

**AN  
ALCOHOLICS  
ANONYMOUS  
HISTORY  
IN  
NORTHERN  
ILLINOIS  
AREA 20**

Published by Northern Illinois Area 20,  
Summer 1996.

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## PREFACE TO THE FIRST ISSUE

A tapestry has thousands of threads, individually woven into a compelling image. Our living tapestry, the history of the groups in Northern Illinois Delegate Area 20, is an unfinished work, beautifully woven in the unity taught us through our Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, and Twelve Concepts.

This monograph, *An Alcoholics Anonymous History In Northern Illinois Area 20*, spans over fifty-six years from 1939 through 1995, having its first distribution to the Fellowship in 1996. *A Brief History of NIA*, prepared at the request of the NIA Assembly in 1987, has served as one source.

Footnotes will direct the reader to sources worthy of further study. Every effort has been made to remain as factual as possible. Important acknowledgment is given to the A.A. Archives of Northern Illinois Area 20, Chicago Area 19, and the A.A. Archives at the General Service Office. The effort of those who assembled and maintain A.A. Archives in NIA has provided the example for my motivation to complete this project. The support of the NIA Assembly and the encouragement of the Archivist at the General Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous have provided the incentive for my work.

A.A. history is not necessarily the repeated process of "reinventing the wheel." It is the accurate account of success and failure that begins with our effort to carry the message of recovery to other alcoholics. **It continues with our attempt to pass along the methods of how we carry our message.** Over the years this effort has both preserved and strengthened our Three Legacies of Recovery, Unity, and Service.

Personal anonymity protection of the members of Alcoholics Anonymous, whether alive or dead, is maintained throughout this work. Contacting families of past trusted servants presents a very difficult task. At this level of press, our history may be viewed by persons who are not members of the Fellowship.

Our Alcoholics Anonymous history, the living tapestry I refer to, will always have its critics, its appreciative audience, and the leaders who will learn from its study. Its image changes and grows as we act upon the Legacies entrusted to us. This chronicle attempts to preserve the heritage of love and service given to our Fellowship in northern Illinois.

*AN ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS HISTORY IN NORTHERN ILLINOIS AREA 20 IS DEDICATED TO THE LEADERS AND TRUSTED SERVANTS WHO HAVE BECOME A PART OF OUR HISTORY.*

BEYOND ITS LINKAGE TO OUR PAST, THIS HISTORY IS DEDICATED TO THE FUTURE LEADERS AND TRUSTED SERVANTS OF ALCOHOLICS. ANONYMOUS.

Northern Illinois Area 20 Historian.  
January 1996

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## FROM CHAPTERS TO SECTIONS

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The message of recovery in Alcoholics Anonymous had slowly begun to spread across the United States in 1939. At that time, the largest groups holding meetings were located in New York and Ohio. The New York City, Akron, and Cleveland chapters were growing well enough in numbers for the meetings to relocate out of members' homes into more public meeting rooms. Sporadic newspaper coverage, word-of-mouth, and the efforts of early members in "finding and fixing drunks" brought recovery to more than one hundred men and women.

The book *Alcoholics Anonymous* was published in April of that year, but inquiries to the small office of the Alcoholic Foundation<sup>1</sup> in New York City were scarce. These first hundred men and women, with the aid of the new *Big Book*, continued to apply their personal approaches to attracting active drunks toward recovery. The message of *Alcoholics Anonymous* was primarily carried from one person to another.

In September 1939 *Liberty*, a weekly magazine with a nationwide distribution, published a feature article on Alcoholics Anonymous called "Alcoholics and God." It referred to the new book and recommended its readers to "get hold of a copy. It may very well help you guide a sick man---an allergic alcoholic---on the way to health and contentment."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Alcoholic Foundation, formed in May 1938 to meet in New York, consisted of three non-alcoholics and two alcoholics. Renamed in 1955 as the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous, the Alcoholic Foundation was the original Board of Trustees. Refer to A.A. Comes of Age, pages 14-16 and 151-157. The book is available from Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. (catalog number B-3)

<sup>2</sup> *Liberty* magazine, September 30, 1939, page 7.

A linkage to the medical profession was achieved within months of the book's first printing, through a published review of our *Big Book* by a nationally respected theologian and health writer, Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick. Doctor referrals would bring more alcoholics into our young Fellowship.<sup>3</sup>

The *Big Book* was not an overnight best seller, but all written inquiries received a personal answer from the staff at the Alcoholic Foundation office. While the existing groups of Alcoholics Anonymous in the different parts of the United States were initially called "chapters" by the New York office, the message of recovery circulated and additional small chapters formed. The Chicago chapter began holding meetings once a week at an Evanston, Illinois apartment in September of 1939, and a downtown Chicago meeting for A.As and their families was added in October. This Open A.A. meeting, the Tuesday night "Big" meeting, grew in attendance.

Alcoholics Anonymous had come to Illinois.

Another magazine with an even larger circulation than *Liberty*, the *Saturday Evening Post*, published a feature article about A.A. in March 1941. The Jack Alexander piece "Alcoholics Anonymous" (available today in Conference- approved pamphlet form) quickened the pace of attraction to A.A. recovery. When the *Post* printed the address of the Alcoholic Foundation, thousands of inquiries flooded the office, and its still small staff personally answered each letter.

The Chicago chapter opened the Central Service Office in

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<sup>3</sup> Page 307 in the *Big Book*, Third Edition, describes the attraction of Sylvia K. of Evanston, Illinois to A.A. recovery through her doctor, in the story "The Keys to the Kingdom." Also on page 295, Earl T., Chicago's first A.A. member, describes the assistance of the same doctor in the story "He Sold Himself Short." From *First 17 Members Who Sobered Up In The Chicago Area*, two pages. Source: Chicago Area Archives

May 1941. It was the first Intergroup office anywhere in Alcoholics Anonymous, and assisted locally with the deluge of inquiries resulting from the *Post* article. During the spring of 1941, the Open Tuesday nith “Big” meeting grew to over 250 persons attending each week and the home telephones of the Chicago “founders” were kept very busy. The Central Office, with its published telephone number, met the growing requests for information.

Alcoholics Anonymous had become an authentic national institution after the magazine coverage, and across the United States the membership grew from 2,000 to an estimated 8,000 members by the end of the year. The Chicago office answered all inquiries and developed “districts: and groups for closed meetings, just as the New York office of the Alcoholic Foundation would refer the suffering alcoholic to the nearest location for an A.A. meeting.

Personal response and encouragement continued from the small office of the Alcoholic Foundation. For example, a 1941 letter from Ruth Hock, the secretary at the New York office, was written to a woman in Springfield, Illinois, telling her of the nearest meetings in St. Louis, Missouri. It offered the woman encouragement and requested her continued correspondence.<sup>4</sup>

The Alcoholic Foundation office handled an enormous amount of mail and sold many copies of the *Big Book* following the 1941 *Post* article. Over the next eleven years, Jack Alexander wrote additional features about Alcoholics Anonymous for the magazine. His announcements of recovery in Alcoholics Anonymous sustained the watershed of attraction that the March 1941 issue brought to the young fellowship.

The Chicago Chapter found that its Central Office opening of 1941 would also help meet the requests and need for public

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<sup>4</sup> Letter located in the Northern Illinois Area Archives

information outreach. The Chicago office, with the substantial efforts of its first secretary, Grace Cultice, became a welcome assistance to the Alcoholic Foundation office in carrying the A.A. messenger of recovery. It fielded many of the calls for general information, referred individuals to local hospitals for detox treatment, and sent out A.A. volunteers to call on people who requested help. The Central Office developed a set of ten city Districts within a short time, and many of its methods established an example that other central offices would follow. Meanwhile, each Tuesday night at the Central YMCA in downtown Chicago, the "Big" meeting continued to attract both the curious and the serious.

One small group of "regulars" attending the Chicago meeting returned to their homes in Whiteside County (bordering on the Mississippi River) each week. In 1943 there were enough members to form a local group, and meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous began, in the town of Sterling with a membership of three. In northern Illinois, the Sterling Group is the earliest recorded group to meet outside Chicago. Today it continues to meet each Tuesday night

The Alcoholic Foundation published United States Directories every six months during the 1940s. The format of the Directories has changed over the last fifty-five years, with the latest change taking place in 1994 (yearly group contributions are no longer published). The 1994 Directories state that the "information reflects that as provided to the General Service Office." The 1941-1951 Directories also listed only the information provided to the Alcoholic Foundation: the number of members in each group, the group contribution amounts, a secretary or contact name, and a postal address (more often than telephone numbers). Each printing was emphasized as "A.A. confidential."

The personal approach continued in the reporting of Alcoholic Foundation meetings, literature news, financial reports, and items of interest. The first A.A. newsletter<sup>5</sup> was sent to all the chapters and groups in the different sections of the United States, and was written by Ruth Hock, Alcoholic Foundation Secretary. The *Bulletin* format developed into the A.A. World Services newsletter *Box 4-5-9*.

Beginning the 1941 Directory, the Chicago chapter of groups was listed with an estimated 450 members, and was the only recorded site of A.A. meetings in Illinois. Each six month listing of chapters and groups showed the rapid growth of Alcoholics Anonymous in Illinois as well as across the United States. The 1940s' Directories emphasized the "A.A. confidential" policy still in use today.

The reader should realize that each group's listing was most likely published a few months after the start of its meetings. The first examples of the Sterling Group (begun in winter 1943) and the Rockford chapter were included in the 1943 Directory's publishing date of June 1943, after the Alcoholic Foundation was notified of their meetings in the northern section of Illinois. The complete set of 1941-1951 semi-annual Directories, the *Listing of A.A. Groups with the Alcoholic Foundation*, can be found in the NIA Archives.

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<sup>5</sup> A.A. *Bulletin* #1, 11/14/1940, two pages, located in the NIA Archives.

*LISTING OF AA GROUPS WITH THE ALCOHOLIC  
FOUNDATION*

Under the Illinois section, edited for the northern part of Illinois  
(except where noted).  
ACROSS THE UNITED STATES IN 1940: 59 groups,  
1,400 members.

1943 \_\_\_\_\_

Chicago (presently Area 19), P.O. Box 1047, 600 members.  
Rockford, secretary listed, 4 members.  
Sterling, secretary listed, 3 members.  
Peoria (presently in Area 21), P.O. Box 26, 17 members.

1944 \_\_\_\_\_

Peoria, with two groups, 23 members.  
Springfield (presently in Area 21), P.O. Box 883,  
25 members.  
Villa Park, Brandywine Group, the first meeting in  
DuPage county.<sup>6</sup>

1945 \_\_\_\_\_

Chicago, with 1,250 members.  
Peoria, with 40 members.  
Rockford, with 12 members.  
Sterling, with 4 members.  
Note: Telephone numbers were first listed for each 1945 contact.

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<sup>6</sup> Information provided by District 41 Archives.

*LISTING OF AA GROUPS WITH THE ALCOHOLIC  
FOUNDATION*

ACROSS THE UNITED STATES IN 1945: 556 groups,  
12,986 members.

1946

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Fox River Valley Groups, secretaries listed.

Aurora, 20 members.

Crystal Lake, 25 members.

Elgin, 25 members.

Peoria, three groups, 64 members.

Rockford, 20 members.

Waukegan, Group B, P.O. Box 624, 25 members.

1947

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Aurora, P.O. Box 654, 25 members.

Chicago, 2,800 members.

Elmhurst, Group 15-C, 30 members.<sup>7</sup>

Glen Ellyn, Glenbard Group, 20 members.<sup>7</sup>

St. Charles, Firehouse Group, P.O. Box 469, 17 members.

Springfield, 65 members.

Villa Park, 20 members.<sup>7</sup>

Note: Group registration numbers were first used in 1947.

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<sup>7</sup> Information provided by District 41 Archives

*LISTING OF AA GROUPS WITH THE ALCOHOLIC  
FOUNDATION*

1948 \_\_\_\_\_

Aurora, 50 members.

Barrington (Fox River Valley Groups), secretary listed,  
12 members.

Batavia (Fox River Valley Groups), P.O. Box 267, 8 members.

Joliet, Steel City Group, P.O. Box 1102, 15 members.

Moline, P.O. Box 311, 13 members.

Mt. Morris/ Oregon, Ridge Runners Group, P.O. Box 144,  
8 members.

Ottawa, P.O. Box 657, 13 members.

Rockford, P.O. Box 183, 35 members.

Rock Island, P.O. Box 219, 40 members.

Sterling, P.O. Box 15, 12 members.

Wauconda, later called the Burton's Bridge Group.<sup>8</sup>

Woodstock, secretary listed, 8 members.

1949 \_\_\_\_\_

Barrington, P.O. Box 221, 17 members.

DeKalb, secretary listed, 5 members.

Freeport, the 48 Club Group, P.O. Box 377, 12 members.

Galesburg, secretary listed, 21 members.

Kankakee, Valley Group, secretary listed, 5 members.

McHenry, P.O. Box 216, 5 members.

Sterling, 15 members.

Waukegan, Group A, secretary listed, 28 members.

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<sup>8</sup> Information proved by District 11 Archives

*LISTING OF AA GROUPS WITH THE ALCOHOLIC  
FOUNDATION*

1950 \_\_\_\_\_

Batavia, two groups: Depot Group, P.O. Box 267, and the  
Batavia Group, secretary listed.

Cary, P.O. Box 207, 7 members.

Chicago, 4,300 members.

Dixon, P.O. Box 59, 16 members.

Elgin, two groups: Group #1, secretary listed, and the

Alano Club of the Fox Valley, P.O. Box 272, 17 members.

Freeport, the 48 Club Group, 11 members.

Kankakee, 12 members.

Mt. Morris, Ridge Runners Group, 18 members.

Ottawa, 25 members.

Rockford, three groups, all P.O. Box 183:

1) Central Group, Alano Club of Rockford, 70 members.

2) Blackhawk Group, 25 members.

3) West Side Group, 15 members.

Round Lake, P.O. Box 245, 14 members.

ACROSS THE UNITED STATES IN 1950: 6,249 groups,  
96,475 members.

1950 proved to be a milepost year for Alcoholics Anonymous. The first A.A. International Convention was held in July at Cleveland, Ohio, Dr. Bob S., whose cancer would take his life a few months later, gave a brief memorable address to the 3,000 persons attending the Convention. He and Bill W. shared the podium for the last time on Sunday, July 30.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> "Voices of Our Co-Founders" audiocassette, available from the General Service Office Archives, 475 Riverside Drive, New York, NY 10115.

The 1950 Convention unanimously endorsed A.A.'s Twelve Traditions. Earl T., Chicago A.A.'s first member, is credited with suggesting the current "short form" of our Second Legacy, and both versions were presented at Cleveland. The 1946 issues of the A.A. Grapevine published the complete "long form," and the Traditions were generally understood and accepted by the Fellowship long before 1950. Bill later wrote that a highlight of the First International was "the confirmation of our Twelve Traditions by the Convention as the permanent platform of unity on which our Fellowship would henceforth stand."<sup>10</sup>

The proposed General Service Conference was brought for open discussion to A.A. groups in 1950. Its proposal tested the idea that the development of a World Service Conference would provide linkage between the Trustees of the Alcoholic Foundation and elected representatives from the A.A. sections of the United States and Canada. The Trustees at "Headquarters" gave their support for the Conference idea that year, after considerable presentations from Bill during the preceding four years. Until then, only Bill, Dr. Bob, and the non-alcoholic Trustees of the Alcoholic Foundation had sole authority over the world service functions of the Fellowship.

Bill's concern was wisely steered by the growing consensus of the groups that a direct access to our service affairs was needed. His last meeting with Dr. Bob produced their agreement to call the Conference. For the good of A.A. as a whole, their agreement ultimately made certain that A.A. members could share the responsibility for world services with the Trustees of the Alcoholic Foundation (renamed the General Service Board in 1955). The 96,475 estimated A.A. membership of 1950 would have a voice and a vote in the five-year trial run of a General Service

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<sup>10</sup> A.A. *Comes of Age*, 1957, Chapter II "The Three Legacies of Alcoholics Anonymous" page 213, reprinted with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.

Conference. The groups of 1951, including those in Northern Illinois, certainly were active participants in reaching a consensus of 'yes.'

The conclusion of the list of groups registered with the Alcoholic Foundation follows, edited from the 1951 Directory that shows the size of the northern Illinois section's groups. These groups, members of the Downstate A.A. Conference, helped elect the first Delegate representing Northern Illinois for service on the second Panel at the 1952 General Service Conference.

*LISTING OF AA GROUPS WITH THE ALCOHOLIC  
FOUNDATION*

1951

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Aurora, three groups: 1) Group #1, P.O. Box 246,  
35 members. 2) Downtown Group, secretary listed,  
5 members. 3) Tower Group, secretary listed, 6 members.  
Barrington, 20 members.  
Batavia, 10 members.  
Cary, 14 members.  
Crystal Lake, secretary listed, no numbers reported.  
DeKalb, 15 members.  
Dixon, 16 members.  
Elgin, Group #1, 12 members.  
Freeport, the 48 Club, 13 members.  
Joliet, two groups with P.O. Box, 1102: 1) Steel City Group,  
5 members. 2) Group name unknown, 15 members.  
Kankakee, K.K.K. Group (Kankakee "Kountty Kourthouse")  
P.O. Box 85, 16 members.  
Loves Park (Rockford), secretary listed, 8 members.  
Mattoon, P.O. Box 284, 10 members.  
Moline, Alano Group, P.O. Box 311, 30 members.

