Patti P. Gillespie, President of the National Communication Association, 1986 and 1987

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My parents, both college educated, lived a very comfortable and very southern life. Although a high school teacher for a time, my mother became a full-time homemaker and clubwoman after my birth. My father ran his own businesses, served on boards of various local banks and savings and loans, and developed subdivisions until he retired (which he did the year I left home to attend Wellesley College). As the only child, I led a life of privilege.

During my high school years, I enjoyed several superb teachers, all women: a ninth-grade English teacher, Miss Mary McCombs, and a tenth-grade history teacher, Miss Polly McClure, were the two most influential. (My godmother, Pat Rosebrook, was equally important to these years: she was the only married woman I knew then who chose not to have children and so was free to work outside the home, to go places and do things, which seemed to me even then a very smart decision.) During these years I was extremely active as a member of the debate team, the chorus, the orchestra, the individual events squad, and the usual run of academic clubs and honoraries. During these years, too, I began some public speaking: I gave sermons on youth ministry days, served as the Story Lady for a local radio station for a year, acted in an occasional play, and gave one of the high school's two commencement addresses. I volunteered at, among other places, the local Girls Club, where I taught acrobatics and dance. I also took a variety of lessons during these years—violin, piano, organ, voice, golf, tennis, riding. When I left Bowling Green, Kentucky, to attend college near Boston, a whole new world opened up, one that was much snowier and more serious than the one I knew. I hated my year at Wellesley because I never managed to get warm and because the men (as we were instructed to call them) from the surrounding Ivy League colleges didn't behave at all like the Southern boys I was accustomed to dating—the college men drank wine rather than bourbon and preferred talking to dancing. What to do? I polished my southern accent and was the belle of Boston for a time, but I eagerly transferred at the end of the first year to the University of Kentucky—back to a more familiar, comfortable world.

The year at Wellesley, however, had done its work; I was committed intellectually. Having been surrounded for the first time in my life by girls and women who took themselves and their work seriously, I must have begun to imagine for myself a life different from those that I saw at home or among family friends. Although I didn't recognize any change in myself at the time, in retrospect it is clear that my single year at Wellesley changed me profoundly.

At the University of Kentucky, I majored in bacteriology, minored in chemistry, and usually found myself the only "girl" in a class of forty or more, taught without exception by male professors. I carried between twenty and twenty-three hours each semester, went to summer school, and finished college in two more years, Phi Beta Kappa, with honors. During college, I was much less active than in high school, mostly because of my overloaded semesters in courses that required three-hour laboratory sections for every hour of lecture. Still, I belonged to a social sorority and water ballet company, and I served as both life guard and canoe guard occasionally.

Although I briefly considered attending medical school, I instead married the summer I graduated from the university, as was then customary. I moved to another small southern town, where no visible career path presented itself. I therefore quickly returned to school at a regional university to secure teaching credentials and, the next year, a master's degree in English, and, the year after, taking advantage of federal dollars loosed by Sputnik, thirty hours above the masters in chemistry education. After teaching beginning chemistry, qual/quan analysis, beginning biology, anatomy and physiology, physics, English 9 and l0 and French I and II (from which the language in Kentucky has never fully recovered), I taught a course in speech and drama (in which I had never had a course of any kind, though I had been active in the local community theatre). My most important qualification for the assignment was that I had a free period at the time that the course was scheduled. I loved teaching this course because it put me in contact with students who didn't take courses like anatomy and physiology or analytical chemistry.

Soon thereafter, I reached the highest professional rank then possible in Kentucky for a high school teacher. At the age of twenty-eight, I didn't think it promising to be already at the top of my profession. I determined to return to graduate school at Indiana University. I drove up one day to investigate financial aid packages in the several departments for which I thought myself competitive (English, comparative literature, bacteriology, chemistry), and I applied, as an afterthought really, to one department for which I was clearly unqualified: the Department of Speech and Drama. I thought how much fun it would in theatre and how dreary it would be in any of the others, and so I went into theatre. As its chair, Jeffrey Auer, explained, "We never penalize a student for seeing the light too late." When I graduated, Jeff Auer also recommended me for my first university teaching position—at the University of Iowa.

During these years, my major influences were all men: there were few (usually no) women in my classes and few (usually none) on the faculty at these three universities. (I didn't notice this peculiarity at the time.) I had two important intellectual and one pivotal professional influence at this time. Bacteriologist Maurice Scherago, at Kentucky, taught me how to set and meet high goals in independent work, and drama theorist Hubert Heffner, at Indiana, taught me that it was much more important to understand than to know. Samuel Becker, whose efforts on my behalf are too numerous to detail, was my first department chair. He was always ready to offer advice (but only when asked) and to show me how to keep a sense of humor, even when there appeared little reason to have one. He also helped me see how universities really worked (as distinct from how they were supposed to work.) Sam Becker was Mentor Extraordinaire, perhaps without even knowing it.

