

Russell Hilf, Ph.D.
Active Member
AACR Member Since 1960

Once upon a time, the annual Meeting of the AACR was convened at the prestigious Edgewater Beach Hotel in Chicago. The Meeting format, like several before and after that were held in Atlantic City, consisted of 3 days, Friday, Saturday and Sunday. The program had 4 simultaneous scientific sessions of slide presentations of research, each, presentation 10 minutes long followed by a 5 minute discussion. There was a Presidential Symposium, "Nuclear Approaches to Neoplasia", one Award lecture, an annual business meeting for members only and an evening reception, Membership had just exceeded 1000 and the Meeting attendance was 1050. That year, 1960, I became an active member, after paying the annual dues of 12, which, of course, included receiving the journal, Cancer Research.

During the next 40 years, I missed attending only 1 annual Meeting. Most notable, as attendance grew, so did the need to seek venues that could accommodate the increasing attendance and presentations. Hence we met (in alphabetical order) in: Atlanta, Boston, Denver, Houston, Los Angeles, New Orleans, Orlando, Philadelphia, San Diego, San Francisco, Toronto and Washington, DC. As one example, in Philadelphia 10 years ago, it was a full 5 day Meeting. There were 4901 posters, 26 Symposia, numerous mini-Symposia and poster discussion sessions, 10 lectures by Awardees and one lecture by the AACR President, one Plenary Session and Meet-the-Expert Sunrise Sessions each morning, along with several educational sessions. And if that did not fill out your day, there were 220 Exhibitors that you could visit in your spare time!

Do I miss those Meetings 50 years ago? Of course I do, along with the level of energy I possessed to attend all of the presentations that I deemed relevant to my research on mammary cancer. What I miss was the ease of opportunity to meet colleagues, old and new, and discuss mutual interests in person - e-mail is no substitute for personal conversations. I heartily agree that the poster format is a boon for presentation of the huge amounts of current cancer research and for the large number of investigators tackling the problems being faced, but it certainly helps to have a postdoctoral Fellow, student or laboratory technician to accompany you so that you can also view the other posters in the same session. We won't return to the Atlantic City format, even though the Boardwalk is still there, the street names remain the same there and on the Monopoly game board, and the ocean air remains delightful (but the James blue and white barrel containing taffy brought home for the kids will be missed). I am grateful that I have those enjoyable memories.

What involvement did I have with the AACR? I co-Chaired 7 presentation sessions and served on the Program Committee 4 times. The last time, 1996, was the most memorable, as I was snowed in for 3 days at the Philadelphia Airport after our meeting was over. My greater involvement was with Cancer Research, starting as a member of the Editorial Advisory Board in 1968 and serving as an Associate Editor until 1977, and after a respite, as an Associate Editor from 1983 to 1994. I served under Editors Mike Shimkin, Sidney Weinhouse, Peter Magee and Carlo Croce. Each successfully

strove to maintain Cancer Research as the premier journal in its field, and each left their own imprint on the journal. It was always delightful to attend the Editorial Board dinner with your fellow Editors, and then a brief report on the number of manuscripts received, the number accepted and the average time elapsed between these two events. And, usually, a reminder to keep after the reviewers to reduce the above interval of these events.

Though the Editors and Associate Editors changed, there was one person who provided continuity throughout. That individual is Marge Foti, who I have known for these past 40 years. No organization could ever hope to have anyone more dedicated to its activities. In fact, my wife Bev and I had the pleasure of attending her ice cream party in celebration of her earning her PhD, and if my memory is correct, it was at the annual Meeting in Washington, DC.