

THE GREAT LAKES CHAPTER

THE FIRST 10 YEARS

At the 1983 Detroit MRA Conference, Audrey Bowen, the current MRA President, challenged the local research community to build a chapter. Len and Jan Homer sent a survey (what else?) to research companies in Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Illinois, and Wisconsin to determine interest.

Thirteen people attended the first meeting which was held in Toledo in May, 1983. Len Homer characterizes the early meetings as "anarchy." In planning each meeting there was always a question as to whether or not it would occur. The by-laws which guided the initial chapter were written in thirty minutes.

The GLC almost became the "Wine Chapter" due to a rather successful wine party held during one of the early meetings. Then wine could have been served at all chapter meetings as part of the ongoing theme. Fortunately clearer heads prevailed and the group opened the requirements to members whose states "touched on water." Filling the bathtub and putting your hand in it was not considered a qualifier.

According to Ron Kornokovich, one of the founders, "The success of the GLC has been predicated on programming." The initial charter was to provide leadership within the research community by blending the inexperienced researchers with the experienced ones through educational conferences. At the time there were still a lot of table-top offices in the research community. Networking among Field Agencies was gaining importance as owners struggled to deal with the nuts and bolts of an industry poised for growth.

One of the most successful early conferences was the "Ethics Seminar" which was held in Columbus in 1984. At this conference, a series of situations were presented and attendees were asked to respond. The situations involved anything that could happen in field. Field agencies, full service companies, and end users were all in attendance. The net result was that open, honest communication occurred between suppliers and clients. What field agencies deemed the most important issues weren't always of critical importance to clients. Attendees left with significantly different outlooks on field issues.

While education and networking are the primary goals of most GLC members, the social events have often created as much interest. Of particular note is a game called Liars Poker which was been played many times on the back of a bus on the way to Scioto Downs. The goal is to "initiate" new members, so be forewarned.

There was also a rather snowy night in Ann Arbor when approximately thirty-five members did Alabama Slammers at Weber's Inn. When drinking these, the goal is to put a napkin on top of your glass and slam it on the table so that it foams before you drink it. The bartender became concerned that a large amount of glassware would be destroyed by this group so he switched them to plastic cups. Three members didn't think things through, slammed their cups, and the drinks exploded on everyone.

River cruises on stormy nights, line dances at Confetti's in Pittsburgh, and hot tubs with everyone fully clothed have all been part of the "social events" organized by the GLC.

From the initial thirteen members, the ranks of the GLC has swelled to 165 members and is still growing. Sixteen states and two Canadian provinces are represented in our membership. The GLC has come a long way since that first meeting in Toledo. HAPPY 10TH ANNIVERSARY!