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Preface To The Second Issue

The living tapestry of our unfinished Illinois AA history holds a spiritual fiber, where its individual strands have held their resilience over time. Time, the fourth dimension the Big Book refers to as the rocketed destination for our recovery, never ends and never retreats. Twentieth Century author William Faulkner suggested that “the past is not dead, it’s not even past.” The same is true of our Fellowship’s history. The past guides our present, overlaps, and blends with our current activity. Alcoholics Anonymous makes its progress slowly, approves its changes prudently, and corrects its actions continuously. Our rapid membership expansion outside of the U.S. and Canada in the twenty-first century seems balanced by our strength at home in North America. Area 20 service meetings, following the mid-1990s, experienced less of an increased membership than the steadiness of its AA members’ longer sobriety time. The challenge in this new century is to continue our outreach to new prospects and the still-suffering alcoholics in our midst, who heal as we grow. Our trusted servants give selflessly and humbly, aiding our effort to carry the AA message of personal recovery, our unity of purpose, and the success of service.

This updated monograph, *An Alcoholics Anonymous History In Northern Illinois Area 20, Second Issue*, now spans over sixty-four years (1939-2003) of AA in Illinois. Published, copyrighted, and posted online at the end of 2003, eight years of additional research and Area Assembly actions render its complete rewrite with new detail and a clearer sense of continuity.

Added acknowledgment and encouragement from the AA Archives staff and Archivists at the General Service Office, the recently established Archives of the Stepping Stones Foundation, the enthusiasm of the annual National Archives Workshops, and the trust and support of the NIA Assembly, motivated your NIA Historian's research effort. The 2001 NIA Fall Assembly endorsed the Second Issue History Project, and a 2003 Panel Review of longtime NIA trusted servants fully examined and approved edits to the draft manuscripts.

Access to early correspondence, rare personal histories, Alcoholic Foundation documents, and many other GSO Archives records brought our first years into a clearer focus. While AA Archives policy and ethics disapprove the verbatim printing of many items, added footnotes direct the reader to sites and sources worthy of further study. Five years (the fourth dimension, again) of new research followed the 1996 Issue's release and supplied the information to propose the Second Issue NIA History Project. The incentive remains in the search for the facts of our history, the joy in the journey of discovery, and the challenge of a "treasure hunt" to uncover the threads of our past.

Archivists and historians present the facts to dispel the myths, legends, and half-truths that may always grow around any society's history. Without drawing conclusions from the facts presented in this book, our actions, events, and discussions produced the evidence. Facts, of course, do not necessarily need a cause to their origin, but facts certainly document results.

Alcoholics Anonymous history, the results of our service, continue to bring vitality to our living NIA tapestry. The readership of the *First Issue* collected an insight from its discoveries, of where and how we have grown in our Groups and General Service Committees. The intent of each rewritten chapter, topic -highlighted sections, and new appendices sets the focus on further understanding and an appreciative awareness for our NIA

past that's "not even past." Nonetheless, our NIA history will always remain an unfinished tapestry. Years from now, another Area 20 Historian may revisit this work, in a new attempt to preserve freshly discovered details of an Alcoholics Anonymous history that can so easily be lost, forgotten, or turned into myth.

With this new chronicle, we can once again stand back to find a heritage of love and service freely given in Northern Illinois. My thoughts and prayers are that our love and attraction to general service remain enthusiastically contagious.

Northern Illinois Area 20 Historian.
November 2003
Algonquin, Illinois

Preface To The First Issue

A tapestry has thousands of threads, interwoven into a compelling image. Our A.A. history can be seen as a living tapestry, an unfinished work that builds on the unity found in our Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, and Twelve Concepts. Each group's growth and each member's activities represent individual strands in the Area 20 history tapestry.

This monograph, *An Alcoholics Anonymous History In Northern Illinois Area 20*, spans over fifty-six years (1939- 1995) and was published, copyrighted, and distributed to the Fellowship in 1996 with the approval of the NIA Assembly. *A Brief History of NIA*, four pages prepared at the request of the 1987 NIA Assembly, precedes this work and served as one of many sources.

Footnotes direct the reader to sources worthy of further study, assuring the reader of accuracy and the effort to provide the available historical facts found through research. Important acknowledgment is given to the Northern Illinois Area 20 Archives, the Chicago Area 19 Archives, and the A.A. Archives at the General Service Office. The effort and example of those who assemble and maintain A.A. Archives in NIA supplied the 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 provided the incentive for my work.

Archivists and A.A. Historians endeavor to preserve A.A. history so that we need not repeatedly "reinvent the wheel." The accurate preservation of our successes and failures provide effective examples we can use in our effort to carry the message of recovery to other alcoholics. **Archivists and historians record and preserve the methods of how we carry our message**, and illustrate the resulting strengths of our Three Legacies of Recovery, Unity, and Service in action. Abiding with our Eleventh

and Twelfth Traditions, the personal anonymity of A.A. members, both living and deceased, is respected throughout this work. Its research involved contacting families of past trusted servants for historical information, many who are non-members. This monograph may be viewed by persons who are not members of the Fellowship, and at this level of press, anonymity becomes more important and becomes an integral part of our history. Alcoholics Anonymous history, like the living tapestry, will always have its critics, its appreciative audience, and its students and leaders who learn from its study. As we progress and act upon the Legacies entrusted to us, the current image changes and grows with us. In this chronicle, we can stand back to find a heritage of love and service freely given to our Fellowship in Northern Illinois.

***An Alcoholics Anonymous History of
Northern Illinois Area 20 is dedicated
to the Groups, leaders, and trusted servants
who have become parts of our history.***

**Beyond its linkage to our past,
this history is dedicated
to the future leaders and trusted servants
of Alcoholic Anonymous.**

Northern Illinois Area 20 Historian.
January 1996
Algonquin, Illinois

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One - From Chapters To Sections

The message of recovery in Alcoholics Anonymous spread slowly 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: banquet halls, hotels, schools, community centers, churches, and rented clubrooms. 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 Foundation¹ in New York City were scarce. The first few hundred men and women, with the aid of the new Big Book, continued to apply their personal approaches to attracting active drunks toward recovery and AA sobriety. AAs primarily carried the message of Alcoholics Anonymous from one person to another, carefully building a membership in a society of ex-drunks with small numbers of repeated successes. The early AA pioneers established the local groups and chapters that, unpredictably and unknown to them, would soon handle a quicker pace of newcomers seeking sobriety.

¹ 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 *AA Comes of Age*, pages 14-16 and 151-157. The book is available from Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. (Catalog number B-3)

In September 1939 *Liberty*, a five-cent 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.”²

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.³

The Big Book was not an overnight best seller, but requests for help and all written inquiries received a personal answer from the staff at the Alcoholic Foundation office.

While the New York office initially called the existing groups of Alcoholics Anonymous in the different parts of the United States “chapters”, 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 AAs and their families was added in early October. This Open AA meeting, the Tuesday night “Big” meeting, grew in attendance.

Alcoholics Anonymous had come to Illinois.

² *Liberty* magazine, September 30, 1939, page 7.

³ Page 271 in the Big Book, Fourth Edition, describes the attraction of Sylvia K. of Evanston, Illinois to AA recovery through her doctor, in the story “The Keys to the Kingdom.” Also on page 265, Earl T., Chicago’s first AA 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 Archives.

Another magazine with an even larger circulation than *Liberty*, the *Saturday Evening Post*, published a feature article about AA in March 1941. The Jack Alexander piece “Alcoholics Anonymous” (available today in Conference-approved pamphlet form) quickened the pace of attraction to AA recovery. The Chicago Group, with its several newspapermen, impressed Alexander with its success and enthusiasm. When the *Post* printed the Alcoholic Foundation address, thousands of inquiries flooded the New York office, and its still small staff continued to personally answer each letter.

The Chicago chapter opened its Central Service Office in May 1941. It was the first Intergroup Central 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 night “Big” meeting grew to over 250 persons attending each week and the home telephones of the Chicago Group “founders” were kept very busy. The Central Office, with its newly listed telephone number, met the growing requests for information and twelfth step calls.

Alcoholics Anonymous became an authentic national institution after the magazine coverage. Across the United States, AA membership grew from 2,000 to an estimated 8,000 members by the end of the year. The Chicago office answered many inquiries, led by the example of the New York “Headquarters” office in writing to and encouraging local AA members to call on the suffering alcoholics that wrote for help.

Personal response and encouragement continued from the small office of the Alcoholic Foundation. In one example of thousands, 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.⁴

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. The *Saturday Evening Post* articles on 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 public information requests and outreach. The Chicago office, with the substantial efforts of its first secretary, Grace Cultice, provided great assistance to the Alcoholic Foundation office in carrying the AA message of recovery in AA's Midwest "section." It fielded many calls for general information, referred individuals to local hospitals for detox treatment, and sent out AA volunteers to call on people who requested help. The Central Office developed a set of ten city Districts within a short time, and established an organizational 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 (on the Rock River and east of the Mississippi valley) 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.

⁴ Letter located in the Northern Illinois Area Archives.

In northern Illinois, the Sterling Group is the earliest recorded group to meet outside Chicago. Today it continues to meet each Wednesday night.

The Alcoholic Foundation published United States Directories every six months during the 1940s. 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). The Directory formats changed over time, removing contact addresses, adding Area Delegates and Area Chairman information, printing only once a year, and with the most recent change taking place in 1994, when yearly group contributions were no longer published. The Directories repeatedly state that the “information reflects that as provided to the General Service Office.” Each 1940s six-month printing was emphasized as “AA confidential.”

Mail correspondence to groups and group secretaries continued with reports of Alcoholic Foundation meetings, literature news, financial news, and items of interest. The first AA newsletter⁵ was sent in late 1940 to all the chapters and groups in the different sections of the United States, and was written by Ruth Hock, Alcoholic Foundation Secretary. The *AA Bulletin* service news format later developed into the AA World Services newsletter *Box 4-5-9*. The *AA Grapevine* magazine, mixing news, artwork, letters, service, and recovery articles, followed in mid-1944.

Beginning with the 1942 Directory, the Chicago chapter of groups listed an estimated 450 members, and was the only recorded site of AA meetings in Illinois. Each six-month listing of the chapters and groups showed a rapid growth of Alcoholics Anonymous in Illinois as well as across the United States.

⁵ *AA Bulletin #1*, November 14, 1940, two pages, located in the NIA Archives.

From letters and reports sent to the Alcoholic Foundation office, the Chicago Group quickly grew in numbers: Feb. 1940 with 33 members, April 1941 with 350 members, July 1941 with 430 members, and December 1941 with 450 members.⁶

An AA group's listing was usually published a few months after the start of its meetings. The first meetings in the northern section of Illinois announced the Sterling Group (begun in winter 1943) and the Rockford chapter. Both AA groups were included in the 1943 Directory's publishing date of June 1943.

A complete photocopy set of 1941-1951 semi-annual Directories, the *Listing of AA Groups with the Alcoholic Foundation*, specifically records Illinois group growth, and is located in the NIA Archives.

Across the United States in 1940: 59 groups, 1,400 members.

Listing of Illinois AA Groups With The Alcoholic Foundation

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.

⁶ From Chicago AA letters and reports on file at the GSO Archives.

Villa Park, Brandywine Group, the first meeting in
DuPage county.⁷

Listing of AA Groups With The Alcoholic Foundation

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.

Across the United States in 1945: 556 groups, 12,986 members.

1946

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

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

Chicago, 2,800 members.

Elmhurst, Group 15-C, 30 members.⁷

Glen Ellyn, Glenbard Group, 20 members.⁷

Villa Park, 20 members.⁷

⁷ Information provided by District 41 Archives.

Listing of AA Groups With The Alcoholic Foundation

1947 (continued) _____

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

Springfield, 65 members.

Note: Group registration numbers were first used in 1947.

1948 _____

Aurora, 50 members.

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

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

Fox Valley Groups, all 5 meetings, 75 members.

Freeport, 5 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.⁸

Woodstock, secretary listed, 8 members.

⁸ Information provided by District 11 Archives.

Listing of AA Groups With The Alcoholic Foundation

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.

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 was a significant milestone year for Alcoholics Anonymous. The first AA 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 and memorable address to the 3,000 persons attending the Convention. He and Bill W. shared the podium for the last time on Sunday, July 30.⁹

The 1950 Convention unanimously endorsed AA's Twelve Traditions. Earl T., Chicago AA's first member, worked closely with Bill W. to create and develop the "short form" of our Second Legacy, and both versions were presented at Cleveland. The 1946 issues of the *AA Grapevine* published the complete "long form" as written by Bill W., 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."¹⁰

The proposed General Service "Conference was brought for open discussion to AA groups in 1950. The 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 AA sections of the United States and Canada. The Trustees at "Headquarters," four nonalcoholics and three AA members, gave their support for the Conference idea early that year, after numerous presentations from Bill during the preceding four years. Until then, the Alcoholic

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

¹⁰ *AA Comes of Age*, 1957, Chapter II "The Three Legacies of Alcoholics Anonymous" p. 213, reprinted with permission of AA World Services, Inc.

Foundation Trustees 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, late summer 1950 meeting with Dr. Bob produced their agreement to call the Conference. For the good of AA as a whole, their agreement and recommendation ultimately made certain that AA members could share the responsibility for world services with the alcoholic and non-alcoholic Trustees of the Alcoholic Foundation (renamed the General Service Board in 1955).

The 96,475 estimated AA membership of 1950 would have a voice and a vote in the five-year trial run of a General Service Conference. The AA groups of 1951, including those in Northern Illinois, certainly were active participants in reaching a consensus of "yes."

1951 NIA groups are listed in Appendix II on page 91. Comparisons with 1940s years of growth, reporting, and registration can be made with the alphabetical listings.

Also included for Illinois in the 1951 Directory:

Chicago (Area 19), 123 W. Madison Street, was listed with 4,900 members. Group names, contacts, or meeting locations were not shared with AAWS Directories until 1952.¹¹

The Chicago Area Service Office uses the same telephone number today (with area code 312) and many longtime AA members recall dialing FI-nancial 6-1475. Having outgrown its sites in the Loop, the Tuesday Night "Big" Meeting was

¹¹ November 1955 telegrams and letters between GSO and the Chicago Central Office. Source: GSO Archives.

decentralized, and the Opens were held in four Chicago locations every Tuesday beginning in 1950.¹²

Once each year, Chicago celebrates its September 1939 beginnings with the All Chicago Open, drawing an estimated 12,000 persons in the 1990s.

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

Springfield (presently Area 21) grew from the efforts of one sober member in 1941. Ward M. was an AA Loner for two years, much like Earl T. in Chicago. Springfield meetings began in 1943 and soon supported a clubhouse for regular closed AA meetings. In 1951, Springfield listed three groups, two P.O. Box numbers, and 150 members.¹³

Post Office Box addresses were 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, and one or two group members would follow through in person on each letter. The correspondence from the Alcoholic 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 surveys¹⁴ to describe the

¹² *Chicago AA Landmarks 1937-1959*, two pages. Source: Chicago Area Archives.

¹³ *History of AA in Springfield, Illinois*, 1979, four pages. Source: Southern Illinois Area Archives, with copies located in NIA Archives.

¹⁴ The first general AA Membership Survey began in 1970 through the effort of General Service Board Chairman Dr. Jack Norris and the General Service Conference.

makeup of groups, and group secretaries reported only membership totals. In the 1940s Directories, 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 AA 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, as well as AA members, used the few telephone numbers of group secretaries in the Directories. If there was no telephone contact, the Post Office Box addresses received letter requests for help.

Returning to the record of the earliest groups in northern Illinois, the histories of the first correspondence with DeKalb, the Sterling Group, the Rockford chapter, and the Freeport chapter reflect distinct ways that many groups and AA chapters began.

DeKalb

In April of 1940 a letter arrived at the office of the Alcoholic Foundation in New York City: "My story doesn't differ in details from thousands of others, so I'm not going to write the details... Alcoholics Anonymous is new to me, and I'm interested to make contacts in this vicinity that I may become a member in good standing." Perrie S., a local pharmacist, wrote that he "read 'Alcoholics Anonymous' thoroughly and wished to say, that I established myself with a Superior Being by myself, with my own thoughts, during a 28 day leave from business with persons who at that time were in the same fix as myself."

Ruth Hock, the Alcoholic Foundation Office secretary, replied within a few days and thanked him for his very sincere letter. She

referred him to Earl T. “and the Chicago membership, and we assure you they will appreciate an opportunity to talk with you.” The Chicago Group was the nearest AA chapter sixty-five miles east of DeKalb, and Perrie rode the trains into the city many times to attend its meetings. He and Ruth exchanged letters on a regular basis over the next few years. Ruth, in different letters from the New York office, suggested that he contact other new members in nearby Dixon, Sterling, and Rockford. The Central Office in Chicago also wrote him with requests from prospects as far west as Galesburg and Geneseo (currently in NIA District 91).

Perrie S., the AA Loner in DeKalb, remains the earliest northern Illinois correspondent of record in the Archives at the General Service Office in New York City.¹⁵ His story after 1943 is unknown, but DeKalb’s first AA group registered five members with the Alcoholic Foundation in 1949.

The Sterling Group

The secretary and “founder” of the Sterling Group, Ken S., got sober in Chicago in 1940 and moved to Sterling, a Whiteside County steel mill town in northwestern Illinois and 75 miles east of the Mississippi River and the Quad Cities.

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 Wednesday night meetings of the Sterling Group began in Ken S.’s home in 1943. Coffee, cake, and light games of cards usually followed the AA meeting, and families were included on

¹⁵ Courtesy of GSO Archives and 2002 research access to personal correspondence files. The excerpted letters remain at the AA Archives at GSO in New York City.

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 AA members welcomed other recovering alcoholics from the towns of Tampico, Harmon, Mt. Morris, Morrison, Dixon, and Polo. An early member, Ray N. of Sterling, recalled that growth at the Sterling Group also branched off into new groups in Dixon, Clinton (Iowa), Kewanee and Mt. Morris.¹⁶

Another member rented Post Office Box 15 in Rock Falls for the Sterling Group in 1948, when the group had grown to twelve regular members.¹⁷

In a 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 AA after being given almost seven years of sobriety---that is something I cannot picture.”¹⁸

The members of Alcoholics Anonymous in Northern Illinois Area can consider Ken S. of Sterling as our earliest sober member and effective AA group servant. His example begins with selflessly carrying the message of AA recovery to others and encouraging the start of new groups. His early service, maintaining the Sterling Group’s linkage with the rest of AA as a whole, contributed a large amount to the growth of Alcoholics Anonymous in northwestern Illinois. All available records show that the Sterling Group start, in the winter of 1943, remains the first registered AA group within the current borders of NIA.

