Association's extensive domestic outreach effort is its communication consulting and training division. The Association now has a communication consulting and training office in Chicago, Illinois. This office, housed in the ultramodern training complex of Hilton Hotels, Inc., is located in a Chicago suburb. The Association has signed communication training contracts with over 75 of the top Fortune 500 companies in the United States; it presents training programs 40 weeks of the year. The manager of the Association training complex in Chicago was recently quoted as saying, "I am damn proud that a high percentage of communication training in the United States is now being done by professionals with communication degrees—why back in the last part of the 20th century most communication trainers were psychologists, company managers who tried to train their own employees, and even recycled ministers who predictably sounded like right-wing evangelists.

Finally, the Association has become a leader in reaching out to address real problems of real people beyond the Academy. SCA made no effort to reach out to real world groups and organizations until 1992. At that time, the Administrative Committee of SCA developed a Strategic Plan that focused attention on Outreach for the first time.

In 1992 SCA operated in the large shadow of the American Psychological Association and the American Sociological Association. Well before the 21st century both of these academically-oriented organizations had developed many outreach activities and programs. The American Psychological Association, for example, devoted three of its large Directorates to Outreach. Their Public Interest Directorate alone had an Office on Aids, an Office dealing with Congressional Fellowships, an Ethnic Minority Affairs Office, a Human Welfare Office dealing with social responsibility activities in the areas of children, youth, families, disability issues, and lesbian and gay concerns, and a Women's Programs Office.

You will note that now in the year 2065 our Association has surpassed all other academically-oriented professional associations in its emphasis on outreach. In fact, President Bill Clinton III recently commended the Association on national television for its dedicated efforts to address the problems of underprivileged citizens in all parts of our society.

As time travelers, we will of course spend only a short time with people living in the year 2065. We will soon be returning to our time ship so that we may travel back to the year 1992. We do know, however, that leaders of the Association in the year 2065 will render a judgment on what we tried to start in the year 1992.

Remind yourself one more time of the title of the Presidential Address that Dale Leathers delivered at the SCA convention in 1992: "Back to the Future: SCA Time Capsule." Shortly after that convention

SCA Executive Director Jim Gaudino put Leathers's address and other time-bound SCA artifacts from the year 1992 in a hermetically-sealed time capsule, and buried the capsule in the front lawn of the National Office in Annandale, Virginia. Gaudino left explicit directions for his successor in the National Office in the year 2065 to dig up that time capsule so that its contents can be evaluated by Association leaders who celebrate the 150th convention of SCA in the year 2065.

When Association leaders in the year 2065 look back upon us what will they say? Will the present officers of SCA—Bruce Gronbeck, David Zarefsky, and Dale Leathers—be viewed as simply "old farts" who operated cautiously and unimaginatively under the handicap of an incredibly antiquated communication technology? Or will they be viewed as leaders of some vision who "reached out" boldly to start many of the things that are now an important part of the Association. I, for one, do not have the psychic power to answer that question. I would be extremely pleased, however, if Association leaders in 2065 looked back upon leaders of my generation with at least some of the fondness and respect with which we look back upon the Founders of the Speech Communication Association.

Speaking in 1965 at the Silver Anniversary celebration of SCA, Weaver said:

Time has thinned their ranks. In vain our eyes search the convention crowds for the once familiar faces, and our ears strain to catch the clear voices to which we were wont to listen in other days. It is good for us to pause now and then and commune with the spirits of those who have climbed aloft and with those few who are still with us in the flesh. As we draw upon their strength and wisdom, we assure ourselves that our past will be but prologue to the swelling theme of the future which now beckons us forward. (p. 17).

### References

- McBath, J.H. (1982). James Milner O'Neill (1981-1970). *The Southern Speech Communication Journal*, 47, 108-115.
- McDermott, W.B. (1900, March). "The future as metaphor." *Futures*, 190-202.
- Reid, L. (1982). James A. Winans (1892-1956). *The Southern Speech Communication Journal*, 47, 115-123.
- Reid, L. (1990). *Speech Teacher: A Random Narrative*. Annandale, VA: Speech Communication Association.
- Weaver, A. T. (1989) "Seventeen who made history: The founders of the Association, 13-17 (reprinted from the April 1959 *Quarterly Journal of Speech*) in W.C. Work and R. C. Jeffrey, Eds., *The Past is Prologue: A 75th Anniversary Publication of the Speech Communication Association, 1990*.
- Wells, H.G. (1895) *Seven Science Fiction Novels of H.G. Wells*. New York: Dover Publications.

### Endnotes

1. Alexandre Grandazzi (1990), "The Future of the Past: From the History of Historiography to Historology," *Diogenes*, n.151, 51-74, stresses that the notion of historical truth is mediated by many variables starting with the historical context within which people find themselves. He stresses that we must be sensitive to the impact of selective and sometimes distorted perception on the part of historians. Consider the case of the Sistine Chapel, for example. Grandazzi writes that the "Sistine Chapel that we see today, freed of its layers of smoke and restored to its original colors, is no longer the Sistine Chapel of Stendhal, of Taine or of Berenson. Is it indeed that of Michelangelo? Yes and no, for the important thing is that in the final analysis the painters of the 18th and 19th centuries saw a darkened and smoky Sistine Chapel, believing that in the final analysis the painters of the 18th and 19th centuries saw a darkened and smoky Sistine Chapel, believing that this was the way Michelangelo had intended it, and in turn we today look at the frescoes of the artist of the *Last Judgment* through eyes informed by his successors." (p. 72)

2. Letters of June 16, 1992 from William S. Howell and of July 5, 1992 from Loren Reid provided me with an invaluable sense of historical perspective when studying the founders of the Speech Communication Association and in identifying the distinctive personality traits that helped make the Big Three—O'Neill, Winans and Rarig—strong and effective leaders. Howell writes of Frank Rarig that "in my opinion Frank was much like Robin Williams in 'Dead Poets Society.' What a guy!" Reid reminisced about the time when Frank O'Neill "came to Columbia to give a K.C. talk, I persuaded him to talk to our graduates about the early days of the Association. He held them spellbound."