Indeed, I have Sam Becker along with Sears-Roebuck to thank for introducing me to the ideas of feminism. Sam left a stream of articles in my mailbox at the office, articles that asked questions about gender-based salary differences, modes of address, and numerical proportions among faculties within research universities. Sears refused me a credit card in my own name, though they were happy to issue me one in my husband's name. He was unemployed at the time. Before then, I had thought feminists strident, probably paranoid, and perhaps crazy. After all, I can still hear myself saying, I had never been discriminated against.

I left Iowa after four years when offered the kind of position that comes only once in a career: I was invited to become the founding chair of a new department of theatre and speech at the University of South Carolina. Thus began my too-long sojourn in departmental administration, my work with the Association for Communication Administration, and through it my introduction to many persons whom I very much liked and certainly admired: Bob Jeffrey and Bob Hall, Edd

Miller and Jim McGrath, most notably. During these years, too, I added to my membership in SCA and its regionals, memberships in several theatre associations. In all, I began to hold minor offices and to chair several committees. While at South Carolina, too, my personal life underwent a stunning reconfiguration. I left my husband of twenty-plus years, moved in with my current domestic partner (Kenneth Cameron, with whom I have now lived for twenty plus years), bobbed my hair, and had various body parts removed or readjusted.

After nine years I left South Carolina to become chair of the Department of Communication Arts and Theatre at the University of Maryland, a sprawling, underfunded unit comprising three divisions, a faculty of about fifty, a graduate program of about one hundred fifty, and a whopping twelve hundred undergraduates. Soon after I arrived at Maryland, I was asked if I would accept nomination for the second vice presidency of SCA, and I quickly agreed. I had by then served as vice-president of two national theatre associations, chair of the national Women in Theatre Program, a member of the board of directors of John Houseman's The Acting Company, and president of ACA. I had by then as well served SCA as chair of its theatre division; as a member of the legislative council two or three times, both elected and ex officio; on several editorial boards and committees, and as a member and then chair of the finance board, which brought with it membership on the administrative committee. I had also published some textbooks and had articles in the major SCA journals and the ACA journal as well as in various theatre outlets. In truth, I was flattered to be asked to accept nomination for the presidency of SCA, and I thought that I might open a few more doors for women, just as doors had been opened for me. Perhaps as importantly, I liked the people I worked with in the association, and I thought SCA was doing genuinely important work, to which I wanted to contribute whatever I could. I suppose, too, that I sensed (even if I could not articulate) the symbolic importance of having a woman president of this large professional organization: to see a woman leading a professional association suggests that women are an accepted and important part of both the profession and the association.

Probably I was elected because I was seen as someone who would try to open up the leadership in the association and because I was perceived as someone who had worked hard for SCA for several years. Almost certainly I would have been neither nominated nor elected had it not been for the women's movement, which was then at its most vigorous, both inside and outside SCA. That the election was very, very close suggests that many people had reservations about my holding this office, probably because as a theatre person I was far from the intellectual center of the association and perhaps because I was a woman who would assume the presidency mostly because "those feminists," who were beginning to get noisy within SCA, wanted a woman president.

The other candidate was Will Linkugel of the University of Kansas. His research interests were closer to the intellectual center of the association than were mine, and at the time he was doing some very interesting work on women's rhetoric with Karlyn Kohrs Campbell. On the other hand, he was less active within the association and therefore less visible in the professional meetings of the association. I had not known Professor Linkugel before our nominations, but during our visits to the four regional conventions, visits customary at the time, we sat together often, talked, and got acquainted. After the election, we seldom saw one another.

My vice-presidential and presidential years unfolded oddly. When I was second vice-president, the first vice-president died. He was replaced by a highly respected person in the field, one who should have been, but who had never been, president, Wayne Brockriede. He too died unexpectedly. The result was that I served as president starting slightly before the convention in the year that I was first-vice-president and convention planner, serving the rest of that year and

then the following, my own, year. My two presidential years were l986 and l987; I was forty-eight and forty-nine years old. Two other major challenges marked my presidencies: the association was preparing to celebrate its fiftieth anniversary and the association's long-time executive secretary, Bill Work, was preparing to retire. I needed to set in motion the mechanisms to forward both. I think I was much more successful in meeting the second than the first (others following me as president had much better ideas than I for celebrating our fiftieth), but by appointing the committee to search for Bill Work's successor and by naming Anita Taylor chair of that committee, I think I did my very best.