¹⁶ 1982 recollection letter. The history of the Sterling Group was placed in the NIA Archives from 1995 research for the NIA History project, through the response of the District 73 Archivist.

¹⁷ *The Listing of AA Groups with the Alcoholic Foundation*, February 1948 entry.

¹⁸ Letter of July 17, 1947. Sterling Group history, located in the NIA Archives.

Rockford

The beginning of Alcoholics Anonymous in the city of Rockford followed a repeated pattern of rapid growth experienced by many 1940 urban chapters. Starting with four members in 1943, Rockford's AA 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 had found an article about Alcoholics Anonymous in a *Liberty* magazine issue, and unlike the first press coverage the magazine gave the Fellowship in 1939 the issue printed the address of the New York office.

The letter reply gave Ray the name and nearest location of an AA group in Chicago, where he began to attend meetings and found a sponsor. At that time, new "prospects" who came into Alcoholics Anonymous were directed to closed beginner's meetings for their first three months, and were then encouraged to attend the neighborhood Chicago home group meetings on Thursdays. Ray and Arlene also traveled by train to attend many open AA 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 freight runs, where the opportunity to carry the AA 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 AA 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, Bob's only possessions were a sweater full of holes and one crutch (he had one leg). Ray became his AA sponsor, and Bob became the Rockford chapter's secretary and contact in 1947, eventually getting married to another AA member in Ray's home.

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, and members and their families attended from both the east and west sides of the city. Small AA social gatherings were held every Saturday night at the Rockford Labor Temple.

In the recollection of Gordy C., 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 recalled, "someone came in one time and wanted to know if it was a Quaker meeting."¹⁹

Freeport

Both Rockford groups and Dubuque, Iowa groups participated in the spring of 1948 to establish a new AA group in Freeport. A local physician and a priest placed an ad in the Freeport Journal-Standard, announcing the formation of a Freeport area AA Group to serve the community of Freeport and Stephenson County, and its first meeting was held May 19, 1948 at the Freeport Hotel. The interest of two civic -minded citizens and the support of the groups in neighboring cities contributed to the new group's success.

¹⁹ Information provided by the Rockford Area Intergroup Archives in NIA District 70.

Growth was slow at first and the Freeport Group began meeting in member's homes in 1949, but newspaper ads continued to invite inquiries. New members brought the need for larger meeting places, and after several months at the YMCA, the group moved to a business district location in 1950 and opened a clubroom, taking its name as the 48 Club Group. The original 15 to 20 members maintained the rooms, and the 48 Club Group added several new weekly meetings on its second move to another business district site in 1967. Growing to between 55 to 60 members, the 48 Club Group moved again to larger quarters on North Cherry Street in downtown Freeport in 1976.

Other A.A groups not affiliated with the 48 Club Group grew in the Stephenson County area at the same time the club continued its growth. Sojourn House, a county detox center and halfway house founded in 1974, continues to receive the outreach and dedicated assistance of local AA members.²⁰

Moline and Rock Island

Southwest of Sterling, the Quad Cities welcomed the AA 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 then at the Fort Armstrong Hotel in Rock Island... The Rock Island Group held meetings at their Fort Armstrong location from 1949 until 1972."²¹

²⁰ Information published in the 1970-1971 *Stephenson County History Book*, written by Henry S. of Freeport with his appended text of 1977. Courtesy of District 72 Archives.

²¹ "Then and Now" from a 1992 issue of the *ILLOWA Messenger*, the newsletter of the Quad Cities Intergroup in Moline. From GSO research by the NIA Historian, the 1948 start is a correction from the 1949 date in the article.

The growth across the Mississippi River reflects the New York Office's description of the "AA chapter" where one set of groups branched out into neighboring towns. The groups of Moline and Rock Island participate in NIA District 90 today, but many share an original linkage with Alcoholics Anonymous in Iowa.

The records of new 1940s and 1950s groups, formed through the Sterling, Rockford, Freeport, and Quad Cities growth and outreach, additionally show that the AA message traveled in many directions from the Mississippi River border to the outlying sections of northwestern Illinois.

Fox River Valley

The "Fox River Valley Groups" 1946 listing with the Alcoholic Foundation came from their initial linkage with Chicago AA, 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, and the section retained its Chicago listing from 1950 until the late 1980s as District 10, the "Northwest Suburban Districts".

Confusingly but an historical fact, the towns in the section considered as District 10 groups were also identified as different Districts in the 1960 map drawn by the Downstate Illinois AA Conference (see page 36). Some groups in the same counties kept their registration active with Chicago AA, while others aligned with the Downstate Areas. One surviving remnant of the District 10 designation is found in the name of NIA District 22 (Elgin and northern Kane County)'s checking account: N.W.S.AAS.G., the "Northwest Suburban Alcoholics Anonymous Service Groups." Following at least a half dozen District changes through 1997, the

successive Districts formed out of the original Fox Valley section continue their representation in Area 20.²²

The Group Secretaries

Each group's secretary provided service to the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous in the initial effort to establish contact and correspondence with the Alcoholic Foundation. Individual correspondence and letters described activities, problems, and

successes with the group members reporting the 1940s' group voice. 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 AA contacts for chapters and groups established a network for communication with other group secretaries, the office of the Alcoholic Foundation in New York, and the Central Service Office in Chicago.

The correspondence remained mutual. The linkage between groups and an AA "Headquarters" was strengthened when many groups established P.O. boxes and began printing announcements of meetings in local newspapers. As group membership increased, the opportunity for AA service expanded. Group secretaries kept the records while service positions developed for a group's treasurer, chairperson, greeters, and by the 1950s', the Group Representative (today's General Service Representative).

A Greater Sense of the Fellowship's General Service

1940s AA members from different groups gathered informally and discussed current news, compared outreach strategies, and

²² Information found in records and Minutes located in the AA Archives of both NIA and the Chicago Area.

most always found a common ground. Group Secretaries served by reporting the group voice to the New York “Headquarters” and relaying back the office’s news. The *AA Grapevine* acceptance by the Groups, from its beginning in 1944, considered its success as a result of the group “sense” of participating in Alcoholics Anonymous.

The 1946 *AA Grapevine* articles on 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 AA membership experience as the result of ideas that worked well. The suggestions about 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 AA groups gradually endorsed and adopted the Traditions as the Fellowship’s working expression of unity. Where the AA Twelve Steps placed many drunks in recovery, the AA Twelve Traditions brought the groups out of their separated existence into a larger community that bridged all borders.

Two - The Delegates to the General Service Conference

Bill W. shipped over 50,000 copies of a new fifteen-page pamphlet called *Your Third Legacy—Will You Accept It?*²³ to the registered groups of the Fellowship in the winter of 1950-1951, and the 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.

Bill included the idea of Area designations in the pamphlet, and he also described the balloting methods 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, would ensure that major friction would not result from any extended voting session to select one elected representative.

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

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. Illinois began its representation at the 1951 General Service Conference with two Panel 1 Delegates. Our first NIA Delegate began Panel 2 service in 1952. These Delegates were elected from the three Area designations: Area the southern section of the state; Area 19, the Chicago metropolitan area and its

²³ One original pamphlet located in the District 22 Archives, with copies in the NIA Archives.

Rotating Committee; and Area 20, the northern section of Illinois, south and west of Chicago to the Mississippi River.

Bill later shared his emphasis on service in Alcoholics Anonymous, 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 the alcoholic who still suffers.

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

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

Tradition Nine – AA 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 practice these principles in all our affairs.²⁴

In January of 1951, Bill began visiting as many of the election Assemblies as possible, with the timetable of the Conference's start as only four months away. At each city, he spoke to large audiences and was an observer for Delegates elections. His talks were on various topics but generally highlighted the guiding principles of AA service. Over two dozen States and Provinces warmly welcomed him. He arrived in Chicago for a special meeting of the Chicago Area held on a Tuesday night in early February.

²⁴ *AA Comes of Age*, 1957, page 138, reprinted with permission of AA World Services, Inc.

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

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

Toward our own history in Northern Illinois Area, George M. of Decatur (presently in Area 21) was elected as the Alternate Delegate for 1951. He was seated as a Panel 2 Delegate the following year, to represent our Northern Illinois Area at the 1952 Conference.

George M. was the first and last person introduced at the special Chicago meeting of February 13, each time with welcoming applause.²⁵ The Downstate Illinois AA Conferences,

²⁵ *Minutes of Special Meeting of Chicago Area AAs*, Palmer House Hotel, Chicago, February 13, 1951. Fifteen-paged transcript. Source: Chicago Archives.

prior to 1973, met in combined Assemblies with the Northern and Southern Illinois Areas, and jointly elected each Area's Delegates. After 1973, only NIA Assemblies elected NIA Delegates.

Area 20 Delegates Elected by Downstate Illinois Conferences²⁶

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. ²⁷ Waukegan
1966-67	Panel 16 R.A.	"Bud" W. Rock Island
1968-69	Panel 18	Joe F. Dixon
1970-71	Panel 20	Roland "Rollie" C. Rockford
1972-73	Panel 22	Lou D. Glen Ellyn

²⁶ *A Brief History of NIA* 1993, four pages. Source: NIA Archives.

²⁷ Bruce W., Panel 14 Delegate, was elected East Central Region Trustee at the 24th General Service Conference. He served 1974-1977 on the General Service Board with AA World Services, Inc.

Elected by NIA Assemblies after 1973

1974-75	Panel 24	Hank S. Kenosha, Wisconsin
1976-77	Panel 26	Earl McN. Chicago
1978-79	Panel 28 ²⁸	Ruth P. Lisle
1980-81	Panel 30	LaVerne “Pete” P. Freeport
1982-83	Panel 32	John G. McHenry
1984-85	Panel 34	Jack O. ²⁹ Joliet
1986-87	Panel 36	Hank G. Princeton
1988-89	Panel 38	Dennis D. McHenry
1990-91	Panel 40	Phyllis W. Oneida
1992-93	Panel 42	Tom B. Waukegan
1994-95	Panel 44	Russ V. Toulon
1996-97	Panel 46	Tom G. Elgin

²⁸ Jim H., NIA Alternate Delegate from Joliet, served the remaining three months of Ruth P.’s term when she moved to another state.

²⁹ Jack O. was elected East Central Region Trustee at the 1998 Conference and during his four years, served as AAWS Chair in 2000.

Elected by NIA Assemblies after 1973 (continued)

1998-99	Panel 48	Jerry P. Sycamore
2000-02	Panel 50	Marcia S. Union
2002-03	Panel 52	Sonny M. Joliet
2003-04	Panel 54	Terry W. East Moline

Three - The Downstate Conference and Illinois Growth, Toward NIA Autonomy 1951-1972

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

Areas' elected representatives met at Assemblies identified as the Downstate Illinois AA Conference. The combined sessions elected Delegates each year, to serve two-year terms for either the Northern or Southern section at the General Service Conferences.

Our neighboring Chicago Area soon experienced trouble of its own creation and split into factional strife. In 1954, two newly formed service entities, the West Suburban Intergroup and the South Suburban Intergroup, abandoned the Metropolitan Area Rotating Committee (the Chicago Area Assembly). Metropolitan Chicago AA'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."³⁰ Earl, Chicago AA's founding member, was well known and very well respected, but the groups were not fully consulted about the plan and were not notified about their opportunity to vote with substantial unanimity.

For eighteen years, Chicago's three service groups worked separately and came to few agreements. A Downstate Illinois meeting of 1959 tabled discussion on the situation in Chicago and chose not to become involved. The Downstate Illinois Conference

³⁰ *Chicago Metropolitan Policy Committee Report to Chicago Area Groups*, 1954. Three pages, including a letter from Bill W. Source: Chicago Area Archives.

wisely would not be drawn into this conflict, considering it an outside issue of controversy and autonomy.

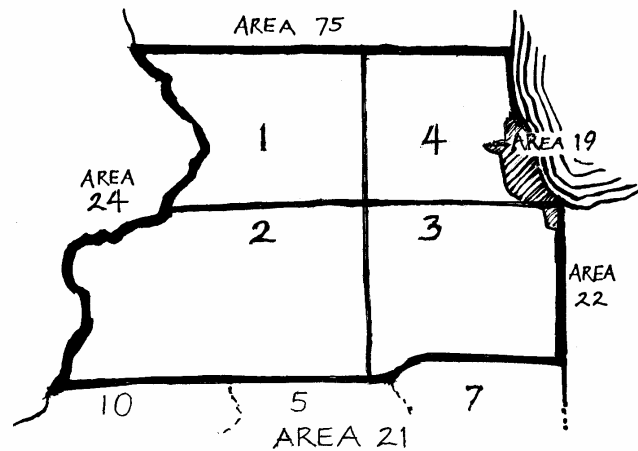
Progressing and growing, the Northern and Southern Areas cooperated and stood together. Unity developed in “Downstate AA” while it remained tolerant of its geographic differences. The splintered unity of the Chicago Area eventually led to the 1963 General Service Conference refusal to seat either of two Delegates elected by Chicago groups that year. Despite its difficulties, the entire Chicago Area 19, with its three service entities, also shared in the continued growth of Alcoholics Anonymous in Illinois.

The Minutes and records of the Downstate Illinois AA Conference are located in the Northern Illinois Archives by the contribution of a very special woman. A member of Al-Anon, she was the widow of early AA member Ed C. (Panel 13 Delegate for Southern Illinois Area 21, 1963-64). The past Downstate AA Conference Secretary, Loie C. kept an entire set of Minutes from the Downstate AA proceedings. The collection spans the years 1954 through 1973 when she served in the elected position as Conference Secretary. Her reporting on the Planning Meetings (presently known in NIA as the Area Committee Meetings) and the Conferences (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 Loie’s interview with past Delegate Hank G., then serving as NIA Archives Committee Chairman. The interview records her recollection of early Illinois AA service 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.

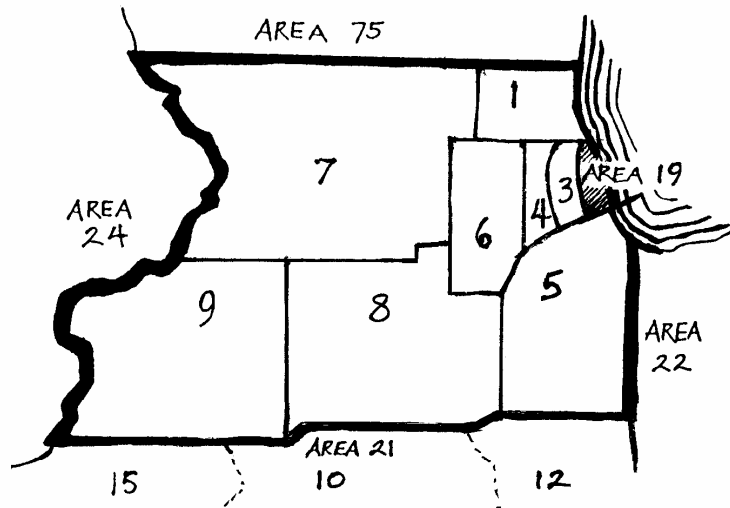
Our past service history has been preserved with the help of this gracious past trusted servant’s donation of early Minutes. Highlights of Downstate AA Conferences/ Assemblies complete this chapter.

1953 NIA Map



The boundaries of the four Northern section Districts (called State Committee Areas) from a 1952 map of the ten Districts in the Downstate Illinois A.A. Conference. Courtesy of the A.A. Archives at GSO, copies of the map are located in the NIA Archives.

1960 NIA Map



Downstate Illinois A.A. Conference re-districted the combined Delegate Areas in 1960, adding six Districts, and voted to elect its future Delegates from inside the borders of each Area. The general NIA southern border of U.S. Route 24 remains. Courtesy of the A.A. Archives at GSO, copies of the map are located in the NIA Archives.

The Downstate Illinois Conference first discussed a yearly budget in 1957 and an amount of \$1,000 was approved as a prudent reserve fund in 1962. In October 1959 at a Quarterly Conference, meeting Minutes recorded the first discussion about establishing two distinct Area borders. No actual decision was made for a full year.

In October 1960, for the single purpose of choosing Delegates, the Downstate Conference chose a line along U.S. Route 24 to separate the northern and southern sections. This boundary for the two Areas, drawn on a trial basis, exists today as the largest line 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 a consensus that the Downstate Conference would elect its Delegates in the fall of each year. This timetable continues today.

The Downstate AA Conference established a State Steering Committee at its October 1960 Assembly. Area Committeepersons (today's DCMs) from both the Northern and Southern sections, the two standing Delegates, and all past Delegates served as members of the State Steering Committee. Each Area's committee servants were elected at separate Spring Conferences (Assemblies). The October Assembly again confirmed Loie C. as State Secretary, with a budgeted fifty dollars per year for expenses. Also approved was a motion that future AA State Treasurers were to be selected from past Delegates. Downstate AA strengthened its partnership between the two Areas with the single AA State Secretary, State Treasurer, and single State Chairman positions.

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 DCMs) were identified as "Area Committeepersons." Nevertheless, 1960 Minutes used the term "District." In repeated recommendations, all members of the Downstate Conference were encouraged to study the *AA Service Manual*.

The first *AA Service Manual*, titled the *Third Legacy Manual*, was published in 1955. It grew out of Bill's late 1950 pamphlet *Your Third Legacy—Will You Accept It?* 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 AA Assembly."³¹ 31 The term "General Service Representative," today's "GSR," was simply identified as an elected "Group Representative."

Early issues of the *AA Service Manual* named the service arms of our Fellowship as they are organized today—AA World Services, Inc. (for the General Service Office and all AA publishing), the AA Grapevine, Inc. (the monthly magazine and "our meeting in print" journal), and the General Service Board (the Trustees, comprised of elected AA members and non- alcoholic "friends of AA"). 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.

