

There are many reasons for individuals to join organizations. There are even more reasons to become actively involved. Following are some reflections written in 2000 about an individual's first foray into active participation with the American Institute of Parliamentarians.

First-Timer's AIP Session Report
by K. Ann McCartney

Even though I joined AIP in 1986, the August 2000 annual session was my first. How could I not attend? Here it was in Seattle, sponsored by Region 1 (the Northwest Region). So, arriving at SeaTac Airport at 4:30 pm, fresh(?) from 18 hours travel after 5 weeks in Russia and Finland, I cleared customs, took the van to the DoubleTree Hotel, and showed up at the opening reception knowing no one there. Yet, from the moment I entered, the place felt entirely different than my usual "academic discipline" meetings where people are cliquish, arrogant, and needing to prove themselves important. Instead I found a welcoming and inclusive group.

Even the warm welcome at the reception did not prepare me for the 8:30 opening on Thursday. First was the entrance of the AIP President James Lochrie preceded by pipers (and bagpipes at 8:30 a.m. will wake up anyone!). After the Call to Order and the Invocation, the Colors were presented by the I Corp Command Color Guard from Fort Lewis, Washington, in full dress uniforms. The Pledge of Allegiance was followed by the singing of the U.S. and Canadian National Anthems. What a dramatic beginning to an excellent conference. The business sessions were well run, the educational sections helpful and well-prepared, the luncheon and dinner speakers were informative and entertaining.

I have never seen a meeting run so well with parliamentary procedure. I was impressed with the skills of the members. One of my hesitations about strict parliamentary procedure in a meeting was that I didn't see how consensus could be built with the formality of the motion process. In the midst of one debate, a member stood up and said, "If we defeat this motion, I am prepared to make a motion that reflects what we have been discussing here." The first motion was defeated, the next motion made, discussed and passed and the wisdom of the group was enacted. And I was pleased to see the appropriate use of the parliamentarian. I could see outsiders saying "why does the AIP session need a parliamentarian, after all, they are all parliamentarians." Yet, President Lochrie used the parliamentarian so that he was free to focus on the facilitation of the meeting. At one point I wanted to ask for information and wasn't sure how to do it and found myself a little intimidated. The person in front of me told me what to do and I made my first contribution to the meeting!

I was also impressed by the handling of the bylaw amendments. By having the open hearing on Thursday evening with a raising on concerns and suggestions for changes in the bylaws, the official action on the amendments during the business meeting on Friday, was effectively and efficiently done.

What struck me most about the AIP Session were the members. This was probably the most diverse group I have ever been a part of (with the possible exception of Scandinavian Fold Dancing). There was an incredible diversity in ages, ethnic background, professional/vocational background, socioeconomic background, regions, experience with parliamentary procedure—a real representation of the best of a democratic society. I am proud to be a member of the American Institute of Parliamentarians.

(K. Ann McCartney has since earned her designation as Certified Parliamentarian, and currently serves as AIP treasurer.)