Throughout my vice-presidencies and presidencies, I tried to bring more women and people of color into positions of responsibility and visibility. For example, when I planned the conventions, I appointed co-chairs for all major units, pairing a young and coming woman or minority with an active, senior professional. (Some of these pairings worked better than others, but in at least two instances my sub-rosa mentoring program seems to have born fruit.) Whenever I sat with groups to appoint committees, I tried to assure the presence of underrepresented groups. And I chose as the subject of my presidential address a defense of affirmative action as a tool for increasing diversity.

As should be clear, until well into the l970s, I know almost no academic or professional women. From the time I left Wellesley college through my years at South Carolina, I could count on one hand the number of female faculty with whom I came into contact and, on two, the number of female students with whom I shared classes. The dearth of women was partly because I was in the hard sciences for my undergraduate and one of my graduate degrees and because there was only one other women working on a Ph.D. at Indiana while I was there (and no female faculty). When I joined Iowa's faculty, there were only two women faculty in the department—both in theatre, one a costumer and the other a vocal coach, clearly technicians rather than scholars.

I had just begun to work with women outside my department at Iowa when I moved to South Carolina and again found myself isolated from professional women: I was the only female chair in the college and one of only two or three in the university and so, paraphrasing Yogi Berra, it was déjà vu all over again. I therefore gravitated to SCA as a place to meet and work with other professional women. My first convention was the year of Marie Hochmuth Nichols' presidency: my first feminist action was drafting the resolution to get the convention moved from states that had not ratified the ERA; this action brought me into contact with then president Jane Blakenship and with Anita Taylor, who led the floor fight to get the resolution passed by the legislative council. Both women quickly became my models of strong, thoughtful, and successful academic women.

SCA was also my first scholarly outlet, both through convention papers and publications. My scholarship tracked my faculty career in perhaps predictable ways. Heffner's influence led to a dissertation in dramatic theory and to my earliest articles--in dramatic theory and criticism, published in *QJS*, *CM*, *CSSJ*, and *Educational Theatre Journal*. Although I occasionally returned to such pieces later in my career, most of my subsequent work tracked in three other areas: theatre education, academic administration, and women in theatre.

My assignment of Iowa's course in Drama and Western Culture (an introduction to drama and theatre history) caused me to rethink and experiment with ideas on how to engage students in large lecture courses, the results of which found publication in *CE*. My interest in theatre education continued and led to publications in regional theatre journals, *CM*, *The Journal of Aesthetic Education*, and, most recently, an anthology compiled by two of my former doctoral

students. Soon after publishing a high-school textbook for classes in speech and theatre, co-authored with a colleague from Iowa, I entered administration and began to publish regularly in the *ACA Bulletin*, 1975-l990 or so. Beginning in the mid-70s, my interest in women's issues grew and my scholarship followed. An article on feminist theatres of the l960s and 70s, drawing on Karlyn Campbell's work on women rhetors, was a pioneering work in the field but, published first in *QJS*, which theatre people didn't read, became an important addition to theatre scholarship only after its reprinting in *Women in American Theatre*, an anthology; other articles on women in theatre, drama, and dramatic theory appeared off and on through the 1980s and 90s. Probably because my course assignments in South Carolina comprised mostly courses in theatre's history, I wrote with my partner an upper-level textbook: *Western Theatre: Revolution and Revival*, which used Thomas Kuhn as its theoretical underpinning. A year in Botswana on a Fulbright led to an interest in African theatre and drama, resulting in an article and, more importantly, in a rethinking of the nature of theatre, which caused major changes in parts of *The Enjoyment of Theatre*, an introductory text also co-authored with my partner. These patterns suggest, correctly, that my scholarship, like my life, shifted with my context but that certain questions persisted: how best to educate theatre students, how to guide academic departments, and how to position women in art and culture.

My scholarship has explained parts of my life to myself. For example, as we now know from a large body of feminist scholarship, the category *woman* and the category *leader* are often culturally at odds; that is, in the public mind, traits usually associated with the one often contradict traits usually associated with the other. My sense is that my personal traits locate me closer to the leader than to the woman end of that see-saw. Words like *efficient*, *resolute*, and *goal-directed* describe me better than words like *supportive*, *collaborative*, and *social*. My former husband once offered a telling rejoinder: When told by a member of the departmental faculty at South Carolina that he didn't much like me, my then-husband opined that the faculty member would need to wait his turn at the end of a very long line. I suppose my "management style" is well captured by Max Eastman's description of the actor-director Ida Rauh, who, he said, "lack[s] the yielding and surrounding instinct so notably possessed by water and other liquids." For better or worse, I have lived my life in pursuit of my own goals rather than in pursuit of goals deemed suitable for me by others. That I was free to do so, I now recognize though I did not for some time, came as much from my privileged background and my historical position within the movement for women's rights, as from my own talents and efforts. Because of that realization, I have come to a deep appreciation of the importance of history, especially women's history, and feminism to the lives of all women.