

# SCCR HISTORY COMMENTS

## Carol R. Ember



I am just going to add a few things to Herb Barry's statement about SCCR's history.

Over the years, there were a number of important controversies that stand out in my mind. One was at the first formal organizational meeting at the University of Pittsburgh. The clear highlight of that meeting was the obvious rivalry between "Pete" (George Peter) Murdock and John Whiting. John was one of Pete's first students and by the time of the first meeting he had already established himself in the field. There were clearly at least two rival alpha males in the room, but Murdock was on his home turf (by then, he had moved to the University of Pittsburgh). Obviously, there were psychological undercurrents, but the ostensible controversy was over the degree of formality that the fledgling organization should have. John Whiting was vehemently opposed to formal bylaws and formal officials. As he saw it, the best meetings were about a bunch of people getting together to have intellectual conversations. His style was to argue vociferously. It seemed obvious that Pete thought that he could best John by offering one of the top jobs in the organization to John's spouse Beatrice Whiting. John wasn't having any of it. In his inimitable style, he said something like: "I don't give a damn who you put up for President; I don't want any officers." Problem for John, my mentor, winning this argument was that the meeting included many people from Pittsburgh, most of whom probably sided with Pete. That helped Pete win the argument! John and Bea still continued to come to SCCR meetings, although Bea did have to stop coming earlier when she became very hard of hearing.

There was one major thing that John Whiting did influence in his favor—the time of the meeting. It was in that first informal meeting in a hotel room. Frankly, I can't remember whether it was our room (the room I shared with my late husband Mel) or Ron Rohner's room—Ron will remember. But I do remember a lot of drinking and smoking (back in the day when smoking was okay!)! And I do remember after the question of when to have the meeting. John said, "Washington's Birthday of course." When asked, "Why have the meeting in the winter?" John said, "My father said that if you make it until Washington's Birthday, you've made it through another winter." And that was that. We've had many attempts to change the date—none of them worked.

But where? The first set of places were all in the North (e.g., Philadelphia, Syracuse, New Haven). After a number of years with constant fear of snowstorms, some of us (we were called derisively "the sun-in-the-fun" crowd") kept pushing to change the venue to sunnier climes. There were those who wanted to stay in the university circuit, but many of those places were cold. This was a recurring debate. It went on for years. It seems to be settled for now—sun seems to be deemed fun!