³¹ 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.

The original nine Districts of the Downstate AA Conference increased to twelve in 1954 and to sixteen Districts in 1960.

The AAWS-registered Groups of 1960 NIA are listed in Appendix II on page 115.

The Northern section's eight Districts, our Area 20 in 1960, were first identified as the Northern Illinois Area in the General Service Conference Final Report of 1965. Throughout the 1960s, Northern Illinois continued its partnership with Southern Illinois. From the Minutes of the Downstate AA Conferences, each year the two Areas jointly met at three Assemblies held at different locations around the state. Each Area also met in a separate, fourth Assembly within their borders, north or south of U.S. Route 24.

In 1963, after deciding the procedure for electing Downstate AA Delegates, the General Service Conference approved an Advisory Action that 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 (AA member) Regional Trustee. Ward M., 1951-52 Panel 1 Delegate from Southern Illinois, was a nominee for the new post of East Central Region Trustee. Before 1963, only two AA (Class B) Trustees were elected from all fifty states. Carl S., the Area 20 Delegate, gave a lengthy report to the Downstate AA Assembly that spring. His report ing helped the Downstate 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 (AA member) Trustees into a two-thirds majority on the General Service Board. The General Service Conference added two new Regions to Canada, and elected the new 1966 Board with eight Regional Trustees and four Class A (non-alcoholic) Trustees. The 1965 Downstate AA Conference discussed and approved this

proposal from a resolution passed by the Northern Illinois Fall Assembly held at Rock Island in October 1965.

The sixteen AA Districts of 1960s' Downstate Illinois continued to grow. In Illinois, the Downstate AA Conference began discussion on its third 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, the Area office and two Intergroups, had not yet reached a reconciliation or consensus for unity. The resolution, also approved by the Southern Illinois Area, simply stated, "any independent Group, registered and contributing to G.S.O., that was willing to also support the Illinois AA Conference (Assembly), was eligible to become a member of the Illinois AA Assembly."³²

The addition of groups from the Chicago Area brought the need for the redistricting discussed at the November 1969 Business Meeting (AA State Committee Meeting) held in Mt. Vernon. Downstate Illinois renumbered all of the AA Districts to compensate for the additional Districts in Northern Illinois Area.

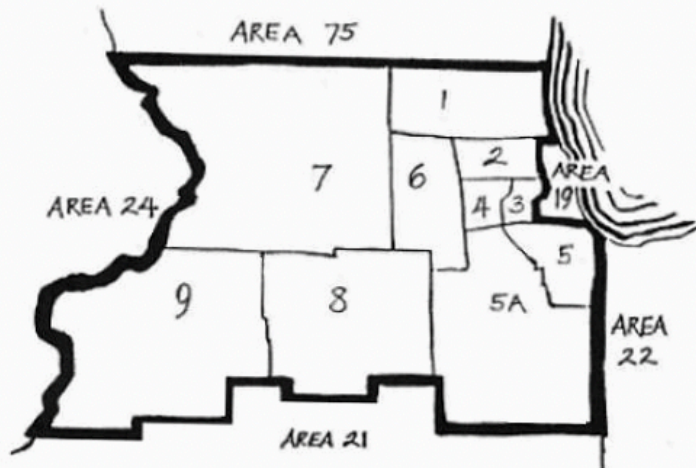
After redistricting discussion at the same November business meeting, the Downstate Illinois Committee tabled a new Motion to divide into three Areas. Proposed as a solution to reduce travel for group representation at the quarterly Assemblies, if adopted, it would have created a fourth Delegate Area in Illinois.

The ten new Districts in Northern Illinois, our Area 20, mapped their boundaries in 1969, and the basic District borderlines remained in effect for the next ten years.

Together, these Districts asserted NIA autonomy in 1972.

³² Minutes, 18th Annual Illinois Downstate AA Conference, Leland Hotel, Springfield, October 1968, Loie C., Secretary. Source: NIA Archives.

1975 NIA Map



The original District boundaries at the start of Northern Illinois Area 20 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.

Four - 1972 - 1973: New Unity and Achieved Autonomy

The Downstate Illinois Assembly, officially known as the Illinois State AA Conference, held its last combined-Area election for the Northern Illinois Delegate on September 26, 1971. The Assembly also discussed an important motion made to the State Steering Committee and presented it to the State Conference for a 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 and responsibility to select its next Delegate in 1973. NIA would return to the 1974 State AA Conference Assembly with its 1974-75 Delegate already elected.

The Downstate Assembly elected Lou D. of Glen Ellyn as its NIA Delegate for the 1972-73 service term. Following a lengthy discussion, a motion was made to establish and nominate a Coordinator, a new State Committee post that would report the “activities throughout the State (and) boundary states, to avoid dates of conflict.” NIA’s enthusiastic Delegate-elect volunteered to serve in the position and the motion was withdrawn.

The Amicable Split

Northern and Southern Areas’ quarterly Assemblies actively discussed the dissolution of the State Conference/Assembly structure over the next two years. Minutes of a Southern Illinois Quarterly Meeting (Assembly) in December of 1972 reported “the Northern Area was making decisions on their own, paying their own Delegate’s costs to the General Service Conference, and... was assuming their own expenses.”³³ Southern Illinois Area began

³³ *Southern Area Quarterly Meeting Minutes*, Marion, Illinois, December 3, 1972. Loie C., Secretary. Source: NIA Archives.

managing its own expenses in February 1972, and like NIA, established its separate Treasury. The Southern Illinois Treasurer reported a balance of \$218.39 at its June Assembly, and the NIA Treasurer reported a similar amount at the 1972 NIA Summer Assembly held at the Yorktown Shopping Center in Lombard.

The Downstate Illinois AA State Conference held its last Assembly at Bradley University in Peoria on August 18, 1973.

Downstate AA Minutes describe the division of the Areas (in a very real sense NIA was now an autonomous group) as amicable. Discussion at each 1970s' Downstate AA meeting revolved around each Area's challenge of parting company and functioning apart from one another. The State AA Conference Chairpersons first reported the possibility of an early end to their service terms at the August 1972 State AA Conference (Assembly) held at Bradley University in Peoria.

Considerable discussion continued at that 1972 Assembly when past NIA Delegate Bruce W. formally proposed the division into two autonomous Areas. Bruce's proposal brought progress and discussion toward the pending split. He also requested that the groups consider doing away with the State AA Committee and the single State AA Treasury, and he honestly stated the fact that each Area had its separate voting entity and was responsible only to its own constituents. Bruce moderated the final Assembly discussion and vote on dissolving the State AA service structure in 1973.

Bruce W. (Panel 14 Area 20) remained active in AA service long after his term at the General Service Conference. He served on AA's General Service Board as our first East Central Region Trustee from NIA, elected at the 1974 General Service Conference.

An All-Illinois State Conference

The 1972 Downstate Illinois Assembly approved a motion that two representatives, each from Chicago Area 19, Northern Illinois Area 20, and Southern Illinois Area 21 would serve on the

AA State Conference Committee.³⁴ In this last action before disbanding, the Downstate Assembly created a new cooperation between all three Illinois Areas for the single purpose of planning and putting on future, annual AA State Conferences without a service Assembly.

Each of the three Illinois Delegate Areas currently sends its two representatives, the Delegates and Area Chairs, to the AA State Conference Policy Committee. Each year since 1974 and in rotation, the host Area assigns and divides participation for the Alcahion Meeting Chairpersons and Panel Presentation speakers between the other two Areas. The annual Illinois State AA Conference weekends emphasize AA service, but after disbanding the Downstate Illinois Areas' Steering Committee in 1973, no Illinois AA State Conference has called for any statewide, combined-Area vote on inter-Area service issues or General Service Conference items.

The Downstate Illinois AA Conference, its Committee structure, and its combined Northern and Southern Illinois Assemblies, came to an official end in September 1973, after both the Southern and Northern Areas accepted the August 18 resolution to disband. Before its closing, the Conference/Assembly heartily thanked and recognized the leadership efforts of the State Committee's trusted servants: State Chairman Dick L. (Southern Illinois Area Panel 19 Delegate 1969-70), State Secretary Loie C. (from Southern Illinois, with nineteen years of service), and State Treasurer Lee H. (Northern Illinois Panel 10 Delegate 1960-61).

³⁴ *Southern Area Quarterly Meeting Minutes*, Marion, Illinois, December 3, 1972. Loie C., Secretary. Source: NIA Archives.

Chicago Area Integration

Dissolving the Downstate Illinois Assembly service structure was not the only developing event in Illinois AA that was 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 restore the unity splintered in 1954. The “common purpose” established a new cooperation and determined the exact location for Chicago Area Groups and Districts. South Suburban groups chose to remain with NIA, and many West Suburban groups reunited with the Chicago Metropolitan Rotating Committee.

The boundaries of Chicago Area 19 and Northern Illinois Area, shown on the 1972 Northern Illinois map on page 36, were clearly defined for the first time in many years. NIA District 3 included some groups that were once a part of the West Suburban Intergroup, and District 5 contained the former South Suburban Intergroup member groups. Various groups in Districts 1 and 2 came into NIA from their previous alignment with the Chicago Area 19 Rotating Committee.

NIA’s first Secretary, Karen T., corresponded with many groups and answered questions on which Area the groups belonged. She also helped resolve specific questions for each suburban group on where its GSRs could participate in District AA service. Following her two-year term in NIA, Karen returned to service with Chicago AA.

Through this great 1972 effort involving both the NIA Secretary and Chicago’s “Common Purpose” Committee, groups were linked to existing Districts in either Chicago Area 19 or Northern Illinois Area 20. The return of suburban groups to

Chicago Area 19 ended the three separate service entities formed in 1954.

A new Chicago Area unity resulted from the Combined Services Committee's effort to redistrict Area 19. The West Suburban Intergroup voted to dissolve in October 1972³⁵ and most of its groups joined the newly named Chicago Area Service Committee (CASC, formerly the Chicago Metropolitan Rotating Committee). Years later in 2001, the CASC changed its name to CASA (the Chicago Area Service Assembly).

Illinois Alcoholics Anonymous' 1972 fellowship witnessed unity restored to Chicago after eighteen years of division and strife, while AA unity continued to grow for its newly autonomous neighbor, our own Northern Illinois Area 20.

Elusive Records

There are no NIA Assembly or Committee Meeting Minutes or either 1972 or 1973, but the search effort continues through the NIA Archives. Before NIA established its Archives, sets of Minutes were kept by Area Secretaries. The Minutes were lost in 1975 – an Area Secretary got married and moved, and her family discarded all her papers! Details of the first two years of Northern Illinois Area meetings can only be provided by recollection.

The Montgomery Ward store at Yorktown had a meeting room that was large enough for a new AA Area Assembly. Karen T., NIA Secretary, recalled that the participation of more than forty Northern Illinois Area AA representatives was a very encouraging sign of the 1972 commitment to service in Alcoholics Anonymous. She noted that the new NIA participation exceeded the total

³⁵ From the presentation and discussion printed in a Chicago-Suburban Intergroup Council flyer, September 1972 "Proposal to dissolve," page 2. Source: Chicago Area Archives

attendance numbers of many previously combined – Area Downstate Assemblies.

Early NIA Secretaries also recall that Lou D. from Glen Ellyn District 4, the Panel 22 NIA Delegate to the 1972-73 General Service Conference, helped organize Traditions Panels for NIA Assemblies when morning sessions were held for the benefit of GSR participation. Southern Illinois Area began this practice in early 1971, and the NIA Assemblies duplicated its success. Lou, Delegate, Rollie C., the immediate past Delegate from Rockford, and Bruce W., past Delegate from Waukegan, led Area 20 through the first growth of its autonomy. Lou is also fondly recalled as being well versed in the *AA Service Manual*--he vigorously and very often advocated its study by all AA members.

Lou suffered a heart attack during the August 1973 Illinois State AA Conference weekend, and fortunately was able to drive himself to a local hospital. He completed his Delegate term, was later elected to serve as NIA Treasurer in 1980-81, and through his effort Area 20 obtained its first sales tax-exempt status with the State of Illinois in 1981.

A Larger Region

The member Areas of the AA East Central Region added the two Delegate Areas of Wisconsin in 1972, following Wisconsin's 1972 General Service Conference-approved request to separate from the West Central Region. Wisconsin joined the AA Areas of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio (then including many groups from northern Kentucky). 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) followed in 1974 to also serve three years.

The East Central Region agreed, with other Regions, to a three-year service term compromise that restored an overlap of all Trustee terms on the General Service Board. The one-time change was approved at the 1971 General Service Conference. When the Conference established AA Regions in 1963 and added two Canadian Regions in 1966, the General Service Board would have experienced a one-time rotation of all Regional Trustees in 1975.

Jack M. served the larger East Central Region during the first years of NIA and SIA autonomy. He developed the consensus for our Region to hold two new Conference weekends each year. Reporting on an example found in the Southeast AA Region, Jack proposed the Delegate/Past Delegate Conference in 1973. The fourteen Areas enthusiastically accepted his proposal, and Chicago Area 19's Panel 23 Delegate hosted the first Delegates' Luncheon in his hometown of Evanston. Within a few years, the Delegates' Luncheon changed in length to the current three-day Delegate/Past Delegate Conference, intended to benefit new Delegates and encourage fellowship among Regional servants.

The members of the East Central Region committee include all current and past Delegates of our fourteen Areas. The Regional Trustees serve as Co-Chair for the four years of their term on the General Service Board, and all other elected positions serve in two-year terms. Our past Area 20 Delegates have served as Trustees (Panel 14 Bruce W. and Panel 34 Jack O.), Co-Chairs (Panel 38 Dennis D. and Panel 44 Russ V.), Treasurers (Panel 42 Tom B.), and Historian (Panel 36 Hank G., maintaining the ECR Archives). NIA last hosted the Delegate/Past Delegate Conference in February 1999 in Morris. At the Delegate/Past Delegate Conferences, open to all AAs, new East Central Region Delegates have the opportunity to read their Area Highlights report that is

heard at their first General Service Conference, and a “mock” Conference floor session is held during the weekend.

The 1973 Delegates’ Luncheon in Evanston also approved an idea for an East Central Regional Conference. Southeast Michigan Area 33 committed to host the first East Central Regional Conference weekend, combining it with the 1973 Michigan AA State Conference. From the success of 1973, the East Central Region holds joint Regional Conferences with different State Conferences weekends each year, rotating the hosts between the Region’s fourteen Areas. The members of the Regional Committee usually hold a Delegate’s Breakfast during the weekend Regional Conference that is open to all AAs. Many times a Regional Committee Meeting takes place, also open to all AAs. The practice of the Delegate/Past Delegate Conference is upheld in the meetings, where only Delegates have a voice and vote—any AA who is not a Delegate can speak to the Meeting only when requested.

The two East Central Region events, the Delegates Conferences and the Regional Conferences, foster a greater sense of an interstate community and neighborliness. Over the years through today, participants find that the Fellowship is “much the same in the Great White North as it is on the banks of the Ohio River.”³⁶

Appendix II lists the census of registered Area 20 groups as published in the AAWS 1973 Eastern United States Directory. This last appendix set on page 119 further tracks the growth in our newly autonomous NIA.

³⁶ May 1989 update to *The History of the East Central Region*, 1987, page 3. Source: NIA Archives.

Five - Charting the NIA District Boundaries: A Redistricting Time-Line

- 1951-1960 Downstate Illinois AA, established as two combined AA Areas listing nine (9) Districts. In 1954, the Downstate Illinois' map showed twelve (12) Districts, with four (4) in Northern Illinois. Boundaries included the entire state without the Chicago city limits, AA Delegate Area 19.
Refer to the map on page 31.
- 1960 Downstate Illinois AA Conference (Assembly) increased to sixteen (16) Districts, eight in each Area. The Downstate Assembly approves the new boundary dividing Northern and Southern AA Delegate Areas, following an east-west line on U.S. Route 24 to the Mississippi River.
Refer to the map on page 32.
- 1965 Annual General Service Conference Final Report first records reporting from Northern Illinois Area 20 containing nine (9) Districts.
- 1968 Downstate Illinois AA approves the inclusion of any independent AA groups willing to support the Illinois AA Conference (the combined Assembly of Northern Illinois Area 20 and Southern Illinois Area 21).

Charting the NIA District Boundaries: A Redistricting Time-Line

- 1969 Proposal to create a fourth Illinois Delegate Area tabled by the Downstate Assembly. All Downstate Illinois AA Districts are re-numbered to reflect current growth: ten (10) Districts in Area 20 and ten (10) Districts in Area 21.
- 1975 Boundaries for NIA Districts 5 and 5A approved by NIA Summer Assembly at Moline. Refer to the first available map preserved from 1975. Located on page 37, it is the earliest existing map of an autonomous Area 20 found through the NIA History Project research.
- 1975 District 1 redrawn as District 1 and District 1A. Reported to the Winter Assembly at Yorktown Auditorium in 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.

Charting the NIA District Boundaries: A Redistricting Time-Line

- 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 York would no longer use letters as part of any District designation. A unified code was developed for the first computer system used by G.S.O. in 1982. Accordingly, District 9 became District 90. Previous redistricting of District 2 renamed 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 a 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.

Charting the NIA District Boundaries: A Redistricting Time-Line

- | | |
|------|---|
| 1982 | NIA Winter Assembly held in West Dundee approved the division of District 10 along Interstate 94, adding District 12. |
| 1983 | NIA Summer Assembly held in Joliet approved the division of District 90 into Districts 90 and 91. Area 20 now enjoyed the participation of nineteen (19) AA Districts. |
| 1984 | Boundaries for Districts 51 and 52 were redrawn to its 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 its 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. |

Charting the NIA District Boundaries: A Redistricting Time-Line

- 1989 Area 20 service newsletter *NIA Concepts* moved the NIA map to its inside pages and included NIA District answering service numbers.
- 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 District 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.
- 1996 District 60 disbands, with its daytime groups integrated into Districts 62, 63, and 64.
- 2002 The 2002 NIA Spring Assembly welcomed and approved a new Spanish-speaking District 20, comprised of all Spanish AA groups within the borders of NIA.