*LISTING OF AA GROUPS WITH THE ALCOHOLIC  
FOUNDATION*

1951\_(continued)

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Monmouth, P.O. Box 50, 9 members.

Mt. Morris, Ridge Runners Group, 18 members.

North Chicago, Great Lakes (Naval Station) Tuesday Night  
Group, secretary listed, 12 members.

Ottawa, 20 members.

Princeton, the Princeton Group, no numbers reported.

Rockford, the Rockford Alano Club, 80 members.

Rock Island, 30 members.

Round Lake, 28 members.

St. Charles, Firehouse Group, no numbers reported.

Sterling, 12 members.

Waukegan, four groups: 1) Monday Night Group, secretary  
listed, 10 members. 2) Wednesday Night Group,  
P.O. Box 624, 12 members. 3) Friday Night Group,  
secretary listed, 10 members. 4) Saturday Night Group,  
secretary listed, 28 members.

Woodstock, secretary listed, 9 members.

Comparisons to previous years of reporting and registration  
with the Alcoholic Foundation office can be made with these  
alphabetical listings. 1951 accuracy was as precise as the General  
Service Office reporting of today, when it relies on the  
information it is given. Also included for Illinois in the 1951  
Directory:

Chicago (presently Area 19), 123 W. Madison Street, listed  
with 4,900 members. The same telephone number is used  
today (with area code 312). Longtimers will recall  
dialing FI-nancial 6-1475.

Having outgrown four sites in the Loop, the Tuesday night  
"Big" Meeting was decentralized, and the Opens were held

in four Chicago locations every Tuesday beginning in 1950.<sup>11</sup> Once each year, Chicago celebrates its September 1939 beginnings with the All Chicago Open, drawing an estimated 14,000 persons in the 1990s.

Peoria (presently Area 21 ), two groups with different P.O. Box numbers, 90 members.

Springfield (presently Area 21) grew from the effort of one sober member in 1941. Ward M. was an A.A. Loner for two years, much like Earl T. in Chicago. Springfield meetings began in 1943 and soon supported a Clubhouse for regular closed A.A. meetings. In 1951 Springfield listed three groups, two P.O. Box numbers, and 150 members.<sup>12</sup>

The Post Office Box numbers were used as the primary source for contacting Alcoholics Anonymous in the 1940s. Most groups held meetings once per week, and after group finances became stronger, some opted for small announcements in local newspapers.

Letters requesting help were written directly to the P.O. Boxes when they were available to the general public. Many times, the spouses of active drunks would be the initial writers. Every letter would be followed through, in person, by one or two of the group's members.

The correspondence from the Alcoholi Foundation kept abreast of these same P.O. Box numbers for passing on information, referrals, literature, and donation receipts from the New York office. There were no membership surveys<sup>13</sup> to

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<sup>11</sup> *Chicago A.A. Lanmarks 1937-1959*, two pages. Source: Chicgo Area Archives

<sup>12</sup> *History of A.A. in Springfield, Illinois, 1979*, four pages. Source: Southern Illinois Area Archives, with copies locate in the NIA Archives.

<sup>13</sup> The first general A.A. Membership Survey began in 1970 through the effort of General Service Board Chairman Dr. Jack Norris and the General Service Conference.

describe the makeup of groups, and only the totals of membership were reported by the group secretaries. The reader can view the steady memberships of certain groups as well as the rapid growth of others.

The P.O. Boxes preceded the local A.A. answering services of today. However, from its beginning in 1941, the Chicago Central Office employed its telephone number for large amounts of Twelfth Step calls. Both the Chicago and New York offices used the few telephone numbers that group secretaries allowed to be published in the Directories. If there was no telephone contact, the Post Office Box received the requests for help.

Returning to the record of the earliest groups in northern Illinois, the histories of the Sterling Group and Rockford chapter reflect two distinct ways that many groups and A.A. chapters began.

The secretary and "founder" of the Sterling Group, Ken S., sobered up in Chicago in 1940 and moved to Sterling, a Whiteside County steel mill town in northwestern Illinois. For three years, he traveled the distance between Sterling and Chicago to attend meetings on a regular basis, had the opportunity to place new prospects in Chicago hospitals for detox treatment, and brought other alcoholics he found in the Sterling area to Chicago meetings.

The Tuesday night meetings of the Sterling Group began in Ken S.'s home in 1943. Coffee, cake, and light games of cards usually followed the A.A. meeting, and families were included on many occasions. No regular collection was taken but individual members contributed to the group when needed. The number of members reported to the New York office in winter 1943 was three. These three A.A. members welcomed other recovering alcoholics from the towns of Tampico, Harmon, Morrison, and Dixon. An early member, Ray N. of Sterling, recalled that

growth at the Sterling Group branched off into new groups in Dixon, Clinton (Iowa), Kewanee and Mt. Morris.<sup>14</sup>

Post Office Box 15 was rented in Rock Falls for the Sterling Group by another member in 1948, when the group had grown to twelve regular members.<sup>15</sup> In an earlier letter from Ken S. to the Chicago Central Office in July 1947, sent to its secretary to update contact addresses and group membership numbers, he wrote: "As to 'losing interest' in A.A. after being given almost seven years of sobriety---that is something I cannot picture."<sup>16</sup>

The members of Alcoholics Anonymous in Northern Illinois Area can consider Ken S. of Sterling as one of our earliest sober, members. His example begins with selflessly carrying the message of A.A. recovery to others. His early service in maintaining the Sterling Group's linkage with the rest of A.A. as a whole contributed a large amount to the growth of Alcoholics Anonymous in northwestern Illinois.

Southwest of Sterling, the Quad Cities welcomed the A.A. message of recovery in 1945. The Davenport, Iowa chapter was "soon joined by interested problem drinkers from Moline and Rock Island. In about 1948, small groups started meetings at the LeClaire Hotel in Moline and the Fort Armstrong Hotel in Rock Island ... the Rock Island group held meetings at their Fort Armstrong location from 1949 until 1972."<sup>17</sup>

The growth across the Mississippi River reflects, the casual

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<sup>14</sup> 1982 recollection letter. The history of the Sterling Group has been placed in the NIA Archives from the 1995 research for the NIA History project, through the response of the District 73 Archivist (and past NIA Historian).

<sup>15</sup> *The Listing of A.A. Groups with the Alcoholic Foundation*, February 1948 entry.

<sup>16</sup> Letter of July 17, 1947 Sterling Group history, located in NIA Archives.

<sup>17</sup> "Then and Now" from 1992 issue of *ILLOWA Messenger*, the newsletter of the Moline Intergroup. From research by the NIA Historian, the 1948 start is a correction from the 1949 date printed in the article.

term of the "A.A. chapter" where one location branched out into neighboring towns. The groups of Moline and Rock Island participate in NIA District 91 today, but some share an original linkage with Alcoholics Anonymous in Iowa. The earlier example of new groups formed from the Sterling Group's growth also shows how the A.A. message traveled to outlying sections of northwestern Illinois.

The "Fox River Valley Groups" 1946 listing with the Alcoholic Foundation was first linked with Chicago A.A., grouped into a section by the Chicago Central Office. The "sectioning" of the 1940s' meetings in Aurora, St., Charles, Batavia, Elgin, Crystal Lake, and Barrington began as an aid for geographic location. The section retains its informal listing today with Chicago Area 19 as District 10, continued since 1950 as the "Northwest Suburban Districts." While no elected representatives have served with the Chicago Area Service Committee (the Area 19 Assemblies) since the early 1980s, group members are welcome to attend CASC meetings as visitors. The groups in Districts 11, 21, 22, 23, 28, 60, 61, 62, 63, and 64 fully participate in Northern Illinois Area 20 Assemblies.

Confusingly over many years but with an historical accuracy, the section considered as District 10 by Chicago was identified as part of District 2 in the 1960 map drawn by the Downstate Illinois A.A. Conference. A surviving remnant of the District 10 designation is found in the name of NIA's District 22 (Elgin and northern Kane County) checking account; N.W.S.A.A.S.G., the "Northwest Suburban Alcoholics Anonymous Service Groups." Following at least a half dozen redistrictings through 1992, the successive Districts formed out of the original section continue their proper representation in Area 20.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Information found in records and minutes located in the A.A. Archives of both NIA and the Chicago Area.

The beginning of Alcoholics Anonymous in the city of Rockford followed a repeated pattern of rapid growth experienced by many 1940s' urban chapters. Starting with four members in 1943, Rockford's A.A. membership grew to over eighty by 1951.

Letters requesting help arrived at the Alcoholic Foundation in 1942, written by Rockford "founder" Ray E. and his wife, Arlene. He found an article about Alcoholics Anonymous in the weekly magazine *Liberty* and (unlike the first press coverage the magazine gave the Fellowship in 1939) it provided the address of the New York office.

The reply gave Ray the name and location of an A.A. group in Chicago, where he began to attend meetings and found a sponsor. At that time, "prospects" who came into Alcoholics Anonymous were directed to closed beginner's meetings for their first three months, and were gradually encouraged to attend the larger, more established Chicago groups. Ray and Arlene also traveled by train to attend many open A.A. Tuesday night "Big" meetings.

Ray's sponsor, Charlie R., was employed as a mailman on a train line that ran from Chicago to Dubuque, Iowa. He stayed overnight in Rockford many times during the freight line's runs, where the opportunity to carry the A.A. message of recovery was good. Both men remained sober, Ray's family life improved greatly, and Charlie ("Randy") later moved to Rockford from Chicago. Ray was listed as the Rockford chapter's secretary and contact in the Alcoholic Foundation Directories from 1943 through 1947, and he greatly assisted in the growth of Rockford A.A. groups.

Another "prospect" Bob M. was introduced to Ray in late 1942 by the Rockford Salvation Army, and Ray and Arlene took him into their home. As the result of a life filled with hardship, alcohol, and jail time, his only possessions were a sweater full of holes and one crutch. (Bob had one leg). Ray became his A.A.

sponsor. Bob later was listed as the Rockford chapter's secretary and contact in 1947.

Meetings first began in Ray and Arlene's home and soon branched out into two Rockford hotels, the administration building of a local housing project, and other members' homes. On Wednesday nights an Open meeting was held in one of the hotels that brought members and their families from both the east and west sides of the city. Small A.A. social gatherings were held every Saturday night at the Rockford Labor Temple.

In the recollection of Gordy C., still an active A.A. member, 1940s' Rockford meetings and Saturday night Socials were well attended by both men and women, but women usually got together on one side of the room while men stayed on the other. In an amusing anecdote, Gordy C. recalls that "someone came in one time and wanted to know if it was a Quaker meeting."<sup>19</sup>

Service to the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous was provided by each group's secretary in the initial effort to establish contact and correspondence with the Alcoholic Foundation. The 1940s' groups' voice was determined only by individual correspondence and most letters described activities, problems, and successes with the reported members in each group. The service structure at the group level remained very loosely organized and was basically undefined. Whether elected, approved, or volunteered, the secretaries were the groups' first trusted servants. In the northern section of Illinois, the Directory listings of A.A. contacts for chapters and groups positioned a network for communication with both the offices of the Alcoholic Foundation in New York and the Central Service Office in Chicago.

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<sup>19</sup> Information provided by NIA District 70 members assembling an A.A. Archives for Rockford.

The correspondence remained mutual. The linkage between groups and an A.A. "headquarters" was not diminished when many groups established P.O. boxes and began printing announcements of meetings in local newspapers. As the group's membership increased, the opportunity for A.A. service expanded. Group secretaries kept the records while service positions developed for a group's treasurer, chairperson, greeters, and by the 1950's, the Group Representative (today's General Service Representative.)

A.A. members from different groups would gather informally and discuss current news, compare outreach strategies, and most always would find a common ground. The *A.A. Grapevine* success from its beginning in 1944 is considered a proven result of the groups' "sense" of participating in Alcoholics Anonymous. The *A.A. Grapevine* emphasized group membership as a very important part of the whole Fellowship.

The 1946 *A.A. Grapevine* publishing of the Twelve Traditions provided a climate for active group discussions. Establishing too many rules and requirements would limit the growth of our young Fellowship, and the "Twelve Points to Assure Our Future" 'wisely focused on the A.A. membership experience as the result of ideas that worked well. The suggestions about simple membership, decision-making, non-affiliation, non-professionalism, the dangers of publicity, the need to rely on member contributions only, and the highlight of spiritual principles overriding any one member's personality all proved to explain "how and why" the Fellowship could survive.

The A.A. groups gradually endorsed and adopted the Traditions as the Fellowship's working expression of unity. Where the A.A. Twelve Steps placed many drunks in recovery, the A.A. Twelve Traditions brought the groups out of a separated existence into a larger community that bridged all borders.

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## THE DELEGATES TO THE GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE

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Bill W. shipped over 50,000 copies of a new pamphlet called *Your Third Legacy* to the registered groups of the Fellowship in the winter of 1950-1951, and the 3500-plus groups were requested to hold assemblies in their sections, newly designated as Areas. These Area Assemblies elected the Delegates to the 1951 General Service Conference.

Each state and Province in the United States and Canada was to have at least one Delegate and Alternate Delegate per Area, and more than one Area would be planned for higher populated states with larger numbers of groups.

Illinois was sectioned into three Delegate Areas in 1950 and the two-year term of service and rotation corresponded to each Area's odd or even number. This procedure has not changed over the last forty-six Conferences, with odd-numbered Areas electing Delegates to begin service terms in the odd-numbered years and even-numbered Areas electing Delegates to begin service in even-numbered years.

Illinois began its representation at the 1951 General Service Conference with two Delegates. These Delegates were elected from the new Area designations of Area 21, the southern section of the state, and Area 19, the Chicago metropolitan area with groups aligned with the Chicago Central Service Office and Committee. The northern section of Illinois, south and west of Chicago to the Mississippi River, took the designation of Area 20.

Bill included the idea of Area designations in the pamphlet, and he also described the blueprint for what has become known as the "Third Legacy Procedure" for voting. Bill explained that each Delegate would be elected with a two-thirds majority vote. His keen insight provided the solution to balloting where a majority

Might take four to five votes to complete an election. The idea of drawing the name "from the hat," after at least four closely contested ballots, proved to ensure that major friction would not result from an extended voting session for one elected representative.

Bill shared emphasis on service in Alcoholics Anonymous clearly, in the application of five Traditions and one Step. He considered their importance in the following order:

Tradition Five- Each group has but one primary purpose---to carry its message to alcoholic who still suffers.

Tradition Seven- Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting.

Tradition Eight- Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever non-professional.

Tradition Nine- A.A. as such ought never be organized, but we may create boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.

Tradition Two- Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.

Step Twelve- We try to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in ll our affairs.<sup>20</sup>

In January of 1951, Bill began visits to as many of the Assemblies as possible, with the timetable of the Conference start only four months away. At each city he spoke to large audiences and was an observer at the Assemblies where Delegates were elected. His talks were on various topics but genelly highlighted the guiding principles of A.A. service. Over two dozen states and Provinces warmly welcomed him. He arrived in Chicago for a

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<sup>20</sup> *A.A. Comes of Age*, 1957, page 138, reprinted with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.

special meeting of the Chicago Area held on a Tuesday night in early February.

The February 13, 1951 special election Assembly was chaired by Earl T., who opened the proceedings with the "usual quiet time." Many A.A.s do not realize that the Chicago chapter of groups began the practice of starting meetings with a quiet time rather than a spoken prayer of some kind. The Chicago example is used by many meetings across worldwide A.A. today. The moment of silence and reflection proved to settle the energies of members, focused the atmosphere toward the A.A. meeting, and allowed the individual to collect his or her thoughts. Early Chicago A.A.s found that the quiet time truly worked well in opening any A.A. gathering.

The special meeting elected Chicago's first Delegate, Luke H. Four visitors from what was then called "downstate Illinois" were attending, and the transcript of the meeting recorded time given for their introductions. On Monday, February 12, 1951 the downstate Assembly met in Springfield and elected Ward M. of Springfield as its Delegate to Panel 1 of the General Service Conference. The four A.A.s traveled to Chicago the following night to attend its special meeting, to hear and speak with Bill, and they observed the proceedings.

Toward our own history in Northern Illinois Area, George M. of Decatur (presently Area 21) was elected as the Alternate Delegate. He was seated as a Panel 2 Delegate the following year, to represent Northern Illinois Area 20 at the 1952 Conference.

George M. was the first and last person introduced at the special Chicago meeting of February 13, each time with welcome applause.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> *Minutes of Special Meeting of Chicago Area A.A.s*, Palmer House Hotel, Chicago, February 13, 1951. Fifteen pages, transcript. Source: Chicago Archives.

Delegates were elected for Area 20 by the Downstate Illinois A.A. Conference prior to 1973. The Downstate Conferences were combined Assemblies of both the Northern and Southern Illinois Areas. After 1973, NIA Delegates were elected by NIA Assemblies.

