

PCACAC Living History

Submitted by Audrey Hill, PCACAC President 1990-1991

It All Began...

It All Began in 1982 when I attended my first PCACAC Conference in Canaan Valley, WV. I had been a secondary school counselor for 9 years in the Montgomery County School System (MD) and had never heard of this organization. I knew a little about NACAC because our school system took our students to the National College Fair in Washington, D.C. every year. I had no idea there were regional NACAC associations.

The Conference in Canaan Valley was phenomenal. The workshops, the counselor college fair, the exhibits, meeting folks & yes, the social was quite an experience. The last day I attended the membership meeting. A discussion item came up about discontinuing the College Fair in D.C. I was appalled!!! Much to my surprise, I jumped to my feet and gave a heartfelt speech about why the Fair needed to continue in D.C. I was shocked that I did that! Who did I think "I Was" speaking in front of all these people? After all, I was a newbie & I didn't know anything about this Association. I quietly took my seat and the President suggested that they table this issue until their next Board meeting. At the end of the meeting, several people came up to me and thanked me for that impassioned speech in defense of the D.C. Fair.

Well, three months later, I received a call from PCACAC President, Jim Ballengee, asking if I would be the PCACAC Human Relations Chair. I did not know what that would entail, but I accepted. I felt this would be an opportunity to get other counselors of color and secondary school counselors involved in the Association.

This is where it all began. I served as Human Relations Chair for 3 years, was appointed to the National Human Relations Committee, then became a NACAC Assembly Delegate for 3 years, and then was elected President of PCACAC. What a wonderful journey that was!!!

As PCACAC President-Elect, following the accomplished Marty Wilder (V.P. Mary Washington College, now U. of Mary Washington), I had the opportunity to plan the 25th Anniversary PCACAC Conference. I was so excited because I wanted this to be a "Memorable Extravaganza" for our members and guest. PCACAC has always been so organized and booked the Conference venues 5 years in advance. Knowing the 25th Conference was on the horizon, they booked the Hotel Roanoke five years prior. It was an exclusive 5-star hotel with southern charm. I had never been there but was excited to meet the hotel staff and plan this Conference. I made reservations with the hospitality manager 9 months prior to our conference to come & visit the venue & start the major planning. I invited Rich Edgar (St. Mary's College) and Angelia Allen (Sweetbriar College) from the Conference Planning Committee to go with me. When we arrived at Sweetbriar, we were told that it was announced that day that the Hotel Roanoke would be closing. Much to my surprise, I was shocked. I had just talked to the hospitality manager the day before & she was expecting us. I kept thinking that this must be some mistake. We got to the Hotel Roanoke that evening and they had our complimentary reservations, so I just knew there

had to be a mistake. After we checked into our rooms, Angelia had been to a wedding at another hotel in Roanoke and we went over to look at it. It was a new, gorgeous, Marriott. The Virginia Sheriffs Association were having a dance there that night and we were bold enough to go in the ballroom and dance with them and ask questions about their stay at the hotel.

We made an appointment to meet the Marriott hospitality manager at 9:30am the next morning, because our appointment with the Hotel Roanoke was 8:30am. When we met with the Hotel Roanoke, we were immediately told that they were closing. We told the hospitality manager that we were on our way to the Marriott & she gave us all our paperwork & told us to ask the Marriott if they would honor our prices that were quoted by the Hotel Roanoke. To make a long story short, we had one of the most “Memorable 25th Anniversary Conferences” ever!!! In the history of our Association, I have been the only President to EVER have their conference hotel go out of business!!!

Since It All Began In 1982, I have had a wonderful professional experience. During my 45-year career, I have had tremendous growth as a counselor, worked with some amazing colleagues (on both sides of the desk), served on committees in other national organizations, won local and national awards and to top it off, became the President of the National Association for College Admission Counseling in 1997. It has been a tremendous journey!!!