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

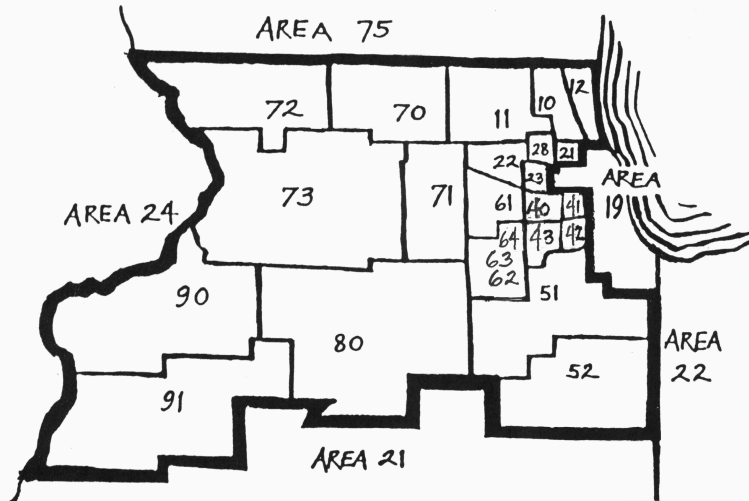
All of the additions of Districts in Area 20 followed the procedure detailed in the *AA Service Manual*. Months of development between the groups of a dividing District preceded the motions to approve new Districts at the NIA Assemblies. The dividing Districts reached full agreement on any boundary changes 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 maps with telephone number changes in addition to any new NIA District boundaries.

The earliest found map of an autonomous Northern Illinois Area, presented on page 37, shows the District boundaries as drawn in the 1969 renumbering and redistricting by the Downstate Illinois AA 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, with alignments to both Area 20 and Area 19 by different groups in its borders. Only the first two 1982 issues of *NIA Concepts* displayed District 3.

NIA Districts will continue to divide when their growth provides the need to redistrict. The original four Area 20 Districts matured into the twenty-five active AA Districts participating in NIA meetings today.

2003 NIA Map



The current District boundaries
of Northern Illinois Area 20
in September 2003, taken from the map
utilized by the NIA Answering Services Committee.

Six - Our Group Lives

Thirteen General Service Conferences reviewed, changed, and reaffirmed the AAWS pamphlet *The AA Group*³⁷ since its first release in 1965. The 1963 Conference proposed revisions to a service piece titled “Partners,” assisting in the *AA Group* pamphlet’s development. Until then (and since then), AA resources describing Group activities, structure, and outreach could be found in *the Secretary Handbook* (until 1954), the *Third Legacy Manual* (now the *AA Service Manual*), AA’s Twelve Traditions, and in articles of the *AA Grapevine*. The *AA Group* pamphlet underwent a major revision in a Conference Literature Committee Advisory Action of 1992, adding text from the long form of Tradition Three and the Twelfth Concept’s Sixth Warranty, where “...much attention has been drawn to the extraordinary liberties which the AA Traditions accord to the individual member and his group.”³⁸

Over time, careful considerations to meet current needs have driven the pamphlet’s changes. The 2003 Conference recommended that the Trustees Literature Committee initiate a comprehensive review of the pamphlet for future Conference consideration.

The current pamphlet answers the question:
“What is an AA group?”

³⁷ *Advisory Actions of the General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous 1951-2001*, 2002 printing (AAWS catalog M-39), recommendations from the Conference Literature Committee, used with permission of AAWS, Inc.

³⁸ *Twelve Concepts For World Service by Bill W.*, 1962, page 7 and 75, used with permission of AAWS, Inc.

As the long form of Tradition Three clearly states, ‘Our membership ought to include all who suffer from alcoholism. Hence we may refuse none who wish to recover. Nor ought AA membership ever depend upon money or conformity. Any two or three alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an AA group, provided that, as a group, they have no other affiliation.’”

“Further clarification of an AA group may be found in Warranty Six, Twelfth Concept:

- no penalties to be inflicted for nonconformity to AA principles;
- no fees or duties to be levied – voluntary contributions only;
- no member to be expelled from AA – membership always to be the choice of the individual;
- each AA group ought to conduct its internal affairs as it wishes – it being merely requested to abstain from acts that might injure AA as a whole, and final that any group of alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an AA group provided that, as a group, they have no other purpose or affiliation.”³⁹

The conduct and activity of 1940s’ Illinois AA meetings pioneered the differences and improvements that remain in many of our twenty-first century groups. We carry the AA message of recovery, service and unity with few changes since our beginnings, and the changing “face of AA” in our groups today reflects our inclusive outreach toward all suffering alcoholics. The experience written into the Twelve Traditions provide our groups the framework of the “extraordinary liberties” described by Bill W. in 1962’s Twelve Concepts.

³⁹ *The AA Group...Where it all begins* (catalog P-16), page 15 of 61 pages, April 2003 printing, and used with permission of AAWS, Inc.

The growth of Illinois AA groups holds stories of humor, danger, vital need, and an ongoing development of AA unity. Rather than efforts of trial and error, the groups of Northern Illinois Area 20 matured in a fortunate combination of experiment and success.

Many recollections of longtime AA members in Northern Illinois Area speak of the spirit of the early groups. Taped interview efforts for the NIA Archives have taken place since the mid-1980s, but no names are included with the anecdotes reported here. Audiocassette recordings, located in the NIA Archives, provide more details of each early member's story. "You must save that evening, and you must be there. In between, every day, you were to contact one or all of the people who were there at that meeting, either by phone, or by dropping in and having coffee, or at their office, or wherever they were. But you must keep in touch with them. We used to ride around in the evening to see if they were all home (laugh) and in good shape. The friendliness and the love that was given was what bound them together...It continued on there until we got 25 members, and we couldn't get them all in."⁴⁰

Early members of Illinois AA groups shared a mixture of enthusiasm and concern. In the full, taped recollection above, members held a concern that "no one really knew if AA was going to work." Friendly telephone calls between early members many times began with the cordial greeting "Are you still there?" The growth at Illinois' first AA group, from six to twenty-five members in three months, proved the opposite. Evanston, Illinois has a much larger population than Sterling, Illinois, but the slow and steady 1940s growth at Sterling, NIA's earliest group, and

⁴⁰ Transcript excerpt from a 1985 interview with an early member's wife, who participated in Illinois' first AA group, meeting in her home in Evanston. Courtesy of the Chicago Area 19 Archives Committee.

rapid growth in 1940s Rockford, showed the end result of outreach, enthusiasm, and attraction for AA recovery.

The first groups in the northern “section” of Illinois began in members’ homes. Group members later provided more ample meeting space in their business offices, in local hotel rooms, and banquet halls. Community centers also met the need for more room. Churches, in the 1940s through today, consistently provided meeting space for AA in their friendly partnership as landlords to groups. The homes of early AA members reflected the same hospitality shown by our Fellowship’s pioneers – newcomers often stayed briefly in AA members’ homes, and AA travelers rarely needed to reserve accommodations at local hotels. In a classic example of AA hospitality, one Rock Island AA couple became close friends and traveling companions with Ebby T., whom Bill W. called his sponsor, beginning with a 1948 talk Ebby gave in Davenport, Iowa. Local AA members and out-of town visitors were welcomed in their Illinois home at all times of the day and night.

Husbands and non-alcoholic wives attended meetings, but the groups quickly separated the AA members-only sharing from the after-meeting socializing. Rockford’s 1940s Saturday night Socials were open to husbands, their wives, and newcomers in recovery as Open Meetings. In the recollection that men and women stayed on opposite sides of the meeting room, wives would compare their family’s recovery in the same way that the AA men would speak of their own current paths. As someone once “wanted to know if it was a Quaker meeting” (p.17), the monthly Socials were nonetheless lively and cordial.

Many AA men traveled together to participate at far-flung groups, as wartime gas rationing curtailed automobile use. The groups in outlying northwest Illinois averaged the shortest distance of over forty miles between locations, and on the different nights of meetings, the AA members rarely arrived alone. Passenger train

lines, more common in the 1940s, provided inexpensive but longer trips than today. A train ride to the Tuesday “Big” Meeting in Chicago encompassed at least an entire day.

Women members in early Illinois AA were few, and originally were sponsored by men. The stigma of alcoholism in 1940s and 1950s America initially carried a greater burden on women coming into AA. The first “Special Groups” in other sections of the United States began for women-only in the late 1940s. Of particular note, the first “Young Peoples Group” met at the Waukegan Alano Club in 1960, and a few “special attendance” groups began in Area 20 during that decade. The practice of naming groups other than the town or the night of the week changed in the late 1960s. The 1973 U.S. Directory record of AA groups in Northern Illinois Area listed many Women’s Groups, Men’s Groups, and Young Peoples Groups (p.119) for the first time.

AA groups started in many towns when enough members assembled for meetings. While some members traveled long distances to attend, local attraction and membership grew, and additional meetings were started on different nights in the same towns. The growth met the increased attraction to AA recovery – Rockford, the Quad Cities (with Moline, Illinois and Davenport, Iowa), Elgin, Batavia, Aurora, and Waukegan held multi-night meetings before 1950.

AA “Headquarters” in New York City printed the national directories every six months, but the first known Illinois AA Directory of 1954 also listed all Northern Illinois towns with AA groups. The same Illinois Directory included the contacts of “Delegates, Committeemen, and Groups of the Nine Illinois Areas.” Originals are located in the District 72 Archives with copies located in the NIA Archives. The “Area Committeemen” served in the same capacity as today’s District Committee

Members (DCMs), but in a different manner: instead of chairing a regular “District” meeting, they served by traveling to each group, carrying AA news, and sought out the developing group consciences. The Area Committeemen and the Group Secretaries shared in the planning of celebration events, such as group anniversaries, dinners, and Open Meetings. The Committeemen helped arrange for group “business” meeting time to discuss “AA as a whole” in the activities of the Downstate Illinois AA Conference meetings and the actions of the General Service Conferences. The attendance and participation from Group Representatives (GSRs and Secretaries) at weekend Downstate AA Conferences and Assemblies increased with the encouragement from the Committeemen. Minutes of the Downstate Illinois AA Conference Assemblies, our combined Northern and Southern Area meetings, were available to groups from 1954 forward.

1940s and 1950s articles in Chicago AA’s *Here’s How* newsletter, a short *Chit-Chat* newsletter from Rochelle, and the issues of the AA Grapevine highlighted and announced service news, ideas, and concerns much more frequently than is found today. The quarterly *NIA Concepts Service Letter* has served well in that capacity since 1982.

The Northern Illinois groups achieved success with private and published outreach. Many groups paid for small ads in the “personals” section of newspaper-classified sections, bringing inquiries from many areas. Announcements of Post Office box addresses changed to telephone numbers in the 1950s, but both telephoned and written inquiries by community leaders, clergy, active alcoholics’ family members, and the alcoholics themselves, provided the opportunity to carry the message of AA recovery in person.

Two clergymen and a local doctor assisted with the startup of the Freeport Group in 1948. More than a few times, Kane County

courts released chronic drunks to the personal custody of an AA member, a County Forest Preserve Ranger. In general, community support across northwest Illinois spread the news about where alcoholics could go for help – to the local groups of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Our AA groups' first "leaders" sometimes provided the opportunity for the start of new groups. "For whatever reason, one AA group *could* break away from another – without necessarily endangering the old group or the new. As anonymous members have put it in unrecorded times: 'All you need to start a new group in AA is a resentment and a coffeepot.'"⁴¹ In one group in the northwest suburbs of Cook County, one particular 1940s AA member, a barber nicknamed "the Colonel," strictly forbid his group members from going to another AA barber, and he publicly ostracized any offender from further attending "his" group. In 1950s Aurora, a local leader, when hearing proposed group changes other than his own opinions, would demonstrate episodes of emotional grief, tears, and announce the impending collapse of "his AA." A few Aurora AAs overreacted by slashing tires. In resentment from outside sources, the 1970s Carpentersville Group found the need to move its meeting location when the tires of members' cars were repeatedly slashed in one season. A 1990s leader of a group in St. Charles actually took the coffeepot with him when members questioned the way the meetings were run and decided to break away—fortunately the old and new groups prospered. New groups broke away when its non-smoking members started "clean air" meetings at different sites, or more

⁴¹ The illustration of the Cleveland, Ohio group growth was repeated in only a few instances in Northern Illinois AA groups. Page 166, *Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers* (AAWS catalog No. B-8), and used with permission of AAWS, Inc.

recently when smokers left facilities that established “no smoking” policies.

Whether or not new groups formed out of personality or group structure difficulties, resentments appear as the exception to the rule reported by “anonymous members in unrecorded times...” Much more so, Northern Illinois AA members started new groups as a smaller, new meeting separate from a larger group, when facilities closed, new facilities opened, when meeting rent increased, “landlords” exerted too much control in the consensus of the group, or the group outgrew its meeting place.

Meeting formats changed since the 1940s, and no group has ever held fast to any written “rule” on how a meeting opens or closes. AA members across the Fellowship began to introduce their sharing with “...and I’m an alcoholic” in the 1950s. Around the same time, many groups began their meetings by reading the *AA Grapevine* “Preamble,” our Twelve Steps from the Big Book’s chapter five “How It Works,” the short form of the Twelve Traditions, or the first paragraphs of the Big Book’s chapter three “More About Alcoholism.”

The 1954 Hazelden Foundation publishing of its *Twenty Four Hours A Day* book contains an “AA Thought For The Day,” a daily meditation, and short prayer that many Northern Illinois and Midwest groups have used over the years at the start of meetings. The AAWS 1990 publishing of *Daily Reflections, A book of reflections by AA members for AA members* (AAWS catalog B-12) replaced the Hazelden reading in many groups.

An opening “quiet time” included an excerpt of “The Serenity Prayer” in relatively few AA meetings, but the practice of opening meetings prayers spread in the late 1980s, where today the

majority of Northern Illinois groups (and Area 20 service meetings) recite the prayer.⁴²

The majority of groups usually closed their meetings with the “Lord’s Prayer” from the *Bible’s* New Testament, as originally practiced by the earliest 1930s AA groups. AA members added the exclaimed phrases “keep coming back!” in the late 1980s, and “it works if you work it sober!” in the mid-1990s. The friendly chants continue at the closing of today’s meetings, emphasizing AA’s spirituality rather than any endorsement of religion. Some groups still utilize only the quiet time at the start of its meetings. Others close with the Serenity Prayer, other Step prayers, AA’s “Declaration of Unity,” or AA’s Responsibility Statement and code “I am responsible...whenever anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of AA to always be there. And for that, I am responsible.”⁴³

The names of Northern Illinois groups today are a dramatic change from the original, simple designations of the night of the week, a group’s town, its meeting site, or a numbered “Group A” or “Group B.” Only a few special-attendance groups registered as women-only or men-only in the early 1970s, and a phenomenon of new names developed after the release of the Third Edition Big Book in 1976. A new awareness of our literature established names and new meeting formats of Big Book Study, Traditions

⁴² Rev. Dr. Reinhold Niebuhr, author, 1932. The excerpt heard in AA and printed by the *AA Grapevine* is the first of a two-stanza Christian prayer “God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.”

⁴³ 1965 Declaration first heard at the International AA Convention in Toronto, Canada, and used with permission of AA World Services, Inc.

Groups, Grapevine Groups, and Step Groups.⁴⁴ In Rockford, the Intergroup Archivist reported the 1980s start of Big Book meetings almost in a rebellion toward the “sameness” of the older groups’ meetings, but more accurately as a stronger reflection of a renewed interest and trend to name a group after an AA book or an AA principle. The creativity of our membership’s selection of group names shows, in today’s District Meeting Schedules and the Eastern U.S. Directories.

Intergroups in Northern Illinois

AA groups began meeting at District Meetings on a regular basis in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Today, a District Meeting is considered a Service Group, with its own identification number assigned by the Records Department at the General Service Office. A different category of a Service Group met the need of Northern Illinois in the early 1970s: the Intergroup.

Described in the *AA Guideline on Central or Intergroup Offices* (AAWS catalog MG-02), an Intergroup carries out functions that are common to the groups supporting them: answering services, newsletters, literature sales, and service committee activity. Intergroups compliment and assist with each location’s general service District and Area activities. Care is taken that Intergroup committees do not compete with the general service efforts of a District or Area, or duplicate the activities to carry the message through the service committees of Public Information, Treatment Facilities, Cooperation with Professional Community, and Correctional Facilities. The *AA Service Manual* offers a second description: “Traditionally, general service

⁴⁴ From annual General Service Conference Final Reports, membership increased 18% from 1979-1982 to one million AAs in 50,000 Groups. The percentage increases were the highest since 1940s AA growth. The 2002 Final Report estimated 2.1 million AAs meeting in 103,768 Groups.

committees and intergroups/central offices have performed different functions. Central offices provide local services; general service committees maintain the link between the AA group and the AA General Service Board by means of the Conference. So, these two separate but vital service structures coexist in many areas in mutual cooperation and harmony.”⁴⁵

In Northern Illinois, two Intergroups formed in 1974 and opened offices to serve local AA needs in the Quad Cities and in Rockford. The ILLOWA Intergroup provides services across the Mississippi River for the cities of Moline, East Moline, Silvis, and Rock Island, Illinois and Davenport and Bettendorf, Iowa. It elected its first officers in May 1974, organized its first dinner, dance, and AA speaker event, and opened its first office in September. “Furniture was acquired and volunteers came from everywhere. Telephone service began in October with both Illinois and Iowa phone numbers, and its charter and non-profit status were established in early 1975.”⁴⁶ Today, ILLOWA Intergroup

representatives are liaisons to the AA groups that also participate in District and Area general service. The office employs a fulltime manager, publishes a multi-city meeting schedule, and makes Conference-approved literature available for purchase. Semiannual AA Open events draw excellent attendance, and its monthly newsletter includes the separate meeting minutes of the Intergroup, NIA’s District 90, and Iowa Area 24’s District 9.

The Rockford Area Intergroup began with local answering services in 1974. Today, it provides Conference-approved literature and employs a part-time manager. As in the Quad Cities,

⁴⁵ Page S37 of the 2002-2003 Edition of the *AA Service Manual* and used with permission of AAWS, Inc.

⁴⁶ From *A Brief History of ILLOWA Intergroup’s Beginning* published in June 1989, courtesy of Iowa Area 24’s District 9 Archives and located in the NIA Archives.

many volunteers assist with keeping the downtown office doors open. The Rockford Intergroup publishes a newsletter, a city AA meeting directory, and also supports an AA Archivist with a display room in its office.

The third Intergroup in Northern Illinois began in 1983 in Galesburg, and unpaid volunteers staffed its office.⁴⁷ Answering services, a newsletter, and literature sales kept the office afloat until the mid-1990s. As local interest slowly declined, the Galesburg Intergroup closed its doors in the winter of 1995.

The NIA Group History Project

Many of the details in this chapter result from group responses to a 1998 launch of a survey sent to all NIA District Archives committees. Only a few group histories had been placed in the NIA Archives until that time, and the response to the NIA Group History Project was greatly aided by District Archives servants. Doubled from the general questions in the GSO Archives *Handbook for Setting Up an Archival Repository* published from 1982-1998, the 1998 NIA Archives outreach effort enlarged the focus to gather group histories by including participation in general services, Seventh Tradition contribution activity, and survey questions requesting details on current group practices. Many of the responses listed names of early members. All completed questionnaires can be found in the larger holdings of the NIA and GSO Archives.

The replies to current NIA group activities met one of the intentions of the Group History Project, to preserve the stories of each group's growth and practices up to the date of its response. Today's groups meet in members' homes, travel between homes as

⁴⁷ Details on NIA Intergroup histories added to this sub-chapter from a four-paged "Report On Intergroups" completed by NIA Alternate Delegate Barb B. and added to 1988 NIA Spring Assembly Minutes.

“Wanderers Groups,” meet in prisons, churches, hospitals, clubhouses, and community centers. Every group reported its GSR rotation of every two years, and maintained its financial independence through self-support. Many group members during differing years served at District and Area levels, and all group problems, difficulties, and growing pains were resolved by the group conscience. The majorities of groups hold regular business meetings, maintain a group telephone list, and contribute funds to District, Area, and AAWS at GSO when possible.

A number of NIA groups hold many weekly meetings at one location but elect one GSR. Many more celebrate group and members’ anniversaries with dinners, picnics, and Open AA Speaker meetings. The groups contribute books and literature to newcomers, libraries, hospitals, and jails. Group members volunteer their time on District answering services, visit jails and treatment centers, and as practiced across the AA Fellowship, hold a “First Step” welcoming session for first-time newcomers.

The response to the NIA Group History Project is ongoing, with the questionnaire currently posted and available on the Area website. 150 NIA groups participated over the past five years by completing the questionnaires. The input greatly assists our District and Area Archives effort to preserve early NIA history and provides details of today’s NIA group activities. As stated in the questionnaire’s closing and thank-you, “Your response will make a difference to the still suffering alcoholic who finds recovery with an AA group, who might also find this record many years from now.”

Seven - The Growth of the NIA Committee with the NIA Assemblies

When the first Assembly in a newly autonomous Northern Illinois Area 20 convened at Yorktown Center in 1972, the differences and similarities with Downstate AA were immediately apparent. Karen T., Area Secretary, recalled that attendance at the Area Assemblies nearly matched that of past combined-Area Downstate Conferences (Assemblies). An average of forty AAs met the challenge of Area service, and NIA Assembly attendance began its growth. Both Southern Area 21 and Northern Area 20 had secured the “separate identities” described by Bruce W. Their vigor and enthusiasm made the dissolution of the combined-Area State AA 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 soon brought the results of their separate planning.

Our ten AA Districts began holding 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 new 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 meetings was significant: many Downstate AA Assemblies were held on Sundays at the close of weekend conferences, where agendas were informally discussed during an entire weekend. NIA Districts, adjusting to the new change in the Area meeting day of the week, were now able to develop and discuss topics with five to six week notices. Voting on topics and business items was first on the agendas of the early Assemblies.

The locations for the first Assemblies and Committee Meetings were chosen for the same reasons that our current service meetings are successes. Facilities with inexpensive meeting room fees, coffee and food service availability, good parking, and especially an easy travel effort for AAs proved to be the ingredients for steadily increasing turnouts for NIA meetings. The average of 40 AAs participating in 1972 NIA grew to 130-150 AAs attending early 1990s' NIA Assemblies, with a slightly lower average of 115 AAs through 2003. Area Committee Meeting attendance grew from an average of 15 AAs in the early 1970s to a current participation of 40-50 trusted servants.

The sites of both NIA Assemblies and Committee Meetings moved to different locations around northern Illinois when NIA Districts volunteered to host a service meeting. The concentration of 1972-1976 Assemblies in Lombard at the Yorktown Center Auditorium 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."⁴⁸ Today, Winter Assemblies approve a yearly NIA Calendar developed by the Area Committee, with meeting sites and District hosts planned ahead of time.

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

⁴⁸ Minutes of NIA Summer Assembly at Moline, June 14, 1975, one page. Reported by Myrtle G., NIA Secretary. Source: NIA Archives.

Yorktown Center heard a panel discuss “Problems With Outside Agencies” with an AA and an agency point of view. The same Assembly was presented with a developmental talk on the “Relationship of General Service Conference Committees 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., past NIA Delegate from two years before, was elected NIA Treasurer by the 1974 Summer Assembly held at the Rockford Alano Club, and finished Bruce’s NIA Treasurer term. Lou later served a full term as NIA Treasurer in 1980-81.

The Assemblies’ panel presentations were excellent tools in highlighting possibilities and potential directions for AA service. 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 District liaison between the Public Information and Hospitals and Institutions Committees, and procedural guidelines were developed for the two separate committees. District activities, reported at each Assembly, showed that both committees’ activities were separately developing at local levels. Area 20 elected its first Hospitals and Institutions Committee Chairman 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 of Downstate Illinois AA Assemblies, but included voting

for more than just selecting the Delegate. NIA ballots were cast for 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 servants, past Delegates, and ten District Committee Members (DCMs).

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, with a review panel comprised of a dozen NIA Committee members that disbanded after discussing changes to the final draft. Ad Hoc Committees in 1970s' NIA met as various nominating committees, a Study Committee for Redistricting, annual NIA Budget planning committees in the fall of each year, and NIA Spring Conference Weekend committees. The first NIA Spring Conference, planned by District 7 volunteers and NIA Committee volunteers, took place in 1975 at the Tabala Towers in Rockford.

Ad Hoc committees met in the 2000s to develop solutions on NIA mailing lists, obtaining insurance coverage for Area meetings, and inventorying and recommending electronic equipment purchases. The Ad Hoc committees report their findings to the Area Committee Meetings for further Assembly action.

Topics that generated long-term early Assembly discussions are comparable to 2000s' 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 General Service Conference, where a soft cover edition was not approved until a later Conference in 1986.

The consensus for any change may always be prudent and slow for AA as a whole. The Fourth Edition Big Book discussions began in 1994 through its Conference-approved publishing in 2001. In a 1996 example of a developing topic from 1991 dialogue, the increased use of “on-line” computer networks to carry the AA message received a very active discussion. Area 20 eventually launched its own web site in January 2000.

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 public address system was approved at the same Assembly.⁴⁹ The new 1976 designation of “NIA Committee Meeting” was accepted to dispel any confusion, where past labels of Quarterly Planning Sessions, Business Meetings, etc. presented a limiting concept to the eighteen Area 20 Committee (including DCMs) members of 1975.

A Textbook Democracy

Northern Illinois Area discourages no AA member from participating at Assemblies or from standing for election to any position on the Area 20 Committee. The active discussion and sharing in an atmosphere of a “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 substantial unanimity is eventually reached on all issues. NIA members abide with the final voting on any Area group conscience.

⁴⁹ Minutes of March 13, 1976 NIA Spring Assembly held at Yorktown Auditorium in Lombard, one page. Ruth P., NIA Secretary. Source: NIA Archives.

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.

NIA Guidelines

Preceding our efforts to develop any legal Area 20 incorporation for tax-exempt non-profit status (Illinois in 1981 and the U.S. Government in 1995), AA service principles were actively discussed at 1980s Assemblies. NIA Chairpersons and NIA Secretaries announced voting rights and eligibility for NIA members at every Assembly, accepting the votes of NIA service committee chairs, past Delegates, District Chairpersons (DCMs), GSRs, and NIA committee officers (Delegate, Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer). The Alternate Chairpersons for these committees possessed a vote only when their elected Chairs were absent.

NIA planned for increased participation through a vote of the 1984 Summer Assembly, where the Alternate Chairs of all Area service committees were given voting rights at Committee Meetings. A motion to the 1995 Spring Assembly also gave all Alternate DCMs a vote at NIA Committee Meetings.

At Assemblies, voting eligibility remained for DCMs and NIA service committee Chairpersons, allowing for voting by their Alternates when the Chairs were absent. The Assembly voting eligibility took great care to place the majority-voting block with Area 20 GSRs.

The 1987 Spring Assembly approved a new document, the *NIA Service Structure Guidelines*, detailing the responsibilities and voting rights of Area servants. All the points of prior Assembly discussion and approval votes on Area service were organized into this first NIA Guideline. A second major section, *Spending Guidelines for Area Servants*, was added and approved by the Assembly in 1992. Through 2003, the two sections received

revision approvals only three times per section, each time to meet changing needs and Area service responsibilities. Voting rights, the members of the Area Assembly, the members of the Area Committee, and the suggestions on funding and spending comprise its content. The *NIA Service Structure Guidelines* act as type of operational Area charter and “standard practices” document for Area 20 service, and it reflects the similar purposes of the By-Laws of AA’s *Conference Charter* and the *AA Service Manual*.

The NIA Spring Conference “planning guide” developed from the model of the original 1974 *State Conference Planning Digest*. Assembly motions and planning committee recommendations were assembled and approved as the *NIA Spring Conference Guidelines* at the 1995 Winter Assembly. Spring Conference planning committees’ final reports add considerations and recommendations from the annual NIA events, and are provided to each new Ad Hoc planning committee.

The 1992 Summer Assembly approved a proposal for *NIA Assembly Hosting Guidelines*, completed and approved a year later at the 1993 NIA Summer Assembly. The Assembly approved updates and revisions in 1998.

The 1993 proposal for the annual NIA Big Book Conference developed into the *NIA Big Book Conference Guidelines* that followed the event’s first success of 1994. The Assembly approved its revision and update in 1999.

Each of the Area 20 Guidelines requires a two-thirds Assembly majority for approval on any changes. Each document aids NIA service, carries the Assembly’s careful development and substantial unanimity support, and presents the ongoing result of AA unity in action and in principle.

All Area 20 Guidelines are available on the NIA website today, at: <http://www.aa-nia.org>

NIA Service Committee Histories

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 establishment of the NIA Hospitals and Institutions Committee in 1976, after careful development by the NIA Committee and the approval of the Assembly. Many times, the growth and creation of NIA service committees paralleled similar developments and Advisory Actions out of our General Service Conferences. Presented here, in their historical sequence in NIA, are the following Area-level service committees:

- DCMs
- Treatment Facilities
- Correctional Facilities
- Public Information
- Cooperation with the Professional Community
- GSRs
- Answering Services
- Archives
- Grapevine
- Literature

The chapter continues with the chronicle of appointed NIA positions, our Area 20 publications, Area events, and closes with our NIA Committee officers-- the Secretary, Treasurer, Chair, Delegate and the Alternates to the elected offices.

District Committee Members

DCMs (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 Committee Meetings as “DCMs Meetings,” highlighting District reporting for much of each session. Whether or not DCMs deliver lengthy reports to the NIA Committee Meetings, their presence and voices carry each NIA District’s views and group conscience. DCMs also carry the invitation for all District representatives to attend and participate in the NIA Assemblies. Since 1984, the DCMs meet as a service committee at each Assembly.

The 1995 Spring Assembly held in Indian Creek approved a major revision to the *NIA Service Structure Guidelines*. The compilation of approved actions that were collected for an updated NIA Guideline contained no major changes, but a discussion led by a few DCMs at the Assembly brought an entirely new idea to NIA: that Alternate DCMs possess an additional vote, along with their attending DCMs, 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 has always emphasized. The “motion to include” DCMs and their Alternate DCMs, with individual votes at the NIA Committee Meetings, revised the NIA Service Structure Guidelines that the Spring Assembly unanimously approved.

Treatment Facilities Committee

The Hospitals & Institutions Committee service, designated simply as the Institutions Committee by General Service Conferences until 1977, was well established in early 1970s NIA Districts. Hospital detox units and rehabilitation centers, staffed by doctors, professional counselors, or State of Illinois professionals, either requested help from Alcoholics Anonymous volunteers or were contacted through an outreach effort to carry the message of

recovery into the facilities. Earlier than this committee's establishment in NIA, AA outreach to the wards of State Hospitals saw continuous success from the 1950s onward. Alcoholics were patients at Manteno State (now in District 52) and Elgin State Hospitals, and by the late 1960s were placed in special treatment wards. The alcoholic unit at the Elgin State Hospital, with announcements by local AA volunteers (now in District 22), benefited from an early 1970s H. & I. newsletter.

The 1976 NIA Committee approved a liaison between District committees for both Institutions and Public Information, to remedy an overlapping effort. The development specifically brought the hospitals outreach into a separate activity of the Institutions Committee. The election of an H. & I. Committee Chairman for service in 1977 freed the Districts' Public Information committees to develop their outreach into other areas.

A 1975 law passed by the Illinois General Assembly under Governor James Thompson generated much Area 20 discussion, and NIA minutes described the legislation as the "new drunk law." Illinois enacted a "Right to 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 next twenty years can be partly attributed to this law. Where Alcoholics Anonymous had announced the facts of the disease since 1939, state legislatures across the United States and Canada slowly realized the benefits of rehabilitation by enacting similar statutes for the "right to treatment" and classifying alcoholism as an actual disease.

The 1977 General Service Conference renamed the Hospitals and Institutions Committee as the Treatment Facilities Committee. The Conference further separated and defined the efforts of AA outreach in medical institutions from outreach efforts in penal institutions (correctional facilities). NIA Assembly minutes

reported the H. and I. Committee as the Treatment Facilities Committee beginning in 1983.

AA volunteers in treatment centers and hospitals were directed to abide by AA Traditions when working with facilities, and the NIA Chairpersons of this committee assisted NIA Districts with any difficulties. Solutions to the problem of treatment centers sending drug-only dependent clients to AA brought about the ideas of holding introductory open discussion meetings in facilities, and having local answering service numbers available for staff to give to alcoholic patients. One result of the NIA TF committee's work established a closer cooperation between treatment center staffs and AA volunteers.

NIA Treatment Facilities chairpersons emphasized that the message of what AA "can and cannot do" continually needed to be communicated to public-funded and privately run facilities. Many TFC chairpersons mailed annual letters that were sent in addition to an annual letter from the AAWS Treatment Facilities Desk at the General Service Office. TFC Communication with the smaller number of current treatment centers remains consistently effective today.

In 1986, the Conference Committee on Treatment Facilities at the General Service Conference began discussion to develop a "Sponsor Contact Program" for AA volunteers, and the outreach work of bringing treatment center clients into the AA Fellowship was formally adopted at the 1991 Conference. From successes in Oklahoma, Southern Minnesota, and Northeast U.S. Areas, AAWS first published the pamphlet *Bridging the Gap---Between Treatment and AA Through Temporary Contact Programs* in 1991, establishing a network for temporary sponsors and contacts for treatment center clients. NIA TFC chairpersons have coordinated the "Temporary Contact Program" 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 TFC chairpersons.

AAWS first published the *Treatment Facilities Newsletter* in 1988, and the General Service Office has sent it to both TFC chairpersons and treatment centers at least two times a year since then, although some years have had the opportunity for a quarterly mailing. AAWS released the videotape *Hope: Alcoholics Anonymous* in 1990, developed from the effort of Treatment Facilities Committees. Much of the film highlights AA’s outreach work in treatment centers, and it serves as an excellent resource for many TFC volunteers and chairpersons in explaining AA principles to newcomers and prospective members.

Correctional Facilities Committee

Following its separation from the Institutions Committee by the 1977 General Service Conference, Northern Illinois Area voted unanimously to separate the Correctional Facilities 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 of H. & I. while allowing the CFC service effort to prosper. NIA members were carrying the AA message of recovery “behind the walls” into Illinois prisons and County jails for many years before the beginning of an autonomous Area 20, but Corrections existed as a sub-committee within the Institutions Committees. Earl R. of Joliet, a past Treasurer of the Downstate Illinois AA Conference in the mid-1950s, reported early examples of AA members working with prison facilities. Earl R. became an AA Coordinator with the Illinois Department of Corrections. An AA member as well as a DOC 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 the maximum security Stateville Prison in Joliet, Earl shared that his length of Correctional Facilities AA service spanned over twenty-five years. Susie R. of Joliet (no relation) began volunteering at the Women's Prison at Dwight, Illinois in the early 1960s. She maintained her participation and involvement by representing and sponsoring both groups and individual inmates. Susie served as NIA Correctional Facilities Committee Chairperson from mid-1988 through 1990.

The County jail and State prison inmates benefited from NIA participation. NIA and District CFC chairpersons started AA meetings and provided books, literature, and volunteers to assist in carrying the AA message into many correctional facilities. The AAWS publication of paperback books gained its first approval at the 1986 General Service Conference, when Correctional Facilities Committees announced the need for the new format to comply with prison administration requirements of no staples or stiff book bindings.

The State of Illinois always required background checks on volunteers, but clearance from the Department of Corrections has never been particularly difficult for AA members. Early volunteers provided Social Security numbers and personal information to CFC members, who then contacted the Illinois Department of Corrections. Waiting periods for clearance and orientation have never been longer than one month and volunteers are usually approved within one or two weeks. As recently as 2001, tuberculosis and drug screening tests became part of the volunteer approval process.

In December of 1994, NIA CFC Chairperson Steve S. reported his acceptance as a Statewide Volunteer, along with his receipt of an identification card that provided immediate clearance to any Illinois correctional facility. This Statewide clearance resulted from many years of negotiation, effort, and cooperation

from CFC members and was considered a milestone for CFC access to inmates in Illinois.

In recent years, CFC members began an outreach to Youth Centers, and Area 20 CFC began coordinating contact lists for paroled inmates to be met by AA volunteers with its own multi-Illinois Area “Bridging the Gap” program. A nationwide Corrections Correspondence Service remains a function of CFC through the General Service Office in New York, and NIA CFC chairpersons continue to announce the rewards of writing letters to inmates that share our experience, strength, and hope.

AAWS produced a sixteen-minute film *It Sure Beats Sitting In A Cell* after approval by the 1987 General Service Conference, from development of a pamphlet with the same title. In 1991, AAWS published *AA In Prison: Inmate To Inmate*. The booklet of thirty-two personal stories collected from the *AA Grapevine* shared the success of the CFC effort to carry the AA message “behind the walls” to the suffering alcoholic. The 2003 Conference voted to update the stories for a second edition of the AAWS *Inmate To Inmate* booklet.

Public Information Committee

The Public Information effort by NIA Districts created the need for the establishment of the committee at the Area 20 level. Minutes included District Public Information reports as early as the Spring Assembly in 1976. 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 responsibilities and focus.

Service committee meetings preceded afternoon Assemblies beginning with 11 a.m. sessions in 1977. AAs representing Public Information had no NIA chairperson and met with the Hospitals & Institutions committee until April 1977, when the NIA Committee Meeting nominated a P.I. Chairman and Alternate P.I. Chairman

who were elected 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 AA books to local schools and libraries, continuing the public information outreach that many NIA Districts and groups performed for several years. The Area 20 P.I. Committee held orientation sessions for AAs 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. A 1979 tape recording of an Area P.I. committee meeting brought the first proposal to purchase many sets of AA public service announcements (PSAs) for radio stations in Area 20.⁵⁰

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 (CPC) Committee at the 1974 Conference. However, separating CPC from P.I. in Area 20 was not resolved until 1985, when the Fall Assembly formally established the NIA CPC Committee to begin service in 1986. Public Information redirected its efforts toward schools, community groups, mass media, and coordinating the NIA

⁵⁰ 1979 Audiocassette, located in the NIA Archives.

Speakers Bureau. P.I. transferred much of its outreach to doctors, medical staffs, police, legal professionals, courts, and clergy to CPC in 1986.

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 later announced as additionally available in two videocassette formats of regular VHS and 3/4" tapes for television broadcasting. The films for Public Information outreach in the mid-1980s' were *Young People In AA*, *It Sure Beats Sitting In A Cell*, and *AA--An Inside View*. Two other 16 mm films, the 1967 releases of *Bill's Own Story* and *Bill On The Twelve Traditions* were placed in the audiovisual lending library. The large collection of items in the NIA P.I. library has always been available for loan to AA groups, AA committees, Districts, and individuals since 1988.

NIA P.I. Committees added the films *Hope: Alcoholics Anonymous*, *AA Rap With Us*, *Markings On The Journey*, *Circles of Love and Service*, and *Your General Service Office* when released on videocassette. P.I. also provides public service announcements for broadcast on radio and television.

In the 1990s,' books and pamphlets in Braille as well as videocassettes in American Sign Language were announced by P.I. Committees for individuals with special needs. The potential of on-line computer networking and website development 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 long-lasting and effective field of AA service involvement.

Cooperation with the Professional Community

CPC branched out from the Public Information Committee in 1985 NIA service, similar to the earlier separation of NIA Correctional Facilities and NIA Treatment Facilities. The CPC committee's field of outreach met a growing need for AA participation that supplemented the work of Public Information.

CPC efforts with health fairs, court information programs, and the coordination of NIA District activities have proven the Area 20 CPC Committee as more than its originally focused third-party method of outreach, where the CPC contacts professionals having exposure and involvement with clients who could be attracted to the AA program of recovery. The 1994 NIA CPC Committee built its first display of CPC materials that NIA Districts actively used with participation assistance from the Area-level committee.

NIA CPC Chairs continue to emphasize personal contact with professionals as its most effective outreach.

A Larger and Longer Area Assembly

Morning meetings of NIA committees informally started at 1977 Assemblies, and these pre-Assembly meetings attracted many AAs when more service committees were established at the Area level. The 1984 Fall Assembly in Round Lake approved a motion to formally begin all 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 NIA service committee meetings could not have been accommodated in any afternoon Assembly session. Most importantly, more time was needed for discussions in a General Service Representatives' meeting session. GSRs attended Assemblies throughout our early history, but only met in its own "group" session when presentations were given on AA service.

The NIA Assembly starting times 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 hosting Districts provide lunches at minimal cost, and Assemblies adjourn in mid-afternoon.

The GSR Meeting

Since the Winter Assembly of 1984, the largest group of AAs holding discussions at NIA Assemblies has always been at the GSR meeting. Many 1990 Assemblies needed to divide GSRs into two smaller GSR sessions to allow for better sharing. Chaired between Delegates, past Delegates, the NIA Chairperson, Alternate Delegate, or the Alternate NIA Chairperson, the GSR sessions discuss solutions to group service, NIA committee activity, current business items, and conduct its meeting along the lines of general sharing sessions.

DCMs encourage all GSRs to participate at Assemblies and the entire NIA Committee always seeks the involvement of GSRs in Area 20 discussions and voting. First-time GSRs are welcomed to an Assembly with the same enthusiasm as newcomers at any AA recovery group. Their reception at the start of each Assembly shows an honest appreciation of their attendance.

The GSR sessions serve as forums to find solutions to problems shared by groups, and the attractiveness of AA service is one of many results that the sessions can generate. The entire Fellowship continues to emphasize that the post of a group's GSR is the most important position in Alcoholics Anonymous. The attraction to continue AA service work at other committee levels actually begins with information that is passed along to the GSRs.

The consensus of each AA group, actively sought by Districts and Assemblies and carried by the GSRs, maintains the strength of our Fellowship today. The NIA Assembly relies on the informed group conscience brought by GSRs to all its voted decisions.

The Assembly format of morning service committee meetings and GSR sessions was reversed for only one year beginning with

the 1991 Summer Assembly. The NIA Committee 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 at the morning Assembly session was discussed by the NIA Committee during an ongoing Twelve Traditions inventory in early 1991. The earlier format, with 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 GSR 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 GSRs felt that more time was needed to discuss the issues and become better informed prior to voting.”⁵¹

Answering Services

The 1984 Winter Assembly, held in Palatine, established the NIA Answering Services committee. 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 service newsletter *NIA Concepts*. Assisting newcomers with 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. Sharing at Answering Service committee meetings continues to support District efforts on a

⁵¹ September 12, 1992 NIA Fall Assembly minutes, Barrington. Reported by Priscilla S., NIA Alternate Secretary. Source: NIA Archives.

range of methods with computer-assisted systems, pager use, and cost-effective success.

At the 1988 Winter Committee Meeting, NIA Answering Services distributed the first professionally printed NIA map in three sizes, with Area 20 towns and confirmed District telephone numbers. The 8 1/2 by 11" letter size, currently in use, incorporates similar graphics of the original map. It continues to serve its effective purpose of providing AA contact anywhere in Northern Illinois Area 20.

July 1993 reporting by the Group Services Desk at the General Service Office in New York announced that the *AA Guideline on Answering Service Committees* would be discontinued as a single Guideline. One of fourteen *AA Service Guidelines* available from Group Services in 1993, its content would be condensed into an *AA Guideline On Intergroups 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, NIA trusted servants mailed many letters in favor of reestablishing the Guideline. Group Services notified Area 20 in early December that as a result of our concern and positive suggestions, the *AA Guideline on Answering Service Committees* was immediately reinstated, and its next printing contained updated information.

The current NIA map with District Answering Services telephone numbers is available to Area members in letter size, is also printed in the *GSR Handbook*, and continues in issues of the *NIA Concepts Service Newsletter*. Discussion began in 2000 toward establishing an Area-wide toll free telephone number, and its developing ideas continued into 2003 with no Assembly action.

Archives

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 displays at NIA Conference weekends, where additional display panels were loaned from the AA Archives at the General Service Office. In 1984, the NIA Assembly approved an Archivist 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 had no 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 rotating Delegate the chairmanship of the NIA Grapevine Committee, but Hank chose to serve and was confirmed as NIA Archives Committee Chair. As a result, two Archivists served NIA for the next four years. In 1992, the NIA Committee affirmed the idea that the Alternate Archives Committee Chair would serve as the NIA Archivist and would maintain the collection of the NIA Archives. The 1992 NIA Committee appointed Susie R. of Joliet as the Archives Committee Chair, and she continued to assist with Archives Committee sessions at NIA Assemblies through 2002, when age and health prevented her participation. In appreciation of her NIA service that began with the 1972 Area 20 autonomy, the 2003 NIA Summer Assembly approved an honorary position and declared Susie as Archives Committee Chair Emeritus.

The 2001 Spring Assembly amended the Service Guidelines and voted to establish a two-year service term for an elected NIA Archives Committee Chair and Alternate Chair. The non-rotating NIA Archivist remained as a Committee appointment and Assembly-approved position.

The collection of AA historical items comprises hundreds of audiocassette tapes, older editions of AA pamphlets, books, meeting directories, *AA Grapevine* issues, and thousands of written, typed, and printed pages of NIA proceedings. Many NIA Districts have contacted the NIA Archives Committee when researching District histories. NIA Archives purchased a portable tape player and earphones in 1993 to allow access to audiocassette tapes. For a few years, as an active part of displays in the Archives rooms of weekend Conferences, visitors could listen to taped AA talks and interviews having AA historical value.

The NIA Archives also maintains two large podium-sized photographs of Bill W. and Dr. Bob S., the co-founders of Alcoholics Anonymous. Panel 30 Past NIA Delegate Pete P. contributed the first set of unframed photos in 1983. NIA Archives offers the photographs for AA Conference weekends as well as the offer to provide archival items and displays for any Area 20 event.

Archives Committee sessions at NIA Assemblies assist District Archivists, discuss the direction and continuing growth of the Area 20 Archives, provide an opportunity for sharing sessions about AA history, the development of District Archives, and discuss methods of successful organization and preservation of archival items. The NIA Archives Committee and the NIA Archivist continue to collect, store, and maintain historical material relating to NIA and AA history, and actively seeks contributions to its growing collection of historical items. Volunteers began an ongoing itemized inventory of NIA Archives' possessions (Area 20 property) in late 1994.

With the appointment and Assembly confirmation of its fourth Archivist, the 1998 Spring Assembly in McHenry approved the establishment of a Repository for the NIA Archives. Located at a refurbished office site in Elgin, all of the archival items were moved to a secure, single location.

In 1994 and 1995, the proposal for the General Service Conference to consider establishing a Conference Archives Committee was approved and announced at NIA Assemblies. The 1995 Conference, with a lack of input, declined to proceed with its development. The Trustees Archives Committee reported to the General Service Conference since 1974 as the only committee without a corresponding Delegate-seated Conference Committee. All Delegates were asked to find their Area consensus for discussion on the 1988 Conference Policy & Admissions Committee proposal to establish the new Conference Archives committee.

In 1998, with lengthy floor discussion and multiple votes, the Conference recognized the need for the Conference Archives Committee and established its service as a secondary Delegate assignment. Panel 48 Delegate Jerry P., received his extra assignment for the inaugural term of the Conference Archives Committee in 1999, and its members elected him as its first Chair.

The Conference Archives Committee approved an AAWS *Archives Workbook* in 2001. A September 2002 Area Archives

Workshop discussed developing a District Archives Workbook as an addition to the AAWS service booklet. The Area Archives Workshop also proposed a Class A Trustee History Project for launch by the Trustees Archives Committee, to gather the recollections of all current and past non-alcoholic Trustees. The 2002 Winter Assembly voted its full support for the proposal.

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 Chair. 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 terms as NIA Grapevine Chairmen, until the 1987 Fall Assembly elected the Chair and Alternate Chair for the NIA Grapevine Committee.

The past Delegates, as well as succeeding NIA Grapevine Committee chairpersons, utilized contacts with the *A.A. Grapevine* office at GSO in New York, to bring the most recent Gv 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. Apart from any shortfalls or loss of carrying over items between service terms, the NIA Budget Line Item for Gv literature has proven very successful for NIA Grapevine committees for its use as “seed money.” *A.A. Grapevine* materials such as audiocassette tapes, audio CD discs, posters, *Best of Grapevine*, *Came To Believe*, and *The Home Group—Heartbeat of A.A.* paperbacks, calendars, and other special items are maintained in a rotating stock, replenished with funds taken into the committee from cash sales.

Of special note, the NIA Grapevine committee added the 1989 hardcover book *Language of the Heart* to its rotating stock, the collected writings of Bill W. published in the magazine from 1944 to 1970. The *A.A. Grapevine* articles, grouped into three

chronological segments, contain almost an entire record of Bill's work (the book's editors decided not to duplicate any of the writing that was already available in other AAWS publications).

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

NIA Literature Committee

The 1995 Fall Election Assembly in Arlington Heights established the new committee, with its suggested responsibilities for announcing current releases, developments, and discussions of changes to new or existing AAWS literature, showcasing the current literature available, and providing a resource for service committee workbooks and order forms. The committee serves as the Area 20 liaison to the Trustees and Conference Literature Committees and the Literature staff desk at the General Service Office. While the NIA Literature Committee's purpose was not intended for it to become a clearinghouse or broker to bulk purchase AAWS literature, its potential to generate enthusiasm and highlight the content of AAWS literature appeared full of promise. In 2003, NIA Literature began an outreach for written input on proposed new items and existing reviews, for summary reporting to AAWS at GSO and reporting to the Delegate and Area Assembly.

NIA Appointed Committee Members

The Area 20 Newsletter Editors

Concepts, the Northern Illinois Area Service Letter printed its first issue in the spring of 1982. The 1981 NIA Public Information committee developed and presented the idea of printing an Area 20 newsletter, and 500 hand-assembled issues were distributed at NIA

Assemblies on its first “run.” *Concepts* brought an immediate positive response and acceptance from all NIA members. Following the rotation of its first Editor, Wally P. of Aurora, the NIA Committee, with Assembly approvals, appointed the newsletter’s next six Editors and three Co-Editors through 2003.

The intent of *NIA Concepts* to inform, challenge, announce, and celebrate AA service to the Fellowship brings wide-ranging acclaim to the quarterly issues. The early years of *NIA Concepts* reported the changes of Area 20’s redistricting and rapid expansion. Tex. B. of Naperville, the newsletter’s longest serving Editor from 1989 through 2000, chose topic themes for the quarterly issues, and wrote many personable and compelling article series that he took from his longtime sobriety that began in 1947.

No matter how large the circulation, *NIA Concepts* is available without charge. The 2003 estimated circulation reached 3,400 readers. Each Editor and editorial board has attempted to manage the newsletter’s growing circulation while turning aside any ideas of charging a subscription fee. In an attempt to manage the large circulation and reduce the “return to sender” costs, the 2003 Spring Assembly approved the recommendations of an Ad Hoc Mailing List committee, to delete the addresses of recipients who declined to respond to the newsletter’s re-subscription requests. When very few recipients responded by the August deadline, over 2,400 addresses were removed from its circulation.

The 2003 Fall Assembly approved a final postcard outreach to the AAs removed from circulation, supporting the new Editor’s hopes to rebuild an accurate mailing list.

NIA Concepts Editors request article contributions, especially from NIA trusted servants, and continually ask for works, ideas, and any NIA member’s written “language of the heart.”

The NIA Archives holds at least two sets of issues dating from 1982 to the 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 AAs requesting its delivery.

The *NIA Concepts* service letter remains the primary publication that Northern Illinois Area 20 provides for its members.

The GSR Handbook

Different issues of *NIA Concepts* presented topics on fields of AA service work, and the positive response to an article “Welcome to the New GSR” from the spring 1990 *Concepts* provided the opportunity for the Area to implement the development and approval of Area 20’s first service piece. The 1991 NIA Winter Assembly held in Grayslake approved the printing of a *GSR Handbook*, developed by *Concepts* editor Tex B. The first edition of NIA’s *GSR Handbook* was released to the 1992 Winter Committee Meeting held in Sycamore, and 2,000 Handbooks were distributed by DCMs and given to GSRs at NIA Assemblies over the next two years. Updates to the *GSR Handbook* brought a 1994 second edition, a 1995 third edition, assisting the GSRs of Area 20 through an eighth edition in 2003. The Handbook does not take the place of the *AAWS Group Handbook* or the GSR section of the *A.A. Service Manual*, but brings its focus to participating GSRs in Northern Illinois Area 20 general service.

Area 20 Archivist

(see Archives Committee history on page 89)

NIA Historian

The 1987 NIA Archives Committee completed the writing of *A Brief History of NIA* in 1993, and submitted the piece for inclusion in an AAWS AA History Book that was under consideration by the General Service Conference. An earlier 1989 AA History Book did not receive Conference approval, and the

1994 Conference also declined to proceed with the completion of a second attempt for a history book. The 1994 NIA Spring Committee Meeting at the Cortland Firehouse received the resignation of the NIA Historian and appointed a replacement, with a cordial challenge to the NIA Committee that a detailed and comprehensive history of Area 20 Alcoholics Anonymous could be completed and made available to Northern Illinois Area members.

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 met in Aurora and discussed the draft manuscripts in December 1995 and in the winter and spring of 1996. The 1996 Summer NIA Assembly in Rockford received the panel's proposal to print the NIA History Project's reviewed manuscript, *An Alcoholics Anonymous History in Northern Illinois Area 20*. The Assembly approved the use of NIA Reserve funds to print 1500 copy sets for distribution, and the NIA History was first made available for purchase at cost through the NIA Literature committee. The 1999 Winter Assembly restored the Reserve fund amount to the NIA Treasury and acknowledged that the booklet purchases, while not easily documented, paid for the 1996 printing cost. When the booklet was no longer available and was considered as "out of print," the NIA web site posted its pages online in February of 2002.

Years of additional research, the new discovery of detailed information, as well as further Area 20 Assembly actions and growth, brought a proposal for the 2001 Summer Assembly to consider proceeding with an updated Second Issue for publication and posting on the NIA web site. Approved at the 2001 Fall NIA Assembly in Rochelle, the Second Issue History Project progressed with the renewed appointment of the NIA Historian to complete its writing and editing. An identical 1995 and 1996 Panel

Review process on the draft manuscript took place in October and November 2003 in Cortland.

The scope and responsibilities for NIA Historian were 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.

Area 20 on the World Wide Web

The Trustees Public Information Committee unanimously recommended that the General Service Office establish an AAWS website, and “alcoholics-anonymous.org” was launched in December 1995. A rapid increase of website usage brought the website management transfer to the AAWS Board, as actual usage (“hits”) on the GSO website doubled each year.

The 1999 Winter NIA Committee formed an Ad Hoc committee to investigate an Area 20 web page, through an ongoing discussion of the potential of the Internet as both a P.I. and AA general service resource. The initial 1991 NIA discussions about online AA meetings suggested possibilities for NIA Districts to launch informational web pages, post meeting schedules, list answering service telephone numbers, and creatively announce the resources and events of Alcoholics Anonymous on the World Wide Web. Many AA Areas established web pages, online Bulletin Boards for messages, and worldwide A. A. support for Internet use and outreach gained momentum through the entire decade.

NIA District 51 launched its first Internet web page in 1998 with reasonable success. In early 1999 and with his own funds, District 43 DCM Bob B. of Warrenville created a test “niarea” site for a three-month trial. The NIA reception was positive and the Area welcomed his efforts, bringing an approval vote of the 1999

Winter Assembly for the creation and funding for an Area 20 web page. After difficulties with one hosting service company in late December 1999, a more reliable hosting service was selected, and the website “aa-nia.org” was successfully launched on January 18, 2000. Its development and expansion continues through the present with Bob B.’s appointed NIA Committee service as Area 20 Webmaster.

The website posts links to the GSO website, the AA Grapevine website, other Area-supported web pages, and NIA District answering services telephone numbers. District meeting schedules were placed online without individual contact information. Event flyers could also be computer-scanned and posted in a tamper-resistant format, using the familiar Acrobat Reader “pdf” program. All the files are printable. The issues of the *NIA Concepts Service Newsletter* soon appeared on the Area 20 site, and web folders for Area reports, NIA Service Guidelines, and NIA service committee outreach followed soon after. A traffic “hit” counter was added in late 2001, recording an increasing usage and access to the NIA website.

Personal telephone numbers, full names of AA members, and private email addresses are not posted on the NIA website, abiding with AA’s Tradition Eleven principle regarding anonymity protection in media.

AA weekend conference flyers and registration forms are easily printed from posted event flyers, and 2002 discussion began on the possibilities of actual online registration and secured payment activity for NIA conferences. The discussion continued through the end of 2003 with no Assembly action. Earlier attempts to establish email links and message forwarding to Area Committee members experienced many problems. Unsolicited email (an overwhelming percentage of “spam”) and regular (although unsuccessful) attacks from Internet viruses required

vigilance and much administrative maintenance from the Area 20 Webmaster. The write-protected Acrobat Reader (pdf) file format proved to work more effectively for posted documents. The First Issue of the NIA History book, the 1996-copyrighted, and 104-paged *An Alcoholics Anonymous History in Northern Illinois Area 20* was successfully posted in Acrobat Reader format at the beginning of 2002.

Including updated NIA Service and Conference Guidelines, the NIA Calendar, a Supplemental events Calendar, and NIA service committee outreach (Delegate, P.I., Treasurer, *the NIA GSR Handbook*, Archives, the *NIA District Secretary Handbook*, NIA Special Needs Committee Guidelines) in its function, **<http://www.aa-nia.org>** continues to grow in size and effective use.

Special Needs

Area Assemblies opened up discussion on carrying the message to alcoholics with physical, hearing, and sight disabilities with a presentation from a District 11 member in 1996. Many District meeting schedules highlighted handicapped-accessible meeting sites regularly, and some Districts' Public Information committees provided Braille copies of the Big Book to public libraries. The late 1990s interest in special needs service grew from the NIA Assembly, to assist Districts developing Special Needs committees and to establish an Area 20 Special Needs Committee. To meet the challenges of assisting alcoholics with special needs, Area 20 appointed a Special Needs Coordinator in 2000, approving reserve funds for American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters. The 2002 Summer Assembly in Kankakee voted to fund ASL "Signers" for Area service meetings when needed. The vote also affirmed the financial autonomy of NIA Conferences, providing for only NIA Special Needs coordination of the services rather than their funding. Reserve funds for Signers at Area

Meetings became a budgeted line item expense in 2001. Guidelines were developed and approved by the NIA Special Needs committee at the 2003 Summer Assembly in Grayslake, in addition to the materials and service pieces from GSO's Group Services desk.

Districts and Groups could borrow an assembled display and library of materials comprised of audiocassette tapes, Braille books and pamphlets, large-print AA books, ASL videotapes, a TV+VCR, and service materials available from AAWS.

The General Service Conference received its first formal request for an Accessibilities Committee in 1993, when the Conference Literature Committee approved new Braille pamphlets. Two *A.A. Guidelines for Special Needs*, the ASL video of the first section of the Big Book, and general information pamphlets developed are also available in 2003, developed out of GSO Groups Services activity.

Mobile meetings, carrying the message to different sites for homebound and physically disabled AA members, showed success in Rockford's District 70, and the 2003 NIA Special Needs committee passed along the methods of getting the meetings started.

Annual NIA Events

The NIA Spring Conference Weekends

Since District 7 hosted the first NIA Spring Conference in 1975 at Rockford's Tabala Towers, District committees and volunteers planned every NIA Spring Conference. After the Assembly approves a District's bid for the annual Spring Conference weekends, the event's Chairpersons report their planning progress to NIA Committee Meetings and Assemblies. Current NIA Guidelines ask that Districts plan their 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 for easier reservation opportunities, for negotiating hotel dates, and for inviting AA speakers, guests, and Al-Anon participation.

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

Since 1978, Spring Conference Committees distribute remaining funds, after conference expenses, in the percentages of participating Al-Anon and Alcoholics Anonymous registration. The original distribution of all excess money was passed on to the General Service Office, but changed as NIA Committees and Assembly votes developed the 1995 Spring Conference Guidelines. In 1999, the NIA Committee suggested appointing a Spring Conference archivist to prepare a summary report of successes and recommendations for the use of future planning committees.

The State and Regional AA Conference Weekends

The Illinois AA State Conference Committee planned its first summer conference weekend in 1973, with leadership drawn

equally between the three AA Delegate Areas in Illinois. While the first AA State Conference at Bradley University in Peoria lost \$1,100 due to an over commitment of rooms reserved but not filled, planning guidelines were developed with participation from each Area. Karen T., NIA Secretary, completed a revised Budget Guide to assist the AA State Conference Committee and it was included in the first 1974 Conference Planning Digest. Each Area freely used its ideas for their own future conference weekends as a result of the early Planning Digest model. The summer AA State Conference weekends move between sites in each of Illinois' three Areas from one year to the next, and provide the opportunity for all Illinois AAs to participate in the Fellowship's unity.

Illinois AA State Conference planning, hosted by local Districts, enjoys the experience of each Area's Delegate and Chairperson as members of its Policy committee. As a direct result of our inter-Area sharing, AA State Conferences accent the AA Legacy of Service.

Illinois first hosted an East Central Regional Conference in 1975 at the Sheraton O'Hare Inn (presently named the Ramada Inn) in Rosemont. All Delegate Areas of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, and Wisconsin rotate as hosts for each year's Regional Conference event.

An Annual NIA Big Book Conference

NIA discussed the potential of a service weekend at the beginning of the 1990s, but the NIA consensus grew for Area 20 to hold an annual Big Book Conference in its place. District 40 hosted the first one-day Saturday event at the Naperville Holiday Inn in 1994, and the October conference's success was repeated in 1995 at Pottawatomie Center in St. Charles' District 61. Bidding and planning procedures developed into a new NIA Guideline in early 1995, assisting any NIA District with the opportunity to bid, plan, and host the newest NIA service event. Flyers, programs, and

audiotape sets of every NIA Big Book Conference are located in the NIA Archives.

**Area 20 “Officers,” the remaining members
of the NIA Committee**

Secretary

The NIA Secretary and Alternate Secretary positions record, produce, and distribute meeting Minutes as their major responsibility, but this two-person NIA Committee accomplishes much more. Nearly every NIA Secretary report at Area 20 meetings requested that NIA members, when notifying GSO, additionally mail service position changes and new information to the NIA Secretary. The complete NIA service roster of elected NIA trusted servants and DCMs are managed in a perpetual state of change.

NIA Secretaries brought progress and positive developments to the position and duties of an AA service secretary. A 1993 Secretary’s Workshop in Aurora intended to write a suggested guideline and replace an outdated *AAWS 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 District Secretaries in Area 20. Updated in 1998 and in 2003, the eighteen-paged *NIA District Secretary Handbook* serves as an effective service piece.

A direct result of the first Secretary’s Workshop discussions, the 1994 Winter Assembly held in Grayslake approved the suggestion for an NIA policy toward the confidentiality of Area minutes. Future NIA meeting minutes listed full names, recorded the names of AAs presenting and seconding motions, and contained the following header: “The NIA Minutes are considered confidential and ought to be used for AA purposes only.”

Alternate NIA Secretary Dale G. presented the 1994 Summer NIA Committee Meeting with a computer printout of all recorded

voting approvals from 1974 NIA minutes forward. The 1994 Summer Assembly held in Geneva added an additional motion, 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.”⁵²

NIA Secretaries utilized and updated the *NIA Voted Actions* at Area 20 meetings, and printouts of the file are located in the NIA Archives.

Recordkeeper

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 a new position of Area 20 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 records tracking for 1994-95.

On a much larger scale than the NIA Secretary’s Roster, the NIA Database of DCMs, GSRs, and District service committee names and addresses is a “moving target” list in a perpetual state of change.

⁵² NIA Fall Assembly Minutes, page 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 AA World Services, in a contribution sent to the General Service Office at the close of each year. The annual sum is taken from the “extra” moneys above the NIA prudent reserves. No funds were ever contributed to AAWS 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 NIA Budget year is not included here but someday may be prepared in a future NIA effort. Records are located in the NIA Archives.

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 additional NIA service 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 2003 NIA Budget holds \$20,000 in Reserve Funds as part of a \$51,000 budget total. The budget increases match the continuous growth of Area 20 service needs, while funds from NIA groups and Districts regularly provide the NIA Treasury with welcome contributions.

Many NIA Treasurers of the 1970s’ and early 1980s’ announced the ideas 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, kept separate from any other funds passed along at the end of each year, in a NIA “Birthday Plan” for the AAWS General Fund at GSO. These “Remember November” gratitude contributions, sent by NIA members and groups to the NIA Treasury, pass along an annually collected Birthday Plan sum of between \$1,500 to

\$5,000. The NIA Birthday Plan contributions help offset year-end AAWS operating costs involved in carrying the AA 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 and 2002. The Area 20 goal of achieving federal Internal Revenue Service status as a not-for-profit organization began with the guidance of the 1990-91 NIA Treasurer, establishing 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 the NIA Treasurer 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 Alternate Chairperson

With duties and responsibilities that involve a great amount of time, travel, and effort, NIA Chairpersons not only lead the Assemblies and Committee Meetings but serve as liaisons to 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 shown by the NIA Chairpersons.

The Delegate and Alternate Delegate

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-three 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-seven 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 AA 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 consensuses that provide specific solutions and recommendations to the General Service Board, AA World Services, and the AA Grapevine. The intent of any Conference consensus always reflects a consideration of the entire Fellowship.

The 2002-03 *A.A. Service Manual* listed twelve primary duties for an Area Delegate, highlighting five relating to the Conference. NIA Delegates arrange schedules of even larger amounts of time, travel, and effort than those described of 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 Delegate’s Workshop

District 80 held the first NIA Delegate’s Pre-Conference Workshop in Ottawa in early 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 agenda items approaching action at the April’s General Service Conference. The consensus of NIA groups, carried through the voices of the AAs 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 and the final agenda released in mid-February. The Delegate's Workshops allow 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 current 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 event closer to the Conference's April startup, scheduling March 1995 for the third NIA Delegate's Pre-Conference Workshop. To provide for more voices of Area 20 consensus on each year's Conference agenda, beginning in 2000 the NIA Spring Assembly dedicated its discussion and service committee meeting time to the Pre-Conference Workshop.

Post-Conference Delegate's Report and Workshop

The success of the first Delegate's Workshop developed the addition of the Post-Conference Delegate's Report and Workshop in 1994, held within a few weeks after the close of the General Service Conference. It is announced as the Delegate's chance to present an immediate General Service Conference report to NIA. First hosted by District 73 in Rochelle, the geographically central NIA location proved successful. Both the 1994 and 1995 Post-Conference Workshops held full discussions there on General Service Conference topics with excellent participation from an average of forty NIA members. Current Post-Conference Delegate Workshops take place in Cortland, the site of NIA Committee Meetings. Delegates also continue to visit and report to individual Districts following each Conference, sharing a thorough discussion

of Conference actions, potential new agenda items, and the ongoing development of issues and proposals.

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, and the permanent right of NIA participation given to past Delegates carries much more than any past Delegate's single vote at NIA meetings. All Area 20 Delegates deliver a voice of experience, ability, trusted leadership, and a certain wry humility to ongoing Area 20 discussion.

In appreciation, Northern Illinois Area meetings always extend their welcome.

Appendix I - Sterling Illinois April 1943

Written April 24, 1943 by Ken S., founder of the Sterling Group, the following is excerpted without editing from a six-page typed 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 AA 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 AA 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, that 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 a 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 the "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 is 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 the NIA Archives, March 1995.

Appendix II – Group Listings 1951, 1960, and 1973

Comparisons with any years of Group membership reporting and registration with the Alcoholic Foundation or AA World Services at New York City's General Service 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. Telephone contacts and semi-annual contribution amounts were reported.

1951 Listing of Northern Area AA Groups With The Alcoholic Foundation

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 Group, 13 members.

Joliet, two groups with P.O. Box 1102:

- 1) Steel City Group, 5 members.
- 2) Group name unknown, 15 members.

Kankakee, Triple K Group (Kankakee "Kounty Kourthouse")

P.O. Box 85, 16 members.

Loves Park (Rockford), secretary listed, 8 members.

***1951 Listing of Northern Area AA Groups
With The Alcoholic Foundation***

Mattoon, P.O. Box 284, 10 members.

Moline, Alano Group, P.O. Box 311, 30 members.

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.

***1951 Listing of Northern Area AA Groups
With The Alcoholic Foundation***

Also included for Illinois in the 1951 Directory:

Chicago (Area 19), 123 W. Madison Street,
Central Service Office and telephone answering services,
4,900 members.

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

Springfield (presently Area 21), three groups,
two P.O. Box numbers and 150 members.

***1960 Listing of Northern Illinois Area 20 Groups
Registered with AAWS at the General Service Office***

In 1960, The Downstate Illinois AA Conference redistricted the two AA Areas 20 and 21, with the changes found on the map on page 35. Its Conference Assembly voted to select Delegates within each Area's borders, with NIA representation basically north of U.S. Route 24. Committee "Areas" began to be called Districts in 1960. Telephone contacts and annual contributions were reported.

Pages 63-70 in the *Spring, 1960 AAWS World Directory*, listings for Illinois, are courtesy of the AA Archives at the General Service Office and are located in the NIA Archives.

Aurora- The Aurora Group, secretary listed, 30 members.

Club: Aurora Alano Club.

Barrington- Barrington Group #1, secretary listed,
16 members.

Barrington Thursday Night Group, secretary listed,
20 members.

Barrington Group #3, secretary listed, 16 members.

Carpentersville - The Meadowdale Group, secretary listed,
5 members.

Crystal Lake - Crystal Lake Group #1, secretary listed,
12 members.

Dixon- The Dixon Group, P.O. Box listed, 20 members.

Downers Grove - Downers Grove Group, P.O. Box listed,
35 members.

Elgin- Fox Valley Group, 35 members.

Fox Valley Groups Intergroup, address listed.

***1960 Listing of Northern Illinois Area 20 Groups
Registered with AAWS at the General Service Office***

Elmhurst- Elmhurst 15C Group, secretary listed,
15 members.

Freeport- 48 Club Group, P.O. Box listed, 15 members.

Galesburg- Knox County Group, P.O. Box listed,
10 members.

Glen Ellyn - East Group, secretary listed, 5 members.
Glen Ellyn West Group, 20 members.

Harvey- Harvey Monday Group, secretary listed,
12 members.

Joliet- Steel City Group, YMCA, 15 members.
12th Street Group, 25 members.
Woodruff Hotel Breakfast Club Group (Open),
secretary listed, 10 members.

Kankakee- Kankakee Group, 20 members.

Kewanee- Kewanee AA Group, P.O. Box listed, 20 members.

Libertyville- Libertyville Group, secretary listed,
12 members.

Lockport- Lockport Group, secretary listed,
no numbers reported.

Lombard- Lombard East Group, secretary listed, 7 members.
Lombard West Group, secretary listed, 10 members.

Macomb- Group #1, 10 members.

Moline- The Moline Group, P.O. Box listed, 40 members.

Monmouth- The Monmouth Group, 2 members.

Mount Morris - Ridge Runners Group, secretary listed,
20 members.

Mundelein- Mundelein No. 1 Group, 20 members.

Naperville- The Naperville Group, P.O. Box listed,
8 members.

***1960 Listing of Northern Illinois Area 20 Groups
Registered with AAWS at the General Service Office***

North Chicago- Tuesday Nite Group, 10 members.
Ottawa- The Ottawa Group, 25 members.
Pontiac- The Pontiac Group, secretary listed, 6 members.
Princeton- The Princeton Group, P.O. Box listed,
12 members.
Rock Falls- Rock Falls Home Group, P.O. Box listed,
6 members.
Rockford- The Central Group, 50 members.
Fireside Group, P.O. Box listed, 3 members.
Rockford Home Groups, P.O. Box listed, 30 members.
Club: Alano Club of Rockford.
Rock Island- The Rock Island Group, 30 members.
St. Charles- Firehouse Group, P.O. Box listed, 30 members.
Sterling- The Sterling Group, 15 members.
Sycamore- The Sycamore Group, P.O. Box listed,
12 members.
Villa Park- Ardmore Group, secretary listed,
no numbers reported.
Villa Park Group, secretary listed, 22 members.
Waukegan- Monday Night Group, 15 members.
Sunday Morning Breakfast Group, 12 members.
Sunday Night Group, 2 members.
Thursday Night Group, 8 members.
Tuesday Night Group, 18 members.
Wednesday Night Group, 18 members.
Young Peoples Group, 8 members.
Club: Alano Club of Waukegan.
West Chicago- DuPage Group, secretary listed, 10 members.
West Chicago Group, 8 members.

***1960 Listing of Northern Illinois Area 20 Groups
Registered with AAWS at the General Service Office***

Wheaton- North Side Group, secretary listed, 10 members.

South Side Group, 8 members.

Winthrop Harbor- Zion-Benton Group, 20 members.

Club: Zion-Benton Alano Club.

Wonder Lake- The Wonder Lake Group,
no numbers reported.

***At the time of NIA autonomy in 1972,
The Listing of Northern Illinois Area 20 Groups Registered with
AAWS at the General Service Office***

Taken from the 1973 *Eastern United States AA 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 with the assistance of NIA's first 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. Telephone contacts and annual contribution amounts were reported.

Pages 46-53 of the 1973 *Eastern United States AA Directory*, listings for Illinois, are courtesy of the AA Archives at the General Service Office and are located in the NIA Archives.

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.

***1973 Listing of Northern Illinois Area 20 Groups
Registered with AAWS at the General Service Office***

- Batavia - Ernie J.'s Memorial Group, 8 members.
Belvidere- Club: Belvidere Alano Club (Su, Tu, W, Th, Sa),
35 members.
Bloomington- Bloomington 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 AA 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.

***1973 Listing of Northern Illinois Area 20 Groups
Registered with AAWS at the General Service Office***

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.
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.

***1973 Listing of Northern Illinois Area 20 Groups
Registered with AAWS at the General Service Office***

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
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.

***1973 Listing of Northern Illinois Area 20 Groups
Registered with AAWS at the General Service Office***

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).
Mt. Morris- Ridge Runners Group (Su), 10 members.
Mundelein- Mundelein Group #2 (Tu), 7 members.
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, 7 members.
Oak Brook- Oak Brook Group (W), 12 members.
Oregon- one AA 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- Rochelle Wednesday Night Group, 20 members.
Rock Falls- Rock Falls Group - see Sterling.

***1973 Listing of Northern Illinois Area 20 Groups
Registered with AAWS at the General Service Office***

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), 22 members.

Home Group (M, W), 15 members.

Midway Fellowship Group (Th), 8 members.

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.

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), 26 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, 7 members.

***1973 Listing of Northern Illinois Area 20 Groups
Registered with AAWS at the General Service Office***

- 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, 12 members.
 - Tuesday Night Group, 12 members.
 - 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.

***1973 Listing of Northern Illinois Area 20 Groups
Registered with AAWS at the General Service Office***

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, 7 members.
 Tuesday Night Group, 8 members.
 Unskilled Drinkers Group (Tu), 8 members.
 Zion Benton Friday Night Group, 8 members.
 Zion Benton Sunday A.M. 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), 7 members.
Woodstock- Woodstock Bull Valley Group.
Zion Benton Township- Sunday Night Group, 7 members.

Illinois Total Estimated Active AA Membership.....13,069
Total Number of Illinois Groups Reporting..... 821

Appendix III - Our Third Legacy and a Remarkable Consensus

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 outcome of sound AA principles. Any group conscience is hopefully an informed group conscience, where the presentations of background facts combine with current views toward a course of positive action. While not always announced in emphasis, resulting decisions reflect an AA 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 that idea 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 AA 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 always provides the opportunity for a reconsideration vote when anyone in the majority chooses to change their 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 given 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 Panel 40 Delegate Phyllis W. discussed the effort of another Area for the General Service Conference to approve, develop, and publish an AA 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 AA 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 AA pamphlets in 1990 distribution, the subject of AA 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 AA 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 AA's Tradition One, where both our common welfare and personal recovery depend upon AA unity. The word "unity" in the First Tradition carries its inspiration through the remaining eleven Traditions, literally describing its boundaries and explains the principles of AA unity in 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 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 – Windows on the Past, Guide to the Present, and Light for the Future 1996

Serving as an employee of the General Service Office from 1982 through the close of 1996, Frank M. accepted the promotion to Archivist on the retirement of Nell Wing at the end of 1982. His love of AA history, his cordial and abundant correspondence, and his encouragement and assistance to AA Archivists throughout the entire Fellowship generated a loving memory and respect from all who knew him. Many Area, District, and Group Archives were established during his GSO years. By supporting the growing general service AA Archives effort with resources of archival materials, providing expert knowledge of research direction, and insightfully sharing the relationship between archival ethics and AA principles, his pioneering service to our AA Archives is felt to this day. Frank's farewell address to the 1996 General Service Conference, with its Conference theme of "Preserving Our Fellowship—Our Challenge," is not edited and is reprinted with permission of AAWS, Inc.

G.S.O. Archives: Window on the Past, Guide to the Present, and Light for the Future

I appreciate this opportunity to share on something I feel particularly passionate about—our collective AA history and its relevancy to our survival; the anchor of our Fellowship. AA members relish histories, conscious or not. Our AA lives are spent, usually happily, listening endlessly to oral histories, hearing again, and again, the underlying theme: (a) That we were alcoholic and could not manage our own lives. (b) That probably no human

power could have relieved our alcoholism. (c) That God could and would if He were sought (*Alcoholics Anonymous*, p. 60).

In each of our individual stories we hear of drinking causing collapse; then, following a serendipitous contact with Alcoholics Anonymous, a complete transformation of our lives through the remarkably simple application of our Twelve Steps. A clear demonstration of alchemy, turning lead into gold. Doesn't I appear startlingly fresh with each telling? I have listened to these personal histories now for over a quarter of a century, with a deepening sense of wonder.

With a growing recognition that our collective history also merited retention, our Fellowship's Archives was opened in 1972 by Tom Sharpe, former general service trustee; Bob Hitchins, G.S.O. general manger; and Nell Wing, Bill W.'s secretary for 22 years and the first G.S.O. archivist. Bill W. stated the purpose was "...to keep the record straight so that myth does not predominate over fact as to the history of the Fellowship." (*Handbook for Setting Up an Archival Repository*, p. 13) In the ensuing years, the collection has proliferated. Each year has brought forth a fuller appreciation of just what we've got. Throughout the Fellowship, particularly in the last decade, the interest in our history has exploded. At last count, 63 of the 92 delegate areas had an active archivist. Many of these areas have district archivists as well. This body, joined by other interested historians, generates about 40 requests per week for detailed historical data on earlytimers, groups, districts, and areas. As some of you know from firsthand experience, our researcher, Noela Jordan, spends a good chunk of her life pouring over old directories, newspaper clippings, and files hunting up the "earliest" and "firsts." Not a few areas have published impressively detailed local histories that document AA's beginnings and growth. The memories of a multitude of earlytimers have been captured on tape. And joyously, under the skill and guidance of Judit Santon, our assistant archivist, a large

beginning has been made on scanning our material for computer access, with the aim of cutting future response time, making a larger body of material available, and avoiding physical damage to the fragile original documents in the collection. Is all this attention to our past necessary, some have asked?

As our co-founders, Bill and Bob, often stated, we, the present members of Alcoholics Anonymous, are links in an ancient chain of alcoholics stretching back through time. And haven't alcoholics been a perplexing problem for society for centuries? For example, Solomon laments, almost 3000 years ago, "Who hath woe? Who hath sorrow? Who hath contentions? Who hath babbling? Who hath wounds without cause? Who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine...when it moveth itself aright. At the last, it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things...They have stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was not sick; they have beaten me and I felt it not: When shall I awake? I will seek it yet again." (Proverbs 23:29-35)

It seems that alcoholics baffled Solomon, and we continue to baffle others and ourselves. Drunkenness is not new to our shores. Someone observed that the Pilgrims stopped at Plymouth Rock not because they wanted to settle in Massachusetts, but because they had run out of booze.

Let's take a brief look through an archival window at some of the attempts over the ages to offer us sufferers some relief to our malady. In 1782, Benjamin Rush, prominent physician and signer of the Declaration of Independence, wrote a 17 page medical paper on our condition entitled, "The Effects of Ardent Spirits on the Human Body and Mind." In it, he terms alcoholism "a progressive and odious disease" and urges complete abstinence as the only effective treatment. The paper was widely circulated and well received, becoming a cornerstone document of the Temperance Movement. Yet, the points he made for abstinence from alcohol as

the treatment for a progressive disease seem to have been often forgotten and frequently challenged. In such a fickle public arena, it's nice to remind ourselves that AA, as such, has no opinion on the matter. Our Big Book terms it an illness. Whatever society may choose to call it, I seem to have gotten a bad case of it.

Another opportunity for us alcoholics was embodied in The Washingtonian Temperance Society, which had uncovered a workable formula. After a founding in March of 1840 by six drunks at Chase tavern in Baltimore, the group experienced a meteoric rise, recording 1,000 members before the end of that year. Abraham Lincoln addressed their second anniversary celebration. Their message was simple: 1) the drunkard could be rescued; he was weak, not wicked; 2) relating personal experience by a reformed drunkard was more moving and persuasive than a lecture by a well meaning nonalcoholic; 3) the simplicity of the pledge, requiring only one thing—personal abstinence; and 4) neutrality on the subjects of politics, religion, and the distributions and sale of alcoholic beverages. Not unlike the elements in our own Preamble.

Initially, the Washingtonian movement was virtually entirely made up of reformed “sots.” Later, others flocked to their meetings and took up the pledge and the “fellowship of sufferers” became diluted. In spite of their stated aims, to avoid politics, etc. many members took opposing sides publicly on alcohol reform and other issues. Importantly, there was no principle of anonymity to protect the society from erring members. Within eight or nine years, it was reported that the Washingtonians had “lost their thunder.” At their zenith, the press reported that there were 500,000 recovered sots in the Washingtonians. Since the population in those years was a recorded 20 million, I calculate that today AA would have to have 7,500,000 members in the U.S. alone to have that same ratio. One can't help but ponder the fate of those members when the fire went out.

Another promising answer for the reclamation of the alcoholic was the Emmanuel Movement, founded by a clergyman psychologist, Elwood Worcester. In 1906, Worcester had a deep conviction that the physician and clergyman could work more effectively together in the treatment of functional ills; he had studied, interestingly enough, in Leipzig with Gustav Fechner, one of the pioneers in psychotherapy and one of Carl Jung's professors. His book outlining his theories, *Religion and Medicine, the Moral Control of Nervous Disorders*, appeared in 1908 and had nine printings in the year of publication. Alcoholism, not surprising to us, constituted the largest category within "nervous disorders."

Two successful graduates of the process were Courtney Baylor, who became the first paid alcoholism lay counselor, and Richard Peabody, a prominent lay therapist and author of the *Common Sense of Drinking*, a runaway best-seller of its day (1930), that had found a home in Bill W.'s library. After a couple of decades of successfully treating alcoholics, public controversy entered and diminished their effectiveness. The clergymen publicly quarreled with the physicians. Thus, the movement did not last much beyond the life and energy of its founder.

Our immediate ancestor, the Oxford Group, later renamed Moral Rearmament, has a similar story; it has initially impressive results through a proven method of personal spiritual transformation. Bill asserts in *AA Comes of Age*, that all of our spiritual principles come directly from the Oxford Group, and by way of Sam Shoemaker, its New York leader at Calvary Church, where Bill attended meetings with Ebby and Rowland H. The Oxford Group had the ability to fill vast arenas, like the Hollywood Bowl in 1939, where 25,000 filled the inside and another 10,000 waited outside. Yet, today there's little awareness of their immense influence outside of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Our own present guide, our “founding moment” to recovery from the illness of alcoholism, is thought by many of us to have begun with an encounter just before Armistice Day in 1934, between our co-founder Bill and a childhood friend, Ebby, a recent recruit in the Oxford Group. Bill and Lois were living in Brooklyn Heights. Ebby was sober—something Bill hadn’t expected to see; he left Bill a description of a program of simple actions,⁵³ one designed to produce a spiritual awakening. Bill continued to drink for a few more weeks, but after his fourth admission to Towns Hospital on December 11, 1934, he experienced his “sudden and profound” spiritual event that changed him and the lives of alcoholics in this room. For he then, like Ebby, had caught fire and set about trying to ignite the same passion for sobriety that had been let loose in himself. It is said that Bill tried and failed with 40 men. He then ventured to Akron and tumbled into the lives of Dr. Bob and Ann. He was to stay with the Smiths for over three months, and together they carried the message with zeal to many others. When he left Dr. Bob’s, there was one other on the road to recovery, Bill D., a lawyer. What was to become Alcoholics Anonymous had begun.

⁵³ In 1937, three years after Ebby’s outreach to Bill, the program of simple actions from the alcoholics of the Oxford Movement, as reported by Earl T. of Chicago:

- 1) Complete deflation.
- 2) Dependence and guidance from a Higher Power.
- 3) Moral Inventory.
- 4) Confession.
- 5) Restitution.
- 6) Continued work with other alcoholics.

Alcoholics Anonymous Fourth Edition, p.263 “He Sold Himself Short” Used with permission of AAWS, Inc.

Thus, AA started on the Road of Happy Destiny. And, initially at least, our growth was slow. Most likely a good thing. It took almost four years to gather 100 members and publish a basic textbook. Like those movements before us, Bill was to observe in a talk in Memphis in September 1947, that success was a “serious problem.” He stated, “The wine of forgetfulness might make us dream that Alcoholics Anonymous was *our* success rather than *God’s* will...How, as a movement, shall we maintain our humility—and so our unity—in the face of what the world calls a great triumph? Perhaps we need not look far afield for an answer. We need only adapt and apply to our group life those principles upon which each of us has founded his own recovery. If humility can expel the obsessions to drink alcohol, then surely humility can be our antidote for that subtle wine called success.” (*A.A. Grapevine*, October 1947, p.8)

In August 1947, the previous month, it was reported that there were 48,613 members, in 1,650 groups, in 13 countries. Bill then set about the task of “assuring AA’s future” through the formulation of our Twelve Traditions. He knew that these were the Light for our future. Each of these principles has a reality in the records of our early years, and was deep in the documented experience of these earlier “successful” efforts to aid the alcoholic. Earlier movements failed not because they weren’t successful, but rather because they were; they demonstrated Bill’s point that success can be more damaging to a society than failure.

As in my own personal experience, failure gets my attention; success can make me “intoxicated.” When I lose, I may ask for help; if I hurt enough I might even take the advice. I find that I need the Twelve Steps in my life more than ever to assure my own emotional sobriety.

And our Fellowship needs the Twelve Traditions in our collective lives to assure Emotional Sobriety at the Group and Area levels. Although records on alcoholics are difficult to gather,

it is estimated that there are now 2,000,000 members in approximately 89,000 groups in 146 countries.

So many of us in service throughout the AA world believe that a careful study of our history is essential—to deepen appreciation for our gifts and to foster a renewed effort to remember and carry forward our original message.

Archives, then, are about keeping our collective history and its struggle before us, stimulating a feeling of humility and trust in God’s guidance; taking the abstract wording of the Traditions and transforming them into vital tools for our survival. Keeping clear this window to our past can provide the best light for our future.

All service committees are concerned with carrying our message: by design, the trustees’ Archives Committee’s chief work is preserving our original message. For, as Carl Sandburg wrote, “Whenever a Society or Civilization perishes, there is always one condition present; they forgot where they came from.”

Appendix V – The Twelve Traditions (Long Form) 1946

Taken from pages 563 through 566 of the Fourth 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. The first AA International Convention at Cleveland, Ohio unanimously endorsed the Traditions at their 1950 presentation. The Twelve Traditions are incorporated as by-laws of the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous, and are a major component of the AA World Services Charter approved by the 1955 General Service Conference. They are considered as key to the Fellowship's survival over the past years.

Many AA group meetings in the United States, after hearing "How It Works" and AA's Twelve Steps from the *Big Book*, ask for the reading of the short form of the AA Twelve Traditions with the question "Can we please hear 'Why It Works'?"

The Twelve Traditions (Long Form)

Our AA experience has taught us that:

1. Each member of Alcoholics Anonymous is but a small part of a great whole. AA 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 -- 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. No ought AA membership ever depend upon money or

conformity. Any two or three alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an AA group, provided that, as a group, they have no other affiliation.

4. With respect to its own affairs, each AA 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 AA 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 AA ought to be separately incorporated and managed, thus dividing the material from the spiritual. An AA group, as such, should never go into business. Secondary aids to AA, 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 AA name. Their management should be the sole responsibility of those people who financially support them. For clubs, AA managers are usually preferred. But hospitals, as well as other places of recuperation, ought to be well outside of AA---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 AA group can bind itself to no one.

7. The AA 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 AA treasuries which continue, beyond prudent reserves, to accumulate funds for no stated AA 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 AA General Service Committee. They are the custodians of our AA Tradition and the receivers of voluntary contributions by which we maintain our AA 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 AA 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 AA group or member should ever, in such a way as to implicate AA, 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 AA ought to avoid sensational advertising. Our names and pictures as AA 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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Appendix VI - The Twelve Concepts (Short Form) 1974

The 1962 General Service Conference unanimously approved *The Twelve Concepts for World Service*, incorporated them in the By-Laws of AA's General Service Board, Inc., and approved their small AAWS booklet printing the same year. The *Twelve Concepts* were added to the *A.A. Service Manual* in 1981, and are included as the final Appendix in the Fourth Edition of the Big Book *Alcoholics Anonymous*. An identical verbiage of the six Warranties of Concept XII completed the original 1955 Conference Charter. The Twelve Concepts short form is read at the start of NIA Assemblies and Committee Meetings, where its principles remain as our significant guiding spirit to AA general service.

From pages 574 and 575 in the Fourth Edition of the Big Book *Alcoholics Anonymous*, the following pages are reprinted with permission of AA World Services, Inc.

The Twelve Concepts (Short Form)

AA's Twelve Steps are principles for personