

## INTRODUCTION

The dream of developing a statewide organization to promote excellence in archives and records management throughout the political subdivisions of the Commonwealth of Virginia had a unique origin. *The Virginia Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators (VAGARA)* was not born in the “Old Dominion” but traced its roots to a locality outside of the continental United States of America.

It was during the autumnal months of 1984 that the Association of Records Managers and Administrators (ARMA) convened its annual meeting in Calgary, Canada. In attendance, albeit not initially aware of each other’s presence, was a trio of Virginia delegates. Each hailed from a different locality in the Commonwealth. There was Mary Chinchello, the Records Manager from Norfolk, who was attending her fourth ARMA annual event. Russell Sheahan, the ever pleasant Records Manager from Henrico County, was the unknowing second member of this unusual triumvirate. Last, but certainly not least, was Robert K. Friedman, the Records Manager representing the historic City of Alexandria, who looked forward to another in a long series of career ARMA meetings.

In recalling that particular conference, Mary expressed some fond memories. It was at a “State/Municipal Government IAC one morning and everyone was introducing themselves.” Those of us who know Mary concur that one of the signs of her individuality is the spontaneous manner in which she meets and greets people. This event proved no different since Mary seized the opportunity to meet with both colleagues on domestic records management issues. Little did she realize, at the time, that this meeting would have both personal and professional future impact on others in the field. Our Norfolk colleague noted in passing that Bob would not only become “her mentor” but the acknowledged catalyst behind the development and implementation of VAGARA!

During this introductory session Bob suggested that they remain in contact with each other after their Calgary departure. Moreover, it was also during this amicable encounter that the idea of creating an “organization similar to ARMA at the state/local level” was discussed. A discussion, which was transmitted to other professionals in Virginia, and resulted in the formation of a bona fide association. This trio, or the “Calgary Three”, committed themselves to a “let’s do it” proactive campaign in order to stimulate interest throughout the localities thereby “charting a course” for the establishment of such an organization.

So true, yet so ironic, that delegates from such diverse locations as an historic Northern Virginia municipality, a Tidewater port city, and a midland County joined forces to give VAGARA its first breath of life!