#### ELECTED BY DOWNSTATE ILLINOIS CONFERENCES<sup>22</sup>

1952-53	Panel 2	George M. Decatur (presently Area 21)
1954-55	Panel 4	John K. Dixon
1956-57	Panel 6	Richard W. Quincy (presently Area 21)
1958-59	Panel 8	John M. Lockport
1960-61	Panel 10	Lee H. Mt. Morris
1962-63	Panel 12	Carl S. Rock Island
1964-65	Panel 14	Bruce W. <sup>23</sup> Waukegan
1966-67	Panel 16	R.A. "Bud" W. Rock Island
1968-69	Panel 18	Joe F. Dixon

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<sup>22</sup> *A Brief History of NIA* 1993, four pages. Source: NIA Archives

<sup>23</sup> Bruce W., Panel 14 Delegate, was elected East Central Region Trustee at the 24<sup>th</sup> General Service Conference. He served 1974-1977 on the General Service Board of A.A. World Services, Inc.

## ELECTED BY DOWNSTATE ILLINOIS CONFERENCES<sup>22</sup>

1970-71	Panel 20	Roland “Rollie” C. Rockford
1972-73	Panel 22	Lou D. Glen Ellyn

## ELECTED BY NIA ASSEMBLIES<sup>22</sup>

1974-75	Panel 24	Hank S. Kenosha, Wisconsin
1976-77	Panel 26	Earl McN. Chicago
1978-79	Panel 28 <sup>24</sup>	Ruth P. Lisle
1980-81	Panel 30	LaVerne “Pete” P. Freeport
1982-83	Panel 32	John G. McHenry
1984-85	Panel 34	Jack O. Joliet
1986-87	Panel 36	Hank G. Princeton

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<sup>22A</sup> *Brief History of NIA 1993*, four pages. Source: NIA Archives

<sup>22</sup>Ibid

<sup>24</sup> Jim H, NIA Alternate Delegate from Joliet, served the remaining three months of Ruth P.’s term when she moved to another state.

ELECTED BY NIA ASSEMBLIES (continued)

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1988-89	Panel 38	Dennis D. <sup>25</sup> McHenry
1990-91	Panel 40	Phyllis W. Oneida
1992-93	Panel 42	Tom B. <sup>22</sup> Waukegan
1994-95	Panel 44	Russ V. Toulon
1996-97	Panel 46	Tom G. Elgin

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<sup>25</sup> Dennis D., Panel 38 Delegate, was elected in 1994 to serve as Co-Chairman of the East Central Region with Don W., East Central Region Trustee from Kalanazoo, Michigan.

<sup>22</sup>A *Brief History of NIA* 1993, four pages. Source: NIA Archives

## **THE DOWNSTATE CONFERENCE AND ILLINOIS GROWTH, TOWARD N.I.A. AUTONOMY 1951-1972**

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The three Illinois Areas were sectioned for the election of Delegates to the General Service Conference in late 1950, as Bill set upon his whirlwind tour before the first Conference of April 1951. Over the next twenty-three years, the Northern and Southern Area's elected representatives met in combined sessions, jointly elected Delegates, and were identified as the Downstate Illinois A.A. Conference. The Chicago Area soon experienced trouble of its own creation and as early as 1954 had split into fractional strife.

A Downstate Illinois meeting of 1959 tabled discussion on the situation in Chicago and chose not to become involved. In 1954, two newly formed service entities, the West Suburban Intergroup and the South Suburban Intergroup, abandoned the Metropolitan Chicago Area Service Committee. Metropolitan Chicago A.A.'s Policy Committee failed to search for a group consensus on a number of items, beginning with the paid employment of Earl T. as "Service Coordinator".<sup>26</sup> Earl T., Chicago's A.A.'s founding member, was well known and respected, but the groups were not consulted about the plan, and many quite their representation with the Area Service Committee.

For almost twenty years, Chicago's three service groups worked separately and came to very few agreements. The Downstate Illinois Conference wisely would not be drawn into this

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<sup>26</sup> *Chicago Metropolitan Policy Committee Report to Chicago Area Groups*, 1954, three pages including a letter from Bill W. Source: Chicago Archives.

conflict, considering it an outside issue of controversy and autonomy.

Progressing and growing, the Northern and Southern Areas cooperated and stood together. Unity developed in Downstate A.A. while it remained tolerant of its geographic differences. The splintered unity of the Chicago Area eventually led to the 1963 General Service Conference refusal to seat either of the two Delegates elected by Chicago groups that year. Despite its difficulties, the Chicago Area also shared in the continued growth of Alcoholics Anonymous in Illinois.

The minutes and records of Downstate Illinois are located in the Northern Illinois Archives by the donation of a very special woman. A member of Al-Anon, she is the widow of early A.A. member Ed C. (Panel 13 Delegate for Southern Illinois Area 21, 1963-64). The past Downstate A.A. Conference Secretary, Lois C. kept an entire set of minutes from the Downstate A.A. proceedings. The collection spans the years 1954 through 1973 when she served in the elected position of Conference Secretary. Her reporting on the Planning Meetings (presently known as the Area Assemblies) kept the membership accurately informed for nineteen years.

A 1988 audiocassette tape is located in the NIA Archives, from an interview with past Delegate Hank G., then serving as NIA Archives Committee Chairman. The interview records her recollection of Illinois A.A. history. That year, accepted by NIA Archives with grateful appreciation for an unequalled gift, she turned over one set of minutes and records to NIA.

Our past service history has been preserved with the help of this gracious past trusted servant's donation of early minutes. Highlights of Downstate A.A. Confereneces/ Assemblies complete this chapter.

A yearly budget was first discussed in 1957 and an amount of \$1,000 and was approved as a prudent reserve fund in in 1962. In October 1959 at a Quarterly Conference, meeting minutes recorded the first discussion about dividing the state into two distinct Areas. No actual decision was made for a full year.

In October 1960, for the single purpose of choosing Delegates, an imaginary line along U.S. Route 24 was drawn to separate the northern and southern sections of the Downstate Conference. This boundary for the two Areas, was drawn on a trial basis, exists today as a large part of our Area 20 border with Southern Illinois Area 21.

There also appeared to be no hard and fast timetables for elections. For example, our NIA Panel 10 Delegate from Mt. Morris, Lee H., was elected in March 1960 to participate in the General Service Conference taking place the following month! In 1962 a committee was formed to develop a procedure to improve the timing of spring election sessions. Minutes of 1963 show the consensus that the Downstate Conference would elect its Delegates in the fall of each year. This timetable continues today.

A State Steering Committee was established at the October 1960 Downstate AA. Conference. Area servants representing each of the two sections of Downstate A.A. were to be elected at separate Spring Conferences (Assemblies). Loie C. was again confirmed as State Secretary in 1960, with a budgeted fifty dollars per year for expenses. Also approved was a motion that future A.A. State Treasurers were to be selected from past Delegates. The State Steering Committee made up of Area Committeepersons from both the Northern and Southern sections, the two standing Delegates, and all past Delegates. Downstate A.A. strengthened the partnership between the two Areas with the single A.A. State Treasurer.

The 1950s' terminology used for trusted servants and meetings took different labels than those of today. The Assemblies were

known as "Conferences," the Areas were known as the "sections," and District Committeepersons (District Committee Members, or D.C.M.s) were identified as the "Area Committeepersons." Nevertheless, the term "District" was used in 1960 minutes. For an easier understanding, current labels will be used. All members of the Downstate Conference were encouraged to study the *A.A. Service Manual*.

The first *A.A. Service Manual*, titled the *Third Legacy Manual*, was published in 1955. It grew out of Bill's pamphlet of late 1950, contained the General Service Conference Charter, and explained the entire service structure of Alcoholics Anonymous as it had developed to 1955. Districts were clearly identified as "comprising a number of local Groups represented at an A.A. Assembly."<sup>27</sup> The term "General Service Representative," today's "G.S.R.," was simply identified as an elected "Group Representative."

Early issues of the *A.A. Service Manual* named the service arm of A.A. World Services as they are understood today. The Charter, ratified at the 1955 General Service Conference and then presented to the International Convention in St Louis, confirmed Bill's vision to secure both the present and future of Alcoholics Anonymous.

The original nine Districts of the Downstate A.A. Conference were increased to twelve Districts in 1960. Not including the Chicago Area, the Northern section's six Districts, our Area 20, were first identified as the Northern Illinois Area in the General Service Conference Final Report of 1965. Throughout the 1960s', Northern Illinois held its own separate conferences/ assemblies at least once a year and continued its partnership with

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<sup>27</sup> This identification from the first *Third Legacy Manual* was originally printed in the pamphlet *Your Role in the General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous*, December 1953, page 7. Source Chicago Area Archives

Southern Illinois. From the minutes of the Downstate A.A. Conferences, each year the two Areas met together at three Assemblies held at different locations.

In 1963, after deciding the procedure for electing Downstate A.A. Delegates, a change voted as an Advisory Action by the General Service Conference altered the makeup of the General Service Board. The 1963 General Service Conference established six Regions across the United States, with each region represented by a Class B (A.A. member) Regional Trustee. Ward M., 1951-52 Panel I Delegate from Southern Illinois, was a nominee for the new post of East Central Region Trustee. Before 1963 only one A.A. (Class B) Trustee was elected from all fifty states. Carl S., the NIA Delegate, gave a lengthy report to the joint meeting of the two sections/Areas of Downstate A.A. that spring. His reporting helped the Downstate Conference/Assembly reach its consensus to support this major item on the 1963 General Service Conference agenda.

Another major change approved in 1966 involved a new ratio of Class B (A.A. member) Trustees into a two-thirds majority on the General Service Board. Canada was included with two new Regions. The 1966 Board was elected by the General Service Conference with eight Regional Trustees and four Class A (non-alcoholic) Trustees. The 1965 Downstate A.A. Conference discussed and approved this proposal from a resolution passed by the Northern Illinois Fall Conference/ Assembly held at Rock Island in October 1965.

The twelve A.A. Districts of 1960s' Downstate Illinois continued to grow. Using the larger example of the entire Fellowship in comparison, between 1960 and 1965 a forty per cent increase in A.A. membership created a fifty per cent increase in the number of registered groups. In Illinois, the Downstate A.A. Conference began discussion on its second redistricting in early 1969.

Northern Illinois approved a resolution of inclusion in September 1968, from the request of various Chicago groups for representation with Downstate Illinois. Chicago Area 19's three service entities had not yet reached a reconciliation or consensus for unity. This resolution, also approved by the Southern Illinois Area, simply stated that "any independent Group, registered and contributing to G.S.O., that was willing to also support the Illinois A.A. Conference (Assembly), was eligible to become a member of the Illinois A.A. Assembly."<sup>28</sup>

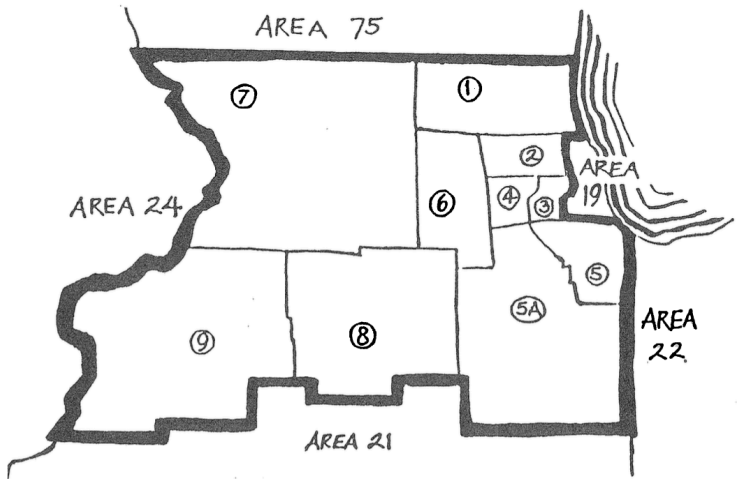
The addition of groups from the Chicago Area was a deciding factor in the redistricting discussed at the November 1969 business (Committee) meeting held in Mt. Vernon. All Illinois A.A. Districts (still called "areas" in the November 1969 minutes) were renumbered to compensate for the additional Districts in Northern Illinois Area. After a discussion at the same business meeting, the Downstate Illinois A.A. Conference Committee Meeting tabled a new proposal to divide into three Areas. Proposed as a solution to reduce travel for group representation at the quarterly Assemblies, if adopted it would have created a fourth Delegate Area in Illinois.

The ten new Districts in Northern Illinois, our Area 20, mapped their boundaries in 1969. The basic lines remained in effect for the next ten years. Together, these Districts asserted NIA autonomy in 1972.

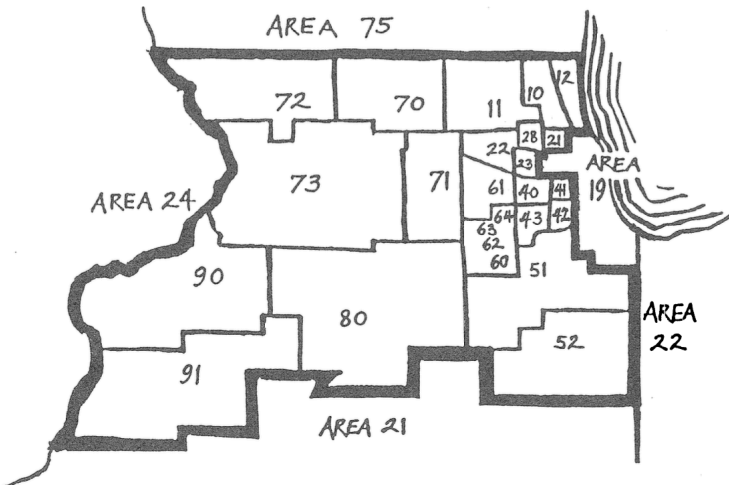
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<sup>28</sup> Minutes, 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Illinois Downstate A.A. Conference, Leland Hotel, Springfield, October 1968, Loie C., Secretary. Source: NIA Archives

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The original District boundaries at the start of Northern Illinois Area autonomy in 1972, from a 1975 map donated to NIA Archives by Ruth P., who served as the third Area 20 Secretary 1976-77 and later as Panel 28 Delegate for NIA 1978-79.



The current District boundaries of Northern Illinois Area 20 in December 1995, taken from the map utilized by the NIA Answering Service Committee.

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## **1972 - 1973: AN ACCOMPLISHED AUTONOMY**

The September 26, 1971 election for the Northern Illinois Delegate was held at the Downstate A.A. Illinois Assembly, then known as the State A.A. Conference. The Assembly also discussed an important motion made to the State Steering Committee and presented to the State Conference for its decision. Thirty-nine eligible voters (elected representatives from the Chicago, Northern, and Southern sections) carried this motion for approval: to adopt and establish a separate Assembly for the Northern Illinois Area. The approval gave the NIA Assembly its own choice to select its next Delegate in 1973, and return to the 1974 State A.A. Conference with the 1974-75 Delegate already elected.

The NIA Delegate elected for the 1972-73 service term was Lou D. of Glen Ellyn. Following a lengthy discussion, another motion was made to nominate a Coordinator, a new State Committee post that would report the "dates of activities throughout the State, boundary states, and avoid conflicts." The motion was withdrawn when Lou volunteered to serve in the position.

Over the next two years, discussion on the dissolution of the State Conference/ Assembly structure became an active topic at both Northern and Southern Illinois Area's quarterly Assemblies. The outcome was the decision for cooperation between all three Illinois Areas for the single purpose of planning and putting on the annual A.A. State Conference weekend. Approved at the State A.A. Conference (Assembly) in August 1973, two representatives each from Chicago Area 19, Northern Illinois Area 20, and

Southern Illinois Area 21 would serve on the A.A. State Conference Committee.<sup>29</sup>

The Downstate Illinois A.A. Conference, its Committee structure, and the combined northern and southern Illinois Assembly meetings came to an official end in September 1973. The Illinois A.A. State Conference held at Bradley University in Peoria held its last Assembly on August 18. The resolution to disband was presented and accepted by both the Southern and Northern Areas. The Conference heartily thanked and recognized the leadership efforts of the State Committee's trusted servants: the State Chairman Dick L.(Southern Illinois Area Panel 19 Delegate 1969-70), State Secretary Loie C. (from Southern Illinois, nineteen years of service), and State Treasurer Lee H. (Northern Illinois Panel 10 Delegate 1960-61).

Dissolving the Illinois Assembly service structure was only one result of events in Illinois that were set in motion at the beginning of 1972. In Chicago, a Combined Services Committee (often remembered as the Common Purpose Committee) began discussion on restoring unity in the Chicago Area. Representatives of its three service groups, the Chicago Metropolitan Rotating Committee, the West Suburban Intergroup, and the South Suburban Intergroup met together to recondition the unity that was splintered in 1954. The "common purpose" developed cooperation and resolved exactly where Chicago Area groups would be registered. One outcome, as shown on the 1972 Northern Illinois map, was the inclusion of South Suburban groups with NIA. Many West Suburban groups reunited with the Chicago Metropolitan Rotating Committee.

The boundaries of Chicago Area 19 and Northern Illinois Area 20 were clearly defined for the first time in many years. District 3

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<sup>29</sup> Minutes of August 18, 1973 Illinois State Conference, Loie C., Secretary Source: NIA Archives

contained groups that were once a part of the West Suburban Intergroup, District 5 contained former South Suburban Intergroup member groups, while various groups in NIA Districts 1 and 2 had been aligned with the Chicago Metropolitan Service Committee.

NIA Secretary Karen T. was instrumental in corresponding with NIA groups to answer questions of exactly which Area the groups had representation with. Karen T also helped resolve the questions of specifically which NIA District each suburban group could send its GSRs to participate in AA service.

Through this great 1972 effort involving both the NIA Secretary and the "Combined Services" Committees, groups were welcomed into Districts with a linkage to either Chicago Area 19 or Northern Illinois Area 20.

A new unity in the Chicago Area was developed by the "Combined Services Committee" to redistrict Area 19. The West Suburban Intergroup voted to dissolve in October 1972,<sup>30</sup> and most of its groups joined the newly named Chicago Area Service Committee (formerly the Chicago Metropolitan Rotating Committee). The return of groups to Chicago Area 19 service replaced the separate three service entities formed in 1954. The remaining border groups that came to Downstate Illinois A.A. in 1969 chose to continue their representation with Northern Illinois Area 20.

To a fortunate 1972 Illinois' Alcoholics Anonymous membership, A.A. unity was restored in Chicago after an eighteen year division, and A.A. unity gained in strength for its newly autonomous neighbor, our Northern Illinois Area 20.

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<sup>30</sup> From the presentation and discussion in a Chicago-Suburban Intergroup Council flyer, September 1972 "Proposal to Dissolve," page 2.  
Source: Chacago Area Archives

Details of the first two years of Northern Illinois Area meetings can only be provided by recollections. Currently there are no Assembly or Committee meeting minutes available for either 1972 or 1973, but an effort continues through the NIA Archives and the NIA History Project to locate the elusive records for those years.

The NIA Delegate to the General Service Conference was Lou D. from Glen Ellyn District 4. Lou was the last Delegate elected by both the Southern and Northern Areas in a combined Conference/ Assembly. His leadership was appreciated for many years. Early NIA Secretaries recall that Lou helped organize Traditions Panels for NIA Assemblies when morning sessions were held for the benefit of G.S.R.s to participate. Southern Illinois Area began this practice in early 1971, and its success was duplicated at the NIA Assemblies. Lou, NIA Delegate, and Rollie C., immediate past Delegate, helped lead the Area through its first growing pains while building on its new autonomy. Lou is also fondly recalled as being well-versed in the *A.A. Service Manual*. He responsibly recommended, both vigorously and very often, its study by all A.A. members.

Lou's two year term as NIA Delegate was interrupted when he suffered a heart attack during the August 1973 Illinois State A.A. Conference weekend; fortunately he was able to drive himself to a local hospital. He completed his term as Delegate, was later elected to serve as NIA Treasurer in 1980-81, and through his effort Area 20 was granted its first sales tax exemption status with the State of Illinois in 1981.

Minutes of a Southern Illinois Quarterly Meeting ( an Assembly) in December of 1972 noted that "the Northern Area was making decisions on their own, paying their own Delegate's costs of the General Service Conference, and assuming their own

expenses."<sup>31</sup> Southern Illinois Area also assumed its own expenses in February 1972, and like NIA, was beginning its separate Treasury. The Southern Illinois Treasurer reported a balance of \$218.39 at its June Assembly, and conceivably a similar amount was reported by the NIA Treasurer at the 1972 Summer Assembly held at the Yorktown Shopping Center in Lombard.

The Montgomery Ward store at Yorktown had a meeting room that was large enough for an A.A. Assembly. Karen T. recalls that the participation of more than forty Northern Illinois Area A.A. representatives was a very encouraging sign of the 1972 commitment to service in Alcoholics Anonymous, noting that similar attendance numbers matched the total combined-Area attendance at many previous Downstate A.A. service meetings.

The new autonomy of Area 20 was not seen as a complete independence from the rest of the Fellowship. Rather, as past Delegate Bruce W. shared with the 1972 State A.A. Assembly, each Area needed its own separate identity. Bruce, Panel 14 Delegate in 1964-65, remained active in A.A. service work long after his term at the General Service Conference. Bruce was elected East Central Region Trustee at the 1974 General Service Conference, serving a term of three years. The 1972 discussions on dissolving the State A.A. service structure were the result of the "separate identity" taking place in Area 20 and Area 21, and Bruce led the final discussion.

The trusted servants of the 1972 and 1973 NIA Committee, especially Delegate Lou D., past Delegate Rollie C., past Delegate Bruce W., Alternate Delegate Hank S., and Secretary Karen T. helped Area 20 develop its new sense of a "separate identity." Growth continued in NIA without any perception of

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<sup>31</sup> Southern Area Quarterly Meeting Minutes, Marion, Illinois, December 3, 1972. Loie C., Secretary Source: NIA Archives

exclusiveness. The 1972 representation in Northern Illinois Area showed a much larger number of groups than Southern Illinois.

Tradition Four's guide on "A.A. as a whole" helped to gently blend our new Area autonomy (in a very real sense we were an autonomous group) with our amicable separation from the Illinois State A.A. Assembly. Discussion in the early 1970s' revolved around each Area's challenge of parting company and functioning apart from one another. The State A.A. Conference Chairpersons first discussed the real possibility of an early end to their service terms at the State A.A. Conference Assembly held in August 1972 at Bradley University in Peoria. Considerable discussion continued at that 1972 State Conference when Bruce W. proposed the formal ideas about each Area's autonomy. Bruce's proposal, without a motion needing a vote, was directed for the groups to consider doing away with the State A.A. Committee and especially the single State A.A. Treasury. He honestly stated the fact that each Area had its separate voting entity and was responsible only to its own constituents.

The structure of the State A.A. Committee remained only as the planning committee for annual State A.A. Conference weekends. Each of the three Illinois Delegate Areas has sent two representatives to its policy committee since 1974. Each year, one Area hosts the site while the other two provide Alcatraz Meeting Chairpersons and Panel Presentation speakers. Since the 1973 decision to dissolve the State A.A. Steering Committee, the succeeding State A.A. Conference Committees have not called for any statewide votes on any items relating to Alcoholics Anonymous in Illinois.

The member Areas of the A.A. East Central Region added the two Delegate Areas of Wisconsin in 1972, from Wisconsin's request to separate from the West Central Region in 1971. Wisconsin joined the A.A. Areas in Illinois, Indiana, Ohio (which included groups from northern Kentucky), and Michigan. Our

Regional Trustee to the General Service Board is selected from one of these fourteen Areas and serves the Fellowship for four years. At the time of the Wisconsin addition, Jack M. (Panel 6 Delegate 1956-57 from Western Michigan Area 34) served as East Central Region Trustee for a term of three years. NIA past Delegate Bruce W. (Panel 14 Delegate 1964-65 from Waukegan) was elected in 1974 to also serve three years.

When A.A. Regions were established in 1963 and were changed in 1966 to include the Canadian Provinces, the General Service Board would have had a one-time rotation of all Regional Trustees in 1975. Developing a continuity to service terms, the three year service terms of Jack M. and Bruce W. were a compromise that other A.A. Regions would follow, allowing an overlap of Regional Trustee terms on the General Service Board.

Jack M. led the East Central Region during the first years of NIA autonomy. He developed the consensus for our Region to hold two new Conference weekends each year. Reporting on the examples he found in the Southeast A.A. Region, Jack proposed the Delegate/ past Delegate Conference in 1973. The proposal was enthusiastically accepted, and Chicago Area 19's Panel 23 Delegate Norm A. committed to host the first Delegates' weekend meeting in his home town of Evanston. At the same Delegates' luncheon in 1973, Southeast Michigan Area 33 committed to host the first East Central Regional Conference in a joint session with the Michigan A.A. State Conference. These weekend Conferences have been held each year since 1974 in the East Central Region.

The two Regional events have fostered a sense of an interstate community and neighborliness over the years, and participants have found that the Fellowship is "much the same in the Great White North as it is on the banks of the Ohio River."<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> May 1989 revision to *The History of the East Central Region*, 1987, page 3.  
Source: NIA Archives

Returning to the group membership in Northern Illinois Area, the following pages list the directory of 1972 NIA groups. Taken from the 1973 *Eastern United States A.A. Directory*, the reader will find that many of 1972's groups registered with the General Service Office continue to meet today. The census effort of the 1972-73 NIA Committee, especially the NIA Secretary, provides an accurate glimpse of the 1972 representation in Area 20. While additional groups were registered in 1973, another *Directory* was not printed until 1975 due to printing production changes. Pages 46-53 of the 1973 *Eastern United States A.A. Directory*, listings for Illinois, were provided by the Archivist at the General Service Office and have been placed in the NIA Archives.

#### 1973 LISTING OF NORTHERN ILLINOIS AREA 20 GROUPS REGISTERED WITH THE GENERAL SERVICE OFFICE

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- ANTIOCH- Triple A Group (M,W,F), 20 members.  
AURORA- Aurora Group (Su, Tu, Th, Sa), 64 members.  
Aurora Thursday Group, 15 members. Farnsworth Group (W), 10 members.  
Mercy Center Friday Night Group, 25 members.  
Saturday Night Group, 25 members.  
Tuesday Night Group, 15 members.  
Club: Alano Club of Aurora.
- BARRINGTON- Barrington Group (Th).  
Barrington Wednesday Night Closed Group, 15 members.  
Barr-Pal Men's Group (Tu), 12 members.  
Friday Home Group.
- BATAVIA- Ernie J. 's Memorial Group, 8 members.

1973 LISTING OF NIA GROUPS REGISTERED WITH G.S.O.

BELVIDERE- Club: Belvidere Alano Club (Su, Tu, W, Th, Sa),  
35 members.

BLOOMINGDALE- Bloomingdale Fellowship Group (Th),  
12 members.

BURTON'S BRIDGE- Burton's Bridge Group (Th).

CARPENTERSVILLE- Carpentersville Group (Tu), 10 members.

CRYSTAL LAKE- Crystal Lake Monday Night Gp, 20 members.

Fellowship Group (F), 10 members.

"Les Girls" Group (W), 15 members.

Sunday Night Group.

Club: Alano Club of Crystal Lake.

DEKALB- Dekalb Group (Tu), 20 members.

Dekalb Home Group (M, W, Sa), 20 members.

DIXON- Dixon Home Group #1(Tu, Th), 20 members.

Dixon Women's Group (M).

EAST MOLINE- House of A.A. Group (Su, Tu, Th, F, Sa),  
52 members.

ELGIN- Elgin Eastside Group (M), 10 members.

Elgin Fellowship Group (Tu, Th, Sa), 20 members.

ELMHURST- Elmhurst Ardmore Group (M), 20 members.

Fireside Group.

Excuse Makers Group (F), 15 members.

Open Group (Tu).

Tree Towns Group (Th).

Wednesday Night Hospital Group.

FREEPORT- 48 Club Group (M, Tu, Th, Sa), 40 members.

Freeport Home Group (F), 5 members.

GALENA- Jo Davies County Group (Tu), 8 members.

GALESBURG- Father Ralph Phau Group (M, Th), 20 members.

Knox County Group (Su, Tu, F, Sa), 40 members.

1973 LISTING OF NIA GROUPS REGISTERED WITH G.S.O.

- GENEVA- Geneva Group (W), 20 members.  
GLENDALE HEIGHTS- Glendale Heights Group (Th).  
GLEN ELLYN- Around the Clock Women's Group (Tu).  
    DuPage Sunday Morning Breakfast Group, 12 members.  
    Glen Ellyn South Group (Tu), 12 members.  
    Glen Ellyn Sunday Evening Group, 20 members.  
    Glen Ellyn Wednesday Night Group, 6 members.  
    Tuesday Night Glen Ellyn North Group, 10 members.  
    Wheaton-Glen Ellyn Monthly Open Meeting Group.  
HARVARD- Thursday Night Harvard Group, 11 members.  
HARVEY- Harvey Group (M), 8 members.  
    Harvey Breakfast Group, 25 members.  
    Harvey 17 Group.  
HENRY- Marshall-Putnam Group (Su, W), 6 members.  
HINSDALE- Tuesday Night Home Group, 15 members.  
ITASCA- Itasca Group (Tu), 8 members.  
JOLIET- Boondocks Group (pending).  
    Joliet Young Peoples Action Group (Th).  
    Marycrest Group (F), 9 members.  
    Monday Night Group, 15 members.  
    Open Fellowship Group (Sa), 25 members.  
    Steel City Y.M.C.A. Group (Sa), 12 members.  
    Sunday Morning Open Meeting Group, 20 members.  
    12th Step Group (F), 12 members.  
    Club: Alano Club of Joliet.  
KANKAKEE- Kankakee Valley Group (Su, M, Tu, W,  
    Th, F, Sa), 30 members.  
KEITHSBURG- Keithsburg Fellowship Group (Tu), 6 members.  
KEWANEE- Henry County Group (Sa), 5 members.  
LAKE BLUFF-Lake Bluff-Lake Forest Friday Group, 6 members

1973 LISTING OF NIA GROUPS REGISTERED WITH G.S.O.

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- LAKE FOREST- Lake Forest Monday Group.  
Lake Forest Thursday Group.  
Lake Forest Waukegan Group.
- LAKE ZURICH- Lake Zurich Group (W), 14 members.
- LA SALLE- L.P.O.S. Group (M, Tu, Sa), 15 members.
- LIBERTYVILLE- Friday Night Group, 15 members.  
Monday Night Serenity House Group, 25 members.  
Serenity House Group (Tu)  
Serenity House Wednesday Night Group, 10 members.  
Wednesday Night Home Group, 12 members.  
Club: Serenity House Club.
- LOCKPORT- Group #1 (Su), 10 members.  
Lockport Group #2 (W), 6 members.
- LOMBARD- Friday Late Group, 12 members.  
Lilacia Group (F), 8 members.  
Lombard Couriers Group (M).  
Lombard Early Group (M).  
Lombard Wednesday Afternoon Group.  
Thursday Group, 12 members.  
Tuesday Night Group, 6 members.  
Villard Group (Th), 10 members.
- LOVES PARK- Park Group (Tu, Th), 10 members.
- MENDOTA- Mendota Group (M), 8 members.
- MILAN- Milan Hillcrest Group (Su, Tu, Th, Sa), 15 members.
- MOLINE- Living Room Group (W), 10 members.  
16th Street Group (Su, M, Tu, W, F, Sa), 40 members.
- MONMOUTH- Monmouth #2 Group.  
Warren County Group (Th).
- MORRIS- Morris Community Group (Th), 7 members.
- MORRISON- Morrison Group (Tu).

1973 LISTING OF NIA GROUPS REGISTERED WITH G.S.O.

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- MOUNT MORRIS- Ridge Runners Group (Su), 10 members.  
MUNDELEIN- Mundelein Group #2 (Tu), 7members.  
NAPERVILLE- Naperville Group (Tu), 12 members.  
NORTH AURORA- Oak Street Group (M), 10 members.  
    Wednesday Morning Group.  
NORTH CHICAGO- North Chicago Group (Tu), 12 members.  
    North Chicago Thursday Group, 7members.  
OAK BROOK- Oak Brook Group (W), 12 members.  
OREGON- one A.A. Loner listed.  
OTTAWA- Al Hennessey Group (Th), 10 members.  
PALATINE- Palatine-Winston Park Group (M).  
    Palatine Women's Daytime Group.  
    Wanderers II Group (F), 15 members.  
PLAINFIELD- Plainfield Group (Th), 6 members.  
PONTIAC- Pontiac Group (Tu, F), 10 members.  
PRINCETON- Princeton Group (Tu), 12 members.  
ROCHELLE-Rochele Wednesday Night Group, 20 members.  
ROCK FALLS- Rock Falls Group - see Sterling.  
ROCKFORD- Rockford Area Central Office, 130 S. 2nd Street.  
    Campus Towers Group.  
    Central Group (Su, M, Tu, W, Th, F), 54 members.  
    Downtown Group (M, Tu, Th, F, Sa), 15 members.  
    East Side Group (Su, W,) 2 members.  
    Home Group (M, W), 15 members.  
    Midway Fellowship Group (Th), 8members.  
    Singer Zone Center Group (Tu), 15 members.  
    South Main Alano Groups (Su, M, Tu, W, Th, F),  
        53 members.  
    Sowani Group (Sa), 100 members.  
    Wednesday Evening Library Group, 10 members.

1973 LISTING OF NIA GROUPS REGISTERED WITH G.S.O.

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- ROCKFORD (cont'd)- Westside Group (M, F), 12 members.  
    Women's Fifth Avenue Group (M, Th).  
    Young Peoples Under 40 Group (W).
- ROCK ISLAND- Rock Island Group (F), 25 members.  
    Triangle Group (M), 12 members.
- ROSELLE- Roselle Group (M), 30 members.
- ROUND LAKE- Round Lake Group (W).
- ST. CHARLES- Delnor Group (M), 62 members.  
    Firehouse Group (M), 9 members.
- SANDWICH- Sandwich Home Group (M), 10 members.
- SAVANNA- Savanna Group (M), 6 members.
- STERLING- Rock Falls Group (W), 27 members.  
    Sterling Saturday Night Group, 7members.
- VILLA PARK- Anona Center Group (Su), 14 members.  
    Beginners Group (M), 7 members.  
    Candlelight Group (Tu), 10 members.  
    Friday Late Group, 10 members.  
    Monday Night Decision Makers Group, 10 members.  
    Stepping Stones Group (Th), 6 members.  
    Thursday Night Steppers Group, 10 members.  
    Villa Park Thursday Group.  
    Villard Group (Th), 7 members.  
    Washington-Ardmore Group (Th), 15 members.
- WAUKEGAN- Beach Park Group (F), 15 members.  
    Monday Night Waukegan Group, 24 members.  
    Sunday Night Group, 25 members.  
    Thursday Night Group, 20 members  
    Thursday Night Home #1 Group, 21 members.  
    Tuesday Night Group, 12 members.

1973 LISTING OF NIA GROUPS REGISTERED WITH G.S.O.

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- WAUKEGAN (cont'd)- Wednesday Noon Group, 10 members.  
Club: Waukegan Alano Club.
- WAYNE- Tuesday Night Group.  
Wayne Group (Tu), 12 members.  
Westchester Group (F), 15 members.
- WEST CHICAGO- West Chicago Group (Tu), 14 members.  
West Chicago Thursday Night Group, 7 members.
- WHEATON- Beginners Group (M), 20 members.  
North Group (M), 12 members.  
Pleasant Hills Group (W), 12 members.  
Thursday Group.  
Wheaton Friday Night Group, 25 members.  
Wheaton Monday Night Beginners Group, 18 members.  
Wheaton South (Tu), 12 members.
- WINFIELD- Central DuPage Saturday Night Group.
- WINTHROP HARBOR- Thursday Night Group,  
7members. Tuesday Night Group, 8 members.  
Unskilled Drinkers Group (Tu), 8 members.  
Zion Benton Friday Night Group, 8 members.  
Zion Benton Sunday AM. . Group, 3 members.  
Zion Benton Thursday Night Group, 40 members.  
Zion Benton Wednesday Night Group, 4 members.  
Club: Zion Benton Alano Club.
- WONDER LAKE- Wonder Lake Group (W), 7members.
- WOODSTOCK- Woodstock Bull Valley Group.
- ZION BENTON TOWNSHIP- Sunday Night Group, 7 members.

ILLINOIS TOTAL ACTIVE MEMBERSHIP.....13,069  
TOTAL NUMBER OF GROUPS REPORTED..... 821  
TOTAL CONTRIBUTIONS..... \$ 19,030.30

## THE GROWTH OF THE NIA COMMITTEE WITH THE NIA ASSEMBLIES

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When the first Assembly in a newly autonomous Northern Illinois Area 20 convened at Yorktown Center in 1972, the differences and similarities with Downstate A.A. were immediately apparent. Karen T. recalls that attendance at the Area Assemblies nearly matched that of past combined-Area Downstate Conferences (Assemblies). An average of forty A.A.s met the challenges of service to Area 20 with good intentions, and NIA Assembly attendance continued to grow. Both Southern Area 21 and Northern Area 20 secured the "separate identities" described by Bruce W. with a vigor and enthusiasm that made the dissolution of the combined-Area State A.A Committee an easy consensus in August of 1973. Redistricting plans began with boundaries for District 5 and District 5A settled in June 1975. Other NIA Districts would soon bring the results of their separate planning.

Our ten A.A. Districts began holding the Assemblies and Committee Meetings in the same calendar frames as today, with an Assembly every three months, and with Committee Meetings held five to six weeks before each Assembly. Eight times a year, Area 20 began its meetings on Saturdays, initially in three hour afternoon sessions. The Downstate Illinois A.A. Conferences/Assemblies often met on Sundays, and the consensus of NIA to meet at the beginning of weekends allowed for more participation with less difficulty obtaining places to meet. Another reason for the change to Saturday-only meetings was significant: many Downstate A.A Assemblies had been held at the close of weekend conferences where agendas were informally discussed during an entire weekend. The NIA Districts, with the new change to the meeting schedule, were able to discuss topics more fully with a

five to six week notice. The voting on topics usually was first on the agendas of the new Assemblies.

The locations for the first Assemblies and Committee Meetings were chosen for the same reasons that current service meetings are successes. Facilities with inexpensive meeting room fees, coffee and food service availability, good parking, and especially an easy effort for travel by A.As proved to be the ingredients for steadily increasing turnouts for NIA meetings. The average of forty A.As participating in 1972 NIA has grown to averages of at least one hundred and thirty A.As attending 1990s' NIA Assemblies. Committee Meeting attendance has also grown from an average of fifteen A.As in the early 1970s' to the current average of fifty-five trusted servants participating.

The sites of NIA Assemblies and Committee Meetings moved to different locations around northern Illinois when NIA Districts volunteered to host a service meeting. The concentration of Assemblies in 1972-76 at Yorktown Center Auditorium in Lombard varied with Assemblies in Zion, Rockford, Moline, and Rock Falls. From available minutes, the Lombard site in District 4 had an easy access when other NIA Districts could not offer a meeting place. Many Committee Meetings during the same years were also held at Yorktown Center, but moved between Elgin, Dekalb, Freeport, Rockford, and LaSalle. A motion approved at the Saturday, June 14, 1975 NIA Assembly provided that "locations for future NIA Assemblies will be considered & decided upon at each Assembly."<sup>33</sup>

Presentations were made at early NIA Assemblies on a wide range of topics and many times were given by two presenters offering different views. Discussions were amicable and lively, as reported in NIA minutes. For example, the 1974 Spring

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<sup>33</sup> Minutes of NIA Assembly at Moline, June 14, 1975, one page. Reported by Myrtle G., NIA Secretary.

Source: NIA Archives

Assembly at Yorktown Center heard a panel discuss "Problems With Outside Agencies" with an A.A. and an agency point of view. The same Assembly was presented with a developmental talk on the "Relationship of General Service Conference Committee and Local Committees." Delegate Hank S. reported on visiting District caucuses about Conference agenda items, to take an accurate group conscience "feeling" with him to the 1974 General Service Conference in New York City. He nominated past NIA Delegate Bruce W. for a term as East Central Region Trustee at that Conference, where Bruce was unanimously elected. Lou D., recovered from a heart attack while serving as NIA Delegate two years before, was elected as NIA Treasurer (to finish Bruce's NIA Treasurer term) at the Summer Assembly held at the Rockford Alano Club.

The presentations were excellent tools in highlighting possibilities and potential directions that A.A. members could serve the Fellowship. District workshops on many service topics were held continuously with much success and results were shared at Area meetings. The activity at local levels brought the Districts' consensus to develop a consolidated voice in a 1977 Area-level Public Information Committee and a new NIA Hospitals and Institutions Committee.

The April 1976 Quarterly Planning Session (the NIA Committee Meeting) named an Area Coordinator to act as a liaison between both the Public Information and Hospitals and Institutions Committees in the Districts, and procedural guidelines were developed for the two separate committees. District activities were reported at each Assembly, showing that both committees' activities were separately developing at local levels. The first Area 20 Hospitals and Institutions Committee Chairman was elected that year in December at the 1976 Winter Assembly.

The early elections of NIA "officers" at Fall Assemblies (every two years on odd-numbered years) continued from the practice

established in 1963 at Downstate Illinois AA Conferences/Assemblies, but included voting for more than just the Delegate position. NIA ballots were cast for only six positions: the Delegate to the General Service Conference, the Alternate Delegate, The Area Chairman, the Alternate Chairman, the Area Treasurer, and the Area Secretary. The early 1970s' NIA Committee consisted of these six trusted servants, past Delegates, and ten District Committee Members (D.C.M.s).

Many "ad hoc" Committees were formed and reported at NIA meetings over the years, with the definition of such committees as completing a specific purpose and disbanding when the goals were accomplished. The NIA History Project is a current example, served by an ad hoc Historian to write the history, and a review panel comprised of a dozen NIA Committee members that disbanded after discussing changes to the final draft. Examples of ad hoc Committees in 1970s' NIA were various nominating committees, a Study Committee for Redistricting, and NIA Spring Conference Weekend Committees. The first NIA Spring Conference, planned by District volunteers and NIA Committee volunteers, was held in 1975 at the Tabala Towers in Rockford.

Topics for active discussion were comparable to 1990s' subjects. The printing of a paperback Big Book edition was discussed in 1976 NIA as an agenda item for the 1977 General Service Conference. The original consensus, that the integrity of the hardbound book would be compromised by a paperback version, was heard at both Area meetings and the G.S.C, where a softcover edition was not approved until a later Conference in 1986. The consensus for any change may always be prudent and slow for A.A. as a whole; for a 1996 example of a developing topic over a five year span, the use of "on-line" computer networks to carry the A.A. message of recovery, unity, and service currently receives a very active discussion.

The 1970s' NIA Assembly group conscience, however, easily approved a number of much-needed items. The procedure of taping Assembly sessions by the NIA Secretary was formally accepted at the Spring Assembly of 1976. The purchase of a small public address system was approved at the same Assembly.<sup>34</sup> The new 1976 designation of "NIA Committee Meeting" was accepted to dispel any, confusion, where its past labels of Quarterly Planning Sessions, Business Meetings, etc. seemed to present a limiting concept to the eighteen Area 20 Committee members of 1975.

The development of all the standing service committees at the Area 20 level follows in this longest chapter of *An Alcoholics Anonymous History of Northern Illinois Area 20*, beginning with the installation of the NIA Hospitals and Institutions Committee in 1976, after its careful development by the NIA Committee.

The HOSPITALS AND INSTITUTIONS COMMITTEE, designated simply as the Institutions Committee by General Service Conferences until 1977, was well established in NIA Districts. Hospital detox units and rehabilitation centers, staffed by doctors and professional counselors, either requested help from Alcoholics Anonymous volunteers or were contacted through an outreach effort to carry the message of recovery into the facilities. The 1976 NIA liaison between District committees for both Institutions and Public Information was approved by the NIA Committee to remedy an overlapping of efforts, fully bringing the hospitals outreach into the Institutions Committee. The election of an H. and I. Committee Chairman for service in 1977 freed the P.I. committees to develop their outreach into other areas.

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<sup>34</sup> Minutes of March 13, 1976 NIA Spring Assembly held at Yorktown Auditorium in Lombard, one page. Ruth P., NIA Secretary. Source: NIA Archives

A 1975 law passed by the Illinois General Assembly under Governor James Thompson generated much discussion, and was described in NIA minutes as the "new drunk law." Illinois enacted a "right of treatment" statute, officially acknowledging alcoholism as a sickness. The law favored alcoholism treatment over criminal prosecution of public drunkenness, and growth in the number of treatment centers over the last twenty years can be partly attributed to this law. Alcoholics Anonymous had announced the facts of the disease since 1939, and state legislatures across the United States and Canada slowly realized the benefits of rehabilitation to modern society by enacting similar statutes for the "right to treatment" and recognizing alcoholism as an actual disease.

The Hospitals and Institutions Committee was renamed the TREATMENT FACILITIES COMMITTEE at the 1977 General Service Conference. It separated and defined the efforts of A. A. outreach in medical institutions from the efforts in penal institutions (correctional facilities). NIA Assembly minutes reported the H. and I. Committee as the Treatment Facilities Committee beginning in 1983.

A.A. volunteers in treatment centers and hospitals were directed to abide by A.A. Traditions when working with facilities, and the NIA Chairpersons of this committee were available to assist NIA Districts with any difficulties. Solutions to the problem of treatment centers sending drug-only dependent clients to A.A. brought about the ideas of holding open discussion meetings in facilities, and having local answering service numbers available for staff to give to alcoholic patients. The development of cooperation between the treatment centers and A.A. volunteers has been one goal of the committee's work.

NIA Treatment Facilities chairpersons emphasized that the message of what A.A. "can and cannot do" continually needed to be communicated to publicly and privately run facilities. Many T.F.C. chairpersons mailed annual letters that were sent in addition

to an annual letter from the A.A.W.S. Treatment Facilities secretary at the General Service Office. Communication with treatment centers remains consistently good today.

In 1986, the Conference Committee on Treatment Facilities at the General Service Conference began discussion to develop a "Sponsor Contact Program" for A.A. volunteers, and the outreach work of bringing treatment center clients into A.A. was formally adopted at the 1991 Conference. From successes in Oklahoma, Southern Minnesota, and Northeast U.S. Areas, A.A.W.S. first published *Bridging the Gap---Between Treatment and AA. Through Temporary Contact Programs* in 1991, establishing a network for temporary sponsors and contacts to bring the treatment center clients into the Fellowship when they leave the facilities. NIA T.F.C. chairpersons have coordinated the "Temporary Contact Program" in the past five years by matching clients with AA. volunteers in the towns they return to after treatment, with much assistance and development of "Bridging the Gap" ideas from NIA's District T.F.C. chairpersons.

The *Treatment Facilities Newsletter* was first published by A.A.W.S.' New York office in 1988 and has been sent to both T.F.C. chairpersons and treatment centers at least two times a year since then, although some years have had the opportunity for a quarterly mailing. The A.A.W.S. videotape *Hope: Alcoholics Anonymous* was developed from the effort of Treatment Facilities Committees and was released in 1990. Much of the film highlights A.A.'s outreach work in treatment centers, and it has been an excellent tool for many T.F.C. volunteers and chairpersons in explaining A.A.'s principles to newcomers and prospective members.

The CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES COMMITTEE was separated from the Institutions Committee by the 1977 General Service Conference. Northern Illinois Area voted unanimously to separate the committee from Hospitals and Institutions at the 1978 Summer Assembly. Just as the formation of the H. and I. Committee in 1976 had corrected overlapping efforts with Public Information Committees, creating a NIA Correctional Facilities Committee helped focus the scope H. and I. while enabling the C.F.C. effort to prosper. NIA members were carrying the A.A. message of recovery "behind the walls" into prisons for many years before the beginning of an autonomous Area 20, where Corrections existed as a sub-committee within the Institutions Committee. Early examples of A.A. members working with prison facilities were reported by Earl R. of Joliet, a past Treasurer of Downstate A.A. in the mid-1950s.' Earl R. became an A.A. Coordinator with the Illinois Department of Corrections, and as an A.A. member as well as a Department of Corrections employee, he greatly helped to create a productive linkage between Alcoholics Anonymous and the formation of prison groups in Illinois. In a 1978 report to the NIA Summer Assembly on conditions at Stateville Prison in Joliet, Earl shared that his length of Correctional Facilities A.A. service spanned over twenty-five years. Susie R. of Joliet, confirmed as NIA Archives Committee Chairperson at the 1992 Fall Assembly, began volunteering at the women's prison at Dwight, Illinois in the early 1960s.' She has maintained her participation and involvement by sponsoring and representing both groups and individual inmates. Susie served as NIA Correctional Facilities Committee Chairperson from mid-1988 through 1991.

The county jails and state prisons have benefited from NIA participation. NIA and District C.F.C. chairpersons have started A.A. meetings and provided books, literature, and volunteers to

assist in carrying the A.A. message into correctional facilities. The A.A. World Services, Inc. publication of softcover/ paperback books gained approval by General Service Conferences beginning in 1986, when the need for the new format was announced by Correctional Facilities Committees.

The State of Illinois has always required background checks on volunteers, but clearance from the Department of Corrections has never been particularly difficult for A.A. members. Volunteers provide Social Security numbers and personal information to C.F.C. members, who then contact the Illinois Department of Corrections. Waiting periods for clearance have never been longer than one month and volunteers are usually approved within one or two weeks. In December of 1994, NIA C.F.C. Chairperson Steve S. reported his acceptance as a Statewide Volunteer, along with his receipt of an identification card that provides immediate clearance to any Illinois correctional facility. The statewide clearance for A.A. volunteers developed over many years of negotiation, effort, and cooperation from C.F.C. members and can be considered a milestone for C.F.C. access to inmates in Illinois.

In more recent years, C.F.C. members began an outreach to Youth Centers, and NIA C.F.C. has coordinated contact lists for paroled inmates to be met by A.A. volunteers with its own multi-Area "Bridging the Gap" program. While the nationwide Corrections Correspondence Service has been a function of C.F.C. through the General Service Office in New York, NIA C.F.C. chairpersons continue to announce the rewarding possibilities of writing letters to inmates that share our experience, strength, and hope.

A.A.W.S. produced a sixteen-minute film *It Sure Beats Sitting In A Cell* after approval by the 1987 General Service Conference, from development of the pamphlet with the same title. In 1991 A.A.W.S. published *A.A. In Prison: Inmate To Inmate*. The

booklet of thirty-two personal stories collected from the *A.A. Grapevine* shares the success of the C.F. C. effort to carry the A.A. message "behind the walls" to the suffering alcoholic.

## PUBLIC INFORMATION COMMITTEE

In an indirect way, the Public Information efforts by NIA Districts created the need for the establishment of committees at the Area 20 level. As early as the Spring Assembly in 1976, minutes included Public Information reports. When the 1976 NIA Committee appointed a Coordinator between the Hospitals and Institutions and Public Information committees, a clearer and better-directed development defined each committee's scope, responsibilities, and areas of focus.

Service Committee meetings preceded the afternoon Assemblies beginning with 11 a.m. sessions in 1977. A.A.s representing Public Information had no NIA chairperson and met with the Hospitals and Institutions groups until April 1977, when the NIA Committee Meeting elected the P.I. Chairman and Alternate Chairman who were nominated at the Spring Assembly. Yearly expenses of \$50 were approved at the Spring Assembly for each of the four new trusted servants on the two committees.

Ruth P., elected NIA Delegate at the 1977 Fall Assembly in Freeport, was seated on the Conference Public Information Committee when P.I. interest began to grow at NIA. An Area-wide "Speakers Bureau" was established in 1977, and NIA P.I. efforts provided pamphlet literature to many doctors and churches. The NIA P.I. Chairman emphasized that Districts could donate A.A. books to local schools and libraries, continuing the public information outreach that many NIA Districts had performed for several years. The Area 20 P.I. Committee held orientation sessions for A.A.s interested in P.I. work, and it coordinated and reported on activities throughout the Area. Early NIA Public

Information Committees purchased pamphlets for distribution in NIA Districts, assisted Districts in writing letters to local community leaders and professionals, and maintained good communication with District P.I. committees.

The 1971 General Service Conference established the Conference Committee on Professional Relations to coordinate activities with a corresponding Trustees' committee established in 1970. Both committees were renamed as the Cooperation With the Professional Community (C.P.C.) Committee at the 1974 Conference. However, separating C.P.C. from P.I. in Area 20 was not resolved until 1985, when the Fall Assembly formally established the NIA C.P.C. Committee to begin service in 1986. Public Information transferred to C.P.C. much of its outreach to doctors, police, legal professionals, and clergy, and redirected its efforts toward schools, community groups, mass media, and coordinating the NIA Speakers Bureau.

The NIA P.I. Committee announced the availability of audiovisual items for Area-wide use in the summer of 1987. Many 16 mm films were purchased for general use in the next year and were announced as additionally available in two videocassette formats of regular VHS and 3/4" for television broadcasting. The films for Public Information outreach in the mid-1980s were *Young People In A.A.*, *It Sure Beats Sitting In A Cell*, and *A.A.--- An Inside View*. Two other 16 mm films, *Bill's Own Story* and *Bill On The Twelve Traditions* were placed in the audiovisual lending library. A very large collection of items has been placed in the NIA P.I. library since 1988 and always is available to A.A. groups, A.A. committees, Districts, and individuals. NIA P.I. Committees added the films *Hope: Alcoholics Anonymous*, *A.A. Rap With Us*, *Markings On the Journey*, and *Circles of Love and Service* when released on videocassette. P.I. also makes available public service announcements for broadcast on radio and television. In the 1990s, books and pamphlets in Braille as well

As films in American Sign Language were announced by P.I. Committees for individuals with special needs. The current potential of on-line computer networking has generated much discussion of possible Public Information activity.

The NIA Public Information Committees continually announce the successful methods and tools that can reach local communities. The coordination of outreach effort by P.I. chairpersons since the 1977 committee establishment at NIA generates a durable and effective field of A.A. service involvement.

C.P.C. – COOPERATION WITH THE PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITY branched out from the Public Information Committee in a similar separations as seen in Corrections and Treatment Facilities Committees.

Current C.P.C. efforts with health fairs, court information programs, and coordination of NIA District activities have proven the C.P.C. Committee as more than its originally focussed third-party method of contact, where C.P.C. contacts professionals having exposure and involvement with people who could be attracted by the A.A. program of recovery. The 1994 NIA C.P.C. Committee built a display of C.P.C. materials that NIA Districts have actively used with assistance from the Area level committee.

## A LARGER AND LONGER ASSEMBLY

The 1984 Fall Assembly in Round Lake approved a motion to begin NIA Assemblies with morning sessions. Until its first full Saturday Assembly held that December in Palatine, all NIA Assemblies began at 1:00 or 1:30 p.m. The growing need for meetings of the NIA service committees could not have been accommodated in an afternoon Assembly session. The morning

meetings of NIA committees informally started in 1977, and these pre-Assembly meetings attracted more A.A.s as more committees were established at the Area level. Most importantly, more time was needed for discussions in a General Service Representatives' meeting session. G.S.R.s attended Assemblies throughout our early history, but only met as its own "group" when presentations were given on AA service topics. D.C.M.s encourage an G.S.R.s to participate at Area meetings and the entire NIA Committee always seeks the involvement of G.S.R.s in Area 20 Assemblies. First-time G.S.R.s are welcomed to an Assembly with the same enthusiasm as newcomers at any A.A. recovery group, and their reception at the start of each Assembly shows an honest appreciation of their attendance.

Since the Winter Assembly of 1984, the largest group of A.A.s holding discussions at NIA Assemblies has always been the G.S.R. meeting. Many Assemblies have needed to divide G.S.R.s into two groups to allow for better sharing. Chaired between Delegates and/ or past Delegates, the NIA Chairperson, Alternate Delegate, or Alternate NIA Chairperson, the G.S.R. sessions discuss NIA committee activity, current business items, and conduct its meeting along the lines of general sharing sessions.

The G.S.R. sessions serve as forums to find solutions to problems shared by groups, and the attractiveness of A.A service is one of the many results that the sessions can generate. The entire Fellowship continues to emphasize that the post of a group's G.S.R. is the most important position in Alcoholics Anonymous. The attraction to continue A.A. service work at other committee levels actually begins with the information that is passed along to the G.S.R.s. The consensus of each A.A. group, actively sought by Districts and Assemblies and carried by the G.S.R.s, maintains the strength of our Fellowship today. The NIA Assembly relies on the informed group conscience brought by G.S.R.s to all its voted decisions.

The NIA Assembly starting time of 9:30 a.m. changed to a 9:00 Assembly start beginning with the 1990 Spring Assembly held in Joliet, to accommodate the need and request for longer service committee meeting time.

The Assembly format of morning service committee meetings and G.S.R. sessions was reversed for only one year beginning with the 1991 Summer Assembly. It was felt that business items could be more easily decided at the start of each Assembly. A secondary intent of having a larger “quorum” (voting representation) to conduct business in the morning sessions was discussed by the NIA Committee during an ongoing Twelve Traditions inventory in early 1991. The earlier format, committee sessions in the morning and full NIA discussions and voting held in the afternoon sessions, was restored by a vote at the 1992 Fall Assembly held in Barrington. The G.S.R. meeting of that Assembly developed and presented the motion, and as reported in the minutes: “Frustration levels were quite high over the Assembly format. The G.S.R.s felt that more time was needed to discuss the issues and become better informed prior to voting.”<sup>35</sup>

The NIA ANSWERING SERVICE COMMITTEE was established at the 1984 Winter Assembly held in Palatine. First developed during the preceding year as an ad hoc committee, the Assembly acknowledged its importance and approved its establishment as a regular NIA standing committee.

The NIA Answering Service Committee’s effort to obtain telephone numbers for all Area 20 Districts and towns resulted in an Area-wide listing first printed in the 1984 summer issue of the newsletter *NIA Concepts*. Assisting newcomers with

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<sup>35</sup> September 12, 1992 NIA Fall Assembly minutes, Barrington. Reported by Priscilla S., NIA Secretary.

Source: NIA Archives

answering service work, helping District Answering Service chairpersons with successful procedures, and updating the NIA telephone listings of Districts and towns attracted active participation at the Area 20 level.

At the 1988 Winter Committee Meeting, a professionally printed NIA map with confirmed telephone numbers for A.A. answering services was distributed in three sizes. The 8 1/2 by 11" size currently in use incorporates the same graphics of the original map. It continues to serve its effective purpose of providing A.A. contact anywhere in Northern Illinois Area 20.

July 1993 reporting by the Group Service Department at the General Service Office in New York announced that the *A.A. Guideline on Answering Service Committees* would be discontinued as a single *Guideline*. One of fourteen A.A. Service Guidelines available from Group Services in 1993, its content would be condensed into an *A.A. Guideline On Intergroup and Central Offices*. To prevent the Answering Service guideline's departure as a distinct service piece, members of the NIA Committee began correspondence to Group Services staff toward reconsideration of its decision. From September through November 1993, many letters were mailed by NIA trusted servants in favor of re-establishing the *Guideline*. Group Services notified Area 20 in early December that as a result of our concern and positive suggestions, the *A.A. Guideline on Answering Service Committees* was immediately reinstated, and its next printing contained updated information.

The NIA ARCHIVES COMMITTEE developed out of 1981 NIA Assemblies hearing the request for donations of historical items. The NIA Secretary, Trudy P., began assembling a collection for display at NIA Conference weekends, where additional items and displays were loaned from the A.A Archives at the General

Service Office. In 1984 an Archivist was approved by the NIA Assembly after selection by the NIA Committee. The responsibilities of collecting, sorting, maintaining, storing, and coordinating items and displays was ably met by Greg N. of Waukegan, who served the NIA Archives Committee until the end of 1993.

The Archives Committee did not have its own chairperson until 1988, when immediate past Delegate Hank G. of Princeton was appointed by the NIA Committee. The standard procedure at that time was to offer the past Delegate the chairmanship of the NIA Grapevine Committee, but Hank volunteered to serve as chairperson of the Archives Committee instead. As a result, two Archivists served NIA for the next four years. In 1992, the NIA Committee affirmed the idea that the Alternate Archives Chairperson would serve as the NIA Archivist and would maintain the collection of the NIA Archives. Susie R. of Joliet was appointed as the Archives Committee Chairperson by the 1992 NIA Committee, and she continues to lead the Archives Committee sessions at NIA Assemblies. She remains actively involved with the committee's Alternate Chairperson, the NIA Archivist.

The collection of A.A. historical items comprises audiocassette tapes, hundreds of older editions of A.A. books and pamphlets, and thousands of written, typed, and printed records of NIA proceedings. Many NIA Districts have contacted the NIA Archives Committee when researching District histories. The current Archives Chairperson developed the idea of collecting and organizing audiocassette tapes, and a portable tape player and earphones was purchased by NIA Archives in 1993. An active part of displays in the Archives rooms of weekend Conferences, visitors can listen to taped A.A. talks and interviews having A.A. historical value.

The NIA Archives also maintains two large podium-sized photographs of Bill W. and Bob S., the co-founders of Alcoholics Anonymous. NIA Archives offers the photographs for use at A.A. Conferences weekends as well as providing archival items for any Area 20 event

Archives Committee sessions at NIA Assemblies assist District Archivists, discuss the direction and continuing development of the Area 20 Archives, and provide the opportunity for lengthy and detailed sharing sessions about AA. history at its meetings.

In 1994 and 1995, the consensus for the General Service Conference to implement the establishment of a Conference Archives Committee was approved and announced at NIA Assemblies. The 1995 Conference declined to proceed with its development, and the Trustees Archives Committee at A.A.W.S. reports to the General Service Conference as the only committee without a corresponding Conference Committee comprised of Area Delegates. Fortunately the representation for A.A. Archives is served well by the Trustees Archives Committee.

The NIA Archives Committee continues to collect, store, and maintain historical material relating to NIA history, and an itemized inventory of NIA Archives' possessions was begun in late 1994. The NIA Archives Committee actively seeks additions to its growing collection of historical items.

The position of NIA HISTORIAN developed out of the 1987 NIA Archives Committee for the writing of *A Brief History of NIA*, completed in 1993. The 1994 Spring Committee Meeting at Cortland received the resignation of the NIA Historian and appointed a replacement, through a cordial challenge to the NIA Committee that a detailed and comprehensive history of Area 20 Alcoholics Anonymous could be presented and made available to A.A. members in Northern Illinois Area. The 1994 Summer Assembly in Cambridge approved the position of an ad hoc NIA

Historian to research and complete a finished manuscript. A panel of NIA trusted servants discussed the manuscript in January and December of 1995, and the NIA History Project's reviewed manuscript for *An Alcoholics Anonymous History of Northern Illinois Area 20* was forwarded to the 1996 NIA Assembly. A definition of the scope and responsibilities for NIA Historian, a separate position from the NIA Archives Committee, was approved at the 1995 NIA Spring Committee Meeting. The description for the NIA Historian post, developed from the ad hoc Historian experience, was included with *Suggestions for NIA Trusted Servants* presented to the 1995 Summer Assembly held in Crystal Lake.

#### NIA GRAPEVINE COMMITTEE

The 1982 NIA Summer Assembly held at the Deck Restaurant in Geneseo heard its first report by past Delegate "Pete" P. as NIA Grapevine Committee Chairman. NIA minutes do not describe any voting on establishing this committee, but a 1982 NIA Committee Meeting requested Pete P., the immediate past Delegate, to continue his NIA service as the Area 20 Grapevine Representative and Committee Chairperson. After 1983, NIA Grapevine Committee chairpersons and alternate chairs were included in NIA Fall Election Assemblies. The NIA Committee asked past Delegates to stand for the chairmanship of the committee and the Assembly elected the NIA GvR Alternates from its other members. Immediate past Delegates Pete P., John G., and Jack O. each served two year terms as NIA Grapevine Chairmen until 1988, when immediate past Delegate Hank G. voiced his preference to serve at NIA Archives.

The past Delegates, as well as succeeding NIA Grapevine Committee chairpersons, utilized contacts with the *A.A. Grapevine* Board's office in New York to bring the most recent

Announcements and events to NIA Assemblies. The committee reported news, assisted new GvRs and NIA District GvRs, attended and led many GvR workshops, and informed the NIA Assemblies of all the items that *A.A. Grapevine* offered in addition to the magazine. The enthusiastic announcements and reporting continue today.

The 1988 Summer Assembly approved the purchase of a selection of items for resale at Assemblies, and the resale of items carried over to NIA Conference weekends. *A.A. Grapevine* materials such as audicassette tapes, posters, *Best of Grapevine* and *Came to Believe* paperbacks, calendars, and other special items were placed in a rotating stock that was replenished with funds taken into the committee from cash sales. Apart from any shortfalls of carrying over items between service terms, the procedure of “seed money” has been very successful for the NIA Grapevine committees. Of special note, NIA Grapevine added the hardcover book *Language of the Heart* in 1989, the collected writings of Bill W. published in the magazine from 1944 to 1970. The collection of articles is grouped into three chronological segments, and contains an almost entire record of Bill’s articles (the book’s editors decided not to duplicate any of the writing that was already available in other A.A.W.S. publications).

The 1990 Grapevine Committee built a portable and colorful display for showcasing all the tools the A.A. Grapevine offers the Fellowship: the magazine, books, booklets, calendars, tapes, posters, and all special items. Current NIA Assemblies enjoy and utilize the display.

The NIA LITERATURE COMMITTEE began as a new NIA committee with its approved establishment at the 1995 Fall Election Assembly held in Arlington Heights. The NIA Committee placed the new committee’s responsibilities for

announcing current developments and discussions of changes to new or existing A.A.W.S. literature, showcasing the current literature available, providing a resource for service committee workbooks, and acting as the Area 20 liaison to the Trustees Literature Committee staff at the General Service Office. While the NIA Literature Committee's purpose is not intended for it to become a clearinghouse or broker to bulk-purchase A.A.W.S. literature, its potential to generate enthusiasm and highlight the content of A.A.W.S. literature appears full of promise.

*CONCEPTS, THE NORTHERN ILLINOIS AREA SERVICE LETTER* printed its first issue in the spring of 1982. The idea of printing an Area 20 newsletter was discussed during 1981 and was developed out of the NIA Public Information Committee. 500 hand-assembled issues were distributed at NIA Assemblies on its first "run," and *Concepts* brought an immediate positive response and acceptance from all NIA members. The early years of *NIA Concepts* reported the changes of Area 20's redistricting and rapid expansion. The 1995 estimated circulation reaches 2,600 active readers. Following the rotation of its first editor, Wally P. of Aurora, the NIA Committee appointed the newsletter's next three editors.

The intent of *NIA Concepts* to inform, challenge, announce, and celebrate A.A. service to the Fellowship brings wide-ranging acclaim to the quarterly issues. Each editor and editorial board has attempted to manage the newsletter's growing circulation while turning aside any ideas of charging a subscription fee.

No matter how large the circulation, *NIA Concepts* is available without charge. Its editors request contributions, especially from NIA trusted servants, of written works, ideas, and any NIA member's "language of the heart."

The NIA Archives holds at least two sets of issues dating from 1982 to present, and often places the entire collection in its Archives displays for viewing at NIA Conferences and events. *NIA Concepts* is distributed at all NIA meetings and also is mailed bulk rate to the many A.A.s requesting its delivery. *NIA Concepts* remains one of the important Northern Illinois Area 20 services provided to its members.

The 1991 NIA Winter Assembly held in Grayslake approved the printing of a *G.S.R. Handbook*, developed by *Concepts* editor Tex B. The first edition of NIA's *G.S.R. Handbook* was highlighted at the 1992 Winter Committee Meeting held in Sycamore, and 2,000 handbooks were distributed by D.C.M.s and given to G.S.R.s at NIA Assemblies over the next two years. Updates to the *G.S.R. Handbook* brought a 1994 second edition and a 1995 third edition assisting the G.S.R.s of Area 20. The handbook does not take the place of the G.S.R. section of the *A.A. Service Manual*, but brings its focus to participating G.S.R.s in Northern Illinois Area. As different issues of *NIA Concepts* presented topics on fields of A.A. service work, the positive response to an article "Welcome to the New G.S.R." from the Spring 1990 *Concepts* provided the opportunity for the Area to implement the development and approval of the well-received *NIA G.S.R. Handbook*.

NIA SPRING CONFERENCE COMMITTEES reported to the NIA Committee and Assemblies after the NIA Assembly approves a District's bid for the annual Spring Conference weekends. Current NIA guidelines ask that Districts plan its bids one and one-half years before each NIA Spring Conference. The 1994 NIA Committee consensus recommended the extra six months,

Allowing an increased planning time and easier reservation opportunities for negotiated dates with hotels and resorts.

The NIA Spring Conference weekends, beginning on Friday afternoons through noon Sundays, currently draw a registration of over one thousand A.A., Al-Anon, and Al-a-Teen members and visitors. With the assistance of NIA trusted servants, presentation panels are organized around various aspects of service in the Fellowship. Many times an invited representative from A.A.'s General Service Office participates as a speaker or panel presenter. Hospitality "greeting" rooms are open with coffee and snacks, one hour A.A. "Alcathon" meetings, "Al-Anonathon" meetings, and Al-a-Teen sessions begin on Friday evenings and continue around-the-clock through the Spring Conference's closing on Sunday morning. A dance follows the Saturday night banquet and featured A.A. speaker. NIA Spring Conference themes highlight the Fellowship's spirit of community, celebration, and never fail to carry the message of experience, strength, and hope.

Since 1978, remaining funds after conference expenses have been returned to the Spring Conference Committee for distribution among the participating Fellowships of Al-Anon and Alcoholics Anonymous. The original distribution of excess money was passed on to the General Service Office, but changed as the NIA Committee developed its Spring Conference guidelines. The NIA Assemblies regularly discuss and approve any updates to its conference planning guidelines.

THE ILLINOIS A.A. STATE CONFERENCE COMMITTEE planned its first summer conference weekend in 1973, with leadership drawn equally between the three A.A. Delegate Areas in Illinois. While the first A.A. State Conference at Bradley University in Peoria lost \$1,100 due to an overcommitment of rooms reserved but not filled, planning guidelines were developed with participation from each Area. Karen T. completed a revised

Budget Guide to assist the A.A. State Conference Committee and it was included in the 1974 update to the conference Planning Digest. Ideas were freely mixed by each Area for their own future conference weekends as a result of the early Planning Digest model. The summer A.A. State Conference weekends move between sites in each of Illinois' three Areas from one year to the next, and provide the opportunity for Illinois A.A.s to participate in the Fellowship's unity.

Illinois A.A. State Conference planning enjoys the experience of each Area's Delegate and Chairperson as members of its policy committee. As direct result of this inter-Area sharing, A.A. State Conferences accent the A.A. Legacy of Service.

Illinois first hosted an EAST CENTRAL REGIONAL CONFERENCE in 1975 at the Sheraton O'Hare Inn (presently named the Clarion Inn) in Rosemont, and all Delegate Areas of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, and Wisconsin rotate as hosts for each year's regional Conference event.

NIA discussed the potential of a service weekend at the beginning of the 1990s, but consensus gradually developed for Area 20 to hold an annual *BIG BOOK CONFERENCE* in its place. District 40 hosted the first NIA *BIG BOOK CONFERENCE* at Naperville's Holiday Inn in 1994, and the one-day October conference's success was repeated in 1995 at Pottawatomie Center in St. Charles District 61. Bidding procedures were added to the NIA service guidelines in early 1995, where each NIA District has the opportunity to bid, plan, and host the newest NIA service event.

District 80 held the first NIA DELEGATE'S PRE-CONFERENCE WORKSHOP in Ottawa in 1993. The NIA

Committee approved the idea of an all-day February meeting for NIA members to discuss agenda items planned for the General Service Conference.

It provides an open forum between the Area 20 Delegate and all NIA members. The DELEGATE'S WORKSHOP hears presentations from NIA trusted servants, bringing discussion on Conference Committee ideas nearing action at the April's General Service Conference. The consensus of NIA groups, carried through the voices of the A.As participating, gives the NIA Delegate the opportunity to understand the NIA group conscience. That group conscience is carried to New York for developments and decisions by the Conference. The 1990s' have experienced a more timely notification of the Conference agendas, announced in a preliminary agenda format at the end of January. The Delegate's Workshop session allows a better and more fully deliberated NIA consensus to assist the NIA Delegate in the expression of Area 20 views. Complete verbal transcripts were printed after the initial two Workshops, and reports of each year's sessions are distributed as soon as possible before the Delegate leaves for the Conference. The 1994 NIA Committee voted to hold the Pre-Conference Workshop closer to the Conference's April startup, scheduling March 1995 for the third NIA Delegate's Pre-Conference Workshop.

The success of the first Delegate's Workshop developed the addition of the POST-CONFERENCE DELEGATE'S WORKSHOP in 1994, held within a few weeks after the close of the General Service Conference. It is announced as the NIA Delegate's chance to present an immediate General Service Conference report to Area 20. Hosted by District 73 in Rochelle, the geographically central NIA location proved successful, as both the 1994 and 1995 Pre-Conference and Post-Conference

Workshops held full discussions there on General Service Conference topics with excellent preparation and participation.

## A TEXTBOOK DEMOCRACY

Northern Illinois Area discourages no A.A. member from participating at Assemblies or from standing for election to any position on the Area 20 Committee. The active sharing in an atmosphere of “textbook democracy” permeates all NIA meetings and events. At any given time, ad hoc Committees are formed and dissolved, thoughtful ideas are freely given, and volunteers regularly meet the requests of NIA Committee members.

As practiced in the entire Fellowship’s actions, Tradition Eleven’s “attraction rather than promotion” and Concept Four’s “right of participation” appear very much alive and well in Area 20 service to Alcoholics Anonymous.

## AREA 20 “OFFICERS,” THE REMAINING MEMBERS OF THE NIA COMMITTEE

D.C.M.s (DISTRICT COMMITTEE MEMBERS) held the largest amount of votes at NIA Committee Meetings since the beginning of NIA autonomy in 1972. Many early NIA minutes referred to the NIA Committee Meetings as “D.C.M.s Meetings,” emphasizing the reporting purpose for much of each session. Whether or not D.C.M.s delivered lengthy reports at the NIA Committee Meetings, their presence and voices carried each NIA District’s views and group conscience. The same activity occurs at current NIA Committee Meetings.

The 1995 Spring Assembly held in Indian Creek approved a major revision to NIA Service Structure Guidelines. The compilation of approved actions that were collected for an updated NIA Guideline contained no major changes, but discussion led by

a few D.C.M.s at the Assembly brought an entirely new idea to NIA: that Alternate D.C.M.s possess an additional vote, along with the attending D.C.M.s, at all future NIA Committee Meetings. Discussion progressed around ideas of fairness, the possible increase of participation, and the certain aspect of inclusion that NIA had always emphasized. The “motion to include” D.C.M.s and their Alternate D.C.M.s with individual votes at the NIA Committee Meetings was included with the revisions to the NIA Service Structure Guidelines that the Spring Assembly unanimously approved.

THE NIA SECRETARY AND ALTERNATE SECRETARY positions record, produce, and distribute meeting minutes as their major responsibility, but much more is accomplished by this two-person NIA Committee. Nearly every NIA Secretary report at Area 20 meetings requested that NIA members, when notifying G.S.O., additionally mail service position changes and new information to the NIA Secretary. The complete NIA service roster or Alternate G.S.R.s, G.S.R.s, District Committee chairpersons and alternate chairpersons, along with the elected NIA trusted servants, has been managed in a perpetual state of change.

The NIA Committee Meetings and Assemblies of 1993 discussed establishing a second Area 20 Alternate Secretary position for the single responsibility of coordinating the massive NIA trusted servants listings, with over 1,000 Area 20 groups counted in 1993. However, after much discussion the 1993 Fall Election Assembly in Joliet approved the new position of NIA RECORDKEEPER. Past NIA Secretary, NIA Alternate Delegate, and NIA Chairperson Barb B. was elected “from the hat” to serve, developing the database during her next two years of NIA service.

Barb had first improved the 1984-85 NIA minutes with the use of computers, and her NIA service appeared to come full circle with her effort to update the computer tracking of records for 1994-95.

The NIA SECRETARIES, brought progress and positive developments to the position and duties of an A.A. service secretary. A 1993 Secretary's Workshop in Aurora intended to write a suggested guideline and replace an outdated *A.A. Secretary's Handbook* not revised since 1954 (and located in the NIA Archives). The resulting March 1994 *District Secretary Guidelines/ Handbook* proved a tremendous assist to elected A.A. Secretaries in Area 20. The suggestion for policy toward the confidentiality of Area minutes was presented and approved by the 1994 Winter Assembly held in Grayslake, and was a direct result of the first Secretary's Workshop discussions. Future NIA meeting minutes would list full names, record the names of A.As presenting and seconding motions, and would contain the following header: "The NIA Minutes are considered confidential and ought to be used for A.A. purposes only."

Alternate NIA Secretary Dale G. presented the 1994 Summer NIA Committee Meeting with a computer printout of all recorded voting approvals at NIA meetings from 1974 NIA minutes forward. The 1994 Summer Assembly held in Geneva added an additional motion, while accepting the idea that Area 20 meetings needed an easy access to the record of all motions approved throughout NIA history: "Take money from the Computer Fund to purchase a laptop (portable computer) suitable to our needs at the Area meetings."<sup>36</sup> NIA Secretaries utilize and update the *NIA Database of Approved Motions and Actions* at Area 20 meetings, and a printout of the file is located in the NIA Archives.

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<sup>36</sup> NIA Fall Assembly Minutes, pages 4 of 5 pages, September 10, 1994. Reported by Dale G., NIA Alternate Secretary. Source: NIA Archives

## NIA TREASURER

The 1974 establishment of a \$2,000 “ceiling” to funds located in the NIA Treasury allowed NIA Treasurers to pass along NIA funds to the General Fund at A.A. World Services, an annual contribution made to the General Service Office at the close of each year. Annual donations are made from the “extra” moneys above the NIA prudent reserve sum. No funds were ever donated to G.S.O. that might impair the operations of a well-funded start to each new year, and the contributions to the General Fund varied through the years of NIA history. A detailed accounting of each year is not included here but someday may be prepared in a future NIA effort.

The 1980 NIA Fall Committee Meeting prepared its first budget of \$6,000 for Area 20 expenses and its motion for Assembly approval was presented by then-NIA Chairman Jack O. The 1981 Winter Assembly held in District 7 approved a 1982 NIA budget in the amount of \$8, 412. In contrast, with the addition of NIA Committees and the ongoing development of Reserve Funds (totaling \$15,000 in 1995), the 1995 Winter Assembly held in Rockford approved a 1996 NIA budget of \$41,800. The budget increases match the continuous growth of Northern Illinois Area 20, while funds from NIA groups and Districts regularly provide welcome contributions.

Many NIA Treasurers of the 1970s’ and early 1980s’ announced the idea of “gratitude: contributions in a loosely organized program called “A Penny A Day For Sobriety.” In 1986, the NIA Treasurer began the practice of sending money collected in a “Birthday Plan” to the General Fund at G.S.O., kept separate from any other funds passed along at the end of each year. These “Remember November” gratitude donations, sent by NIA groups and members to the NIA Treasury, passes along an annually collected Birthday Plan sum between \$1,500 to \$5,000. The NIA Birthday Plan contributions help offset

A.A.W.S. operating costs involved in carrying the A.A. message throughout our worldwide Fellowship.

NIA achieved an Illinois Sales Tax exemption through the effort of 1981 Treasurer (and past Delegate) Lou D., and the exemption was renewed in 1992. The Area 20 goal of achieving federal Internal Revenue Service status as a not-for-profit organization began with the guidance of Dennis J, 1990-91 NIA Treasurer, beginning with the incorporation of "Northern Illinois Area, Limited (NIA, Ltd.)." All the details for a "corporate charter" and required submittals for NIA's non-profit acceptance took place in 1994 and 1995. Designed to lower mailing costs and prevent NIA liability for any federal taxes, Area 20's new classification as "federally tax-exempt" was happily announced by NIA Treasurer Larry D. to the 1995 Summer Assembly held in Crystal Lake. The NIA Assembly warmly received the news with resounding applause for the result of a very involved and lengthy effort.

The NIA CHAIRPERSON AND NIA ALTERNATE CHAIRPERSON serve in positions that involve a great amount of time, travel, and effort. NIA Chairperson not only lead the Assemblies and Committee meetings but serve as liaisons to A.A. State Conference Committees, NIA Spring Conference planning committees, and all planning committees for any NIA events. The smooth and amicable conduct of NIA meetings owe much to the energies and leadership abilities shown by the NIA Chairpersons.

The NIA DELEGATE AND ALTERNATE DELEGATE serve as Area 20's messengers to worldwide Alcoholics Anonymous. Our Delegate is seated with the total of ninety-two Area Delegates to the General Service Conference. Conference Committee

assignments are randomly chosen by the Trustees Conference Committee and are given to our NIA Delegate for the two years of the service term. Every Standing Committee of the Conference has been served at least once in the two year terms of the twenty-three elected NIA Delegates serving Area 20 since 1952.

Participation at the General Service Conferences defines a Delegate as one of the members of the Conference with a duty to act and vote in the best interests of A.A. as a whole. The NIA concerns and group conscience carried to the Conference many times gain strength and momentum toward decisions approved as "Advisory Actions." The Advisory Actions are the final Conference consensus that provide specific solutions and recommendations to the General Service Board of A.A. World Services, Inc. The intent of any Conference consensus always reflects a consideration of the entire Fellowship.

The 1995-96 *A.A. Service Manual* repeats a list of fifteen primary duties for an Area Delegate, highlighting only two relating to the Conference. NIA Delegates arrange schedules of even larger amounts of time, travel, and effort than those described in the NIA Chairperson service position. An immense amount of mailed correspondence also arrives at the NIA Delegate's address, containing news, views, and discussions of every conceivable issue involving the Conference and current activities of service in Alcoholics Anonymous.

The current Pre-Conference Delegate's Workshop assists the NIA Delegate's preparation for the General Service Conference more efficiently than in years past, just as the Post-Conference Delegate's Workshop provides the members of Area 20 a more immediate and personal reporting on the events of the General Service Conference.

The honor to serve Alcoholics Anonymous as a member of the General Service Conference passes from one elected NIA Delegate to the next every two years, but the permanent right of participation allowed past Delegates delivers much more than any past Delegate's single vote at NIA meetings. Area 20 Delegates deliver a voice of experience, ability, trusted leadership, and a certain wry humility to every ongoing Area 20 discussion. In appreciation, Northern Illinois Area always extends its welcome.

## **CHARTING THE NIA DISTRICT BOUNDARIES A REDISTRICTING TIME-LINE**

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- 1951-1960 Downstate Illinois A.A., two combined A.A. Areas listing nine (9) Districts. No maps located. Boundaries included the entire state without the Chicago and Cook County A.A. Delegate Area 19.
- 1960 Downstate Illinois A.A. Conference (Assembly) increased to twelve (12) Districts. No maps located. Boundary approved, dividing Northern and Southern A.A. Delegate Areas, following an east-west line on U.S. Route 24 to the Mississippi river.
- 1965 Annual General Service Conference Final Report first records reporting from Northern Illinois Area 20 containing six (6) Districts. No maps located.
- 1968 Downstate Illinois A.A. approves the inclusion of any independent A.A. groups willing to support the Illinois A.A. Conference (the combined Assembly of Northern Illinois Area 20 and Southern Illinois Area 21).
- 1969 Proposal to create a fourth Illinois Delegate Area tabled by the Downstate Assembly. All Downstate Illinois A.A. Districts are re-numbered to reflect current growth: ten (10) Districts in Area 20 and ten (10) Districts in Area 21.

## **CHARTING THE NIA DISTRICT BOUNDARIES A REDISTRICTING TIME-LINE**

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- 1975      Boundaries for NIA Districts 5 and 5A approved by NIA Summer Assembly in Moline. Refer to the first available map preserved from 1975. Located on page 34, it is the earliest existing map found through the NIA Histroy Project research.
- 1975      District 1 redrawn as District 1 and District 1A. Reported to the Winter Assembly at Yorktown Auditorium, Lombard
- 1978      District 2 divided into eight (8) Districts: 2A, 2B, 2C, 2D, 2E, 2F, 2G, and 2H.
- 1979      NIA Spring Assembly declines to proceed with an Area 20 group directory, as individual District recordkeeping and updating within NIA Districts are favored. Motion to publish Area 20 directory withdrawn.
- 1981      District 4 voting reported its consensus to divide into four (4) new Districts. Approved by the NIA Winter Assembly held in District 7.
- 1982      Reflected in the minutes of the Summer Assembly held in District 9, all Districts were assigned two-digit numbers. The Records Department at the General Service Office in New Rok would no longer use letters as part of any District designation.

## CHARTING THE NIA DISTRICT BOUNDARIES A REDISTRICTING TIME-LINE

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- 1982 (cont'd) A unified code was developed for the computer system used by G.S.O. in 1982. Accordingly, District 9 became District 90. Previous redistricting of District 2 renamed as Districts 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, and 28. District 4 divisions were listed as Districts 40, 41, 42, and 43. Districts 1 and 1A were renamed Districts 10 and 11.
- 1982 At the July NIA Committee Meeting held in Batavia, the first professionally printed map of NIA was distributed after one-year development. 1,000 maps were color printed in wall sizes of 17 x 22.”
- 1982 Boundaries for District 3 removed from NIA map, reflecting groups aligned with the Chicago Area. Districts 24, 25, 26, and 27 eventually aligned with Chicago Area 19 through 1988.
- 1982 Area 20 service newsletter *NIA Concepts* begins printing the NIA map with updated District boundaries on its front page, continuing the front page charting until 1988.
- 1982 NIA Winter Assembly held in West Dundee approved the division of District 10 along Interstate 94, adding District 12.

## **CHARTING THE NIA DISTRICT BOUNDARIES A REDISTRICTING TIME-LINE**

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- 1983      NIA Summer Assembly held in Joliet approved the division of District 90 into Districts 90 and 91. Area 20 enjoyed the participation of nineteen (19) A.A. Districts.
- 1984      Boundaries for District 51 and 52 were redrawn to current borders after development and agreement between the two NIA Districts.
- 1985      The original District 6 boundaries divided into two new NIA Districts 61 and 60, with border between Batavia and North Aurora.
- 1985      NIA Fall Assembly held in Ottawa approves the division of District 70 into Districts 70 and 71.
- 1988      NIA Answering Services Committee first presented Area 20 maps with NIA District answering service telephone numbers, listed by Districts and towns. Printed in black and white with three sizes (17 x 24," 11 x 17," 8 1/2 x 11"), the maps were distributed at the Winter Committee Meeting held at Kishwaukee Hospital in DeKalb.
- 1989      Area 20 service newsletter *NIA Concepts* moved its NIA map to inside pages and included NIA District answering service numbers.

## **CHARTING THE NIA DISTRICT BOUNDARIES A REDISTRICTING TIME-LINE**

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- 1990        After six months of development, District 70 presented its proposed division into two Districts to the NIA Spring Assembly held in Joliet. The NIA Assembly approved the addition of District 72.
- 1992        Districts 60 presented details of its proposed division into four Districts at the NIA Summer Assembly held in Aurora. District 60 would consist of daytime meetings in its original borders. The NIA Assembly approved the addition of Districts 62, 63, and 64, located south to north in the original District 60 borders.
- 1993        The NIA Fall Assembly held in Joliet approved the addition of District 73 from a division proposed by District 71, with Dekalb County remaining as District 71.

The above dates and information are taken from minutes of Northern Illinois Area 20 Assemblies and NIA Committee Meetings, located in the NIA Archives.

All of the additions of Districts in Area 20 followed the procedure detailed in the *A.A. Service Manual*. Months of development between the groups of a dividing District preceded the motions to approve new Districts at the NIA Assemblies. The dividing Districts reached full agreement on any boundary changes with all their groups before proposals were carried to the Assemblies.

Updating the maps of Area 20 presented few difficulties over past years, and the NIA Committee actively discussed the accuracy of the *NIA Concepts* maps from 1982 forward. The NIA Answering Services Committee regularly publishes telephone number changes in addition to any new NIA District boundaries.

The earliest found map of Northern Illinois Area, presented on page 34, shows the District boundaries as drawn in the 1969 renumbering and redistricting by the Downstate Illinois A.A. Conference. It included groups from both the South Suburban Intergroup and the West Suburban Intergroup. Approving the 1968 "motion of inclusion" brought many new groups, and later changes to the NIA boundary with the Chicago Area resulted from many of those groups either remaining in NIA or reuniting with the Chicago Area. For example, the boundary of District 3 presented the difficulty of exactly which Area its groups belonged, because of alignments to both Area 20 and Area 19 by different groups. Only the first two 1982 issues of *NIA Concepts* displayed NIA District 3.

NIA Districts will continue to divide when their growth provides the need to redistrict. Since the beginning of NIA autonomy in 1972, growth has created two and one-half times the original number of Area 20 Districts, to twenty-five active A.A. Districts participating in NIA meetings today.

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## APPENDIX I

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Written April 24, 1943 by Ken S., founder of the Sterling Group, the following excerpted from a six-page piece of his observations on membership in Alcoholics Anonymous, and is located in the NIA Archives.

What have we learned as we passed through the various stages of A.A. absorption? What are the things that make today so worthwhile? What has been given us for future guidance?

FIRST, that through God's guidance and Grace, it is possible to live in perfect sobriety, enjoying a greater than normal share of happiness and understanding.

SECOND, that in God we find we have an ever available haven when troubled or goaded by fear or despair---an ever ready guidance, if we but seek with a willingness to follow.

THIRD, that the spirit of God is an ever-present force, understanding, forgiving, loving, and guiding those who seek direction and try to live in accordance with His teachings---teachings upon which is founded our A.A. program of Faith, Tolerance, Humility, and Service.

FOURTH, we have learned, too, that the program so simply stated provides a straight and undeviating pathway to our goal. We need no further guides, guards, bosses, or directors. The way is open, it's up to us.

FIFTH, the program goes beyond meetings---beyond our own little alcoholic world and our homes, when practiced in all our affairs.

SIXTH, we are awakened to realization that we have and must assume obligations and responsibilities---that we owe so much and can repay so little.

SEVENTH, we find that work is the motivating power of our lives. It vitalizes Faith, produces accomplishment. Dryness without work is hunger partially satisfied - Faith without work spells failure.

EIGHTH, we acknowledge that the rights of others must be considered first. There is little danger that we shall forget to look to our own.

NINTH, we also find that "I and We" judge and jury attitude has no place in a program of humility.

TENTH, that resentments include more than well nursed grudges of long standing. The word has many synonyms including: anger, animosity, irascibility, and wrathful indignation.

ELEVENTH, we have found that one of the hardest tasks is to be unselfishly truthful to ourselves, and we have seen truth reborn in the statements and actions of fellow members.

TWELFTH, and most important, we have discovered a capacity for true thankfulness, for the innumerable things large and small that are our daily lot.

So with meditation on past and present, we move on through life, secure in the admonition to look up to where there is an intelligence from which comes all intellect---recognize the source which sustains us and gives us courage and self-reliance.

Source: Provided by District 73 Archives for the NIA History Project and placed in NIA Archives, March 1995:

## APPENDIX II

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Excerpted from the address titled "The Individual, AA., and Society" by Bernard B. Smith, Class A non-alcoholic Trustee, and the first Chairman of the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous 1951-1956. Taken from *AA Comes of Age*, and reprinted with permission of A.A.W.S., Inc.

It is because we know of the tremendous impact that A.A. can have on generations that will follow us that we have been so painstaking in building a structure of service in A.A. in the General Service Board, the General Service Conference, and the many service agencies that perform the essential daily tasks of carrying the A.A. message throughout the world. It is with good reason that Bill has described this structure of service as a legacy, deserving of the same attention and understanding accorded the First Legacy of the Twelve Steps and the Second Legacy of the Twelve Traditions.

But this Third Legacy has a string to it. And the string is that we are granted the use of this legacy for our lifetime upon the condition that we not only look after it but increase its spiritual content for the generations that will follow us. Each succeeding generation, as it receives this legacy, must similarly protect it if they wish to employ it and gain life by it and pass it on to the next generation with an enriched spiritual content.

The General Service Conference of A.A. is, of course, the practical instrument for preserving, enhancing, and administering this great Third Legacy of Service. The concept of the Conference from the beginning has been so simple and compelling. It is grounded in the belief that all of us who have been associated with

A.A. during its early growth and development owe an obligation to society. That obligation is to insure that this fellowship survives, that this flame of faith, this beacon light of hope for the world, must never be extinguished.

We may not need a General Service Conference to insure our own recovery. But we do need it to insure the recovery of the alcoholic who still stumbles in the darkness, seeking the light. We need it to insure the recovery of some newborn child, inexplicably destined to alcoholism. We need it to provide, in keeping with the Twelfth Step, a permanent haven for all alcoholics who in the ages ahead can find in A.A. that rebirth which brought its first members back to life.

We need it because we are conscious of the devastating effect of the human urge for power and prestige which must never be permitted to invade A.A. We need a Conference to insure A.A. against government while insulating it against anarchy; we need it to protect the fellowship against disintegration while preventing overintegration. We need it, so that Alcoholics Anonymous and Alcoholics Anonymous alone may be the ultimate repository of its own Twelve Steps, its Twelve Traditions, and all of its Services.

We need a Conference to insure that changes within A.A. come only as a response to the needs and wants of all AA., and not of any few. We need it to insure that the doors of the halls of A.A. shall never have locks on them, so that all people with an alcoholic problem for all time may enter these halls unmasked and feel welcome. We need it to insure that Alcoholics Anonymous never asks of anyone who needs help what his or her race is, what his or her creed is, or what his or her social position is.

I have considered it a priceless privilege and a great inspirational experience to have been able to serve A.A. as Chairman of the General Service Board for so many years, a position which also enabled me to serve as Chairman of the first six General Service Conferences. When I retired as Chairman,

following the Sixth Conference in April, 1956, I did not feel that I was stepping out of A.A. No one who is a part of A.A., as I feel I have been, steps out. He just steps aside. He continues to serve in the ranks, giving of himself as humbly and as ably as he can.

## APPENDIX II

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### OUR THIRD LEGACY AND A REMARKABLE CONSENSUS

A number of factors apply to the search for a consensus from the groups of Alcoholics Anonymous, and the decisions eventually approved on any particular issue show the use of sound A.A. principles. Any group conscience is hopefully an informed group conscience, where the presentation of background facts combine with current views toward a course of positive action. While not always announced in emphasis, resulting decisions reflect an A.A. principle stated in the *Twelve Concepts for World Service* (adopted at the 1962 General Service Conference) as Warranty Four of Concept Twelve: "that all important decisions be reached by discussion, vote, and whenever possible, by substantial unanimity." The idea in our Second Tradition of "a loving God as he may express himself in our group conscience" serves as both a motivation for any proposal a group votes on, and also becomes a vehicle that carries the results of voted motions.

Voting at the Assemblies of Northern Illinois Area 20 always prove the vitality of A.A. principles. Our voting and search for an Area 20 consensus is not always completed in one vote, however. A thorough discussion continues before and after voting a specific motion, as Concept Five's "right of appeal" allows for the presentation of the minority opinion. In Alcoholics Anonymous, seen in voting from individual groups to Districts to Assemblies onward to the General Service Conference, the minority opinion is well considered. Our procedure of voting has always provided the opportunity for a reconsideration vote. The final decision on any proposed motion is an authentic informed group conscience where minority views blend into the outcome.

Full NIA consideration was give to a particular motion presented at the 1990 Spring Assembly held in Joliet, resulting in an extraordinary outcome when the Assembly considered its minority views. NIA Delegate Phyllis W. discussed the effort of another Area for the General Service Conference to approve, develop, and publish an A.A pamphlet on "Unity." With the Spring Assembly held about one month before that year's Conference, Phyllis reported that some of the large amounts of her mail discussed the proposal for the new pamphlet. She shared the ideas, the details, and the background of the proposal in the morning session during the Delegate's Report, allowing enough time for a thorough Assembly discussion before voting its consensus in the afternoon session.

The first Assembly vote demonstrated Area 20 as being very much in favor of the 1990 Conference looking into developing a pamphlet on A.A. Unity, with less than 10% voting a minority view. Then, as NIA Assemblies always proceed, the request was made to hear from the minority "if it wished to address the issue." Four or five NIA trusted servants shared their reservations on developing a "Unity" pamphlet and the ideas are included here to help explain the second vote on the proposal. A past Delegate reported that of A.A. pamphlets in 1990 distribution, the subject of A.A unity was presented and announced over sixteen times. Whether a "Unity" pamphlet was really needed or would actually be read by the Fellowship appeared as the strong consideration for the Assembly NOT to approve its development. Another spoke on the idea that A.A. Unity, one of the Three Legacies of our Fellowship, could be thought of as a living, existing, and flexible entity. A new pamphlet on the subject might either be incomplete or detract from the real forces of unity at work in Alcoholics Anonymous. Another spoke of A.A's Tradition One, where both our common welfare and personal recovery depend upon A.A unity. By wisely placing the word "unity" in the short form of the

First Tradition, the remaining eleven Traditions literally describe the limits and explain results that the principles of A.A. unity bring our Fellowship.

The motion was called for a second vote, and as reported in the Spring Assembly minutes by the NIA Secretary, "Upon a standing vote it was evidenced that there was a total turnaround of the opinion of the Assembly and the question was denied." The second vote unanimously declined approval for developing a new pamphlet on "Unity." The 1990 General Service Conference also declined to proceed with the pamphlet's development. The NIA Spring Assembly, after hearing the views expressed by its minority vote, fully reconsidered the thoughtful ideas presented and delivered its informed group conscience, a substantial unanimity and a truly remarkable consensus.

Northern Illinois Area 20 Historian, December 1995

## APPENDIX IV

Taken from pages 565 through 568 of the Third Edition of the *Big Book, Alcoholics Anonymous*, the *A.A. Grapevine* first published the long form of the Twelve traditions in 1946 issues of the magazine. At their 1950 presentation, the first A.A. International Convention at Cleveland, Ohio unanimously endorsed the Traditions. The Twelve Traditions are incorporated as by-laws of the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous, and are a major component of the A.A. World Services Charter approved by the 1955 General Service Conference. They are considered as key to the Fellowship's survival over the past fifty years. Many A.A. group meetings in the United States, after hearing "How It Works" and A.A.'s Twelve Steps from the *Big Book*, ask for the reading of the short form of the A.A. Twelve Traditions with the question "Can. we please hear 'Why It Works'?"

### THE TWELVE TRADITIONS (Long Form)

Our A.A. experience has taught us that:

- 1.-Each member of Alcoholics Anonymous is but a small part of a great whole. A.A. must continue to live or most of us will surely die. Hence our common welfare comes first. But our individual welfare follows close afterward.
- 2.-For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority -- a loving God as He may express himself in our group conscience.

3.-Our membership ought to include all who suffer from alcoholism. Hence we refuse none who wish to recover. Nor ought A.A. membership ever depend upon money or conformity. Any two or three alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an A.A. group, provided that, as a group, they have no other affiliation.

4.-With respect to its own affairs, each A.A. group should be responsible to no other authority than its own conscience. But when plans concern the welfare of neighboring groups also, those groups ought to be consulted. And no group, regional committee, or individual should ever take action that might greatly affect A.A. as a whole without conferring with the trustees of the General Service Board. On such issues our common welfare is paramount.

5.-Each Alcoholics Anonymous group ought to be a spiritual entity having but one primary purpose---that of carrying its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

6.-Problems of money, property, and authority may easily divert us from our primary spiritual aim. We think, therefore, that any considerable property of genuine use to A.A. ought to be separately incorporated and managed, thus dividing the material from the spiritual. An A.A. group, as such, should never go into business. Secondary aids to A.A., such as clubs or hospitals which require much property or administration, ought to be incorporated and so set apart that, if necessary, they can be freely discarded by the groups. Hence such facilities ought not to use the A.A.name. Their management should be the sole responsibility of those people who financially support them. For clubs, A.A. managers are usually preferred. But hospitals, as well as other places of recuperation, ought to be well outside of A.A.---and

medically supervised. While an AA. group may cooperate with anyone, such cooperation ought never go so far as affiliation or endorsement, actual or implied. An A.A. group can bind itself to no one.

7.-The A.A. groups themselves ought to be fully supported by the voluntary contributions of its own members. We think that each group should soon achieve this ideal; that any public solicitation of funds using the name of Alcoholics Anonymous is highly dangerous, whether by groups, clubs, hospitals, or other outside agencies; that acceptance of large gifts from any source, or of contributions carrying any obligation whatever, is unwise. Then too, we view with much concern those A.A. treasuries which continue, beyond prudent reserves, to accumulate funds for no stated A.A. purpose. Experience has often warned us that nothing can so surely destroy our spiritual heritage as futile disputes over property, money, and authority.

8.-Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional. We define professionalism as the occupation of counseling alcoholics for fees or hire. But we may employ alcoholics where they are going to perform those services for which we might otherwise have to engage nonalcoholics. Such special services may well be recompensed. But our usual "12th Step" work is never to be paid for.

9.-Each AA group needs the least possible organization. Rotating leadership is the best. The small group may elect its secretary, the large group its rotating committee, and the groups of a large metropolitan area their central or intergroup committee, which often employs a full-time secretary. The trustees of the General Service Board are, in effect, our A.A. General Service Committee. They are the custodians of our A.A. Tradition and the

Receivers of voluntary contributions by which we maintain our A.A. General Service Office at New York. They are authorized by the groups to handle our over-all public relations and they guarantee the integrity of our principle newspaper, the *A.A. Grapevine*. All such representatives are to be guided in the spirit of service, for true leaders in A.A. are but trusted and experienced servants of the whole. They derive no real authority from their titles; they do not govern. Universal respect is the key to their usefulness.

10.-No A.A. group or member should ever, in such a way as to implicate A.A., express any opinion on outside controversial issues---particularly those of politics, alcohol reform, or sectarian religion. The Alcoholics Anonymous groups oppose no one. Concerning such matters they can express no views whatever.

11.-Our relations with the general public should be characterized by personal anonymity. We think A.A. ought to avoid sensational advertising. Our names and pictures as A.A. members ought not to be broadcast, filmed, or publicly printed. Our public relations should be guided by the principle of attraction rather than promotion. There is never need to praise ourselves. We feel it better to let our friends recommend us.

12.-And finally, we of Alcoholics Anonymous believe that the principle of anonymity has an immense spiritual significance. It reminds us to place principles before personalities; that we are to practice a genuine humility. This to the end that our great blessings may never spoil us; that we shall forever live in thankful contemplation of Him who presides over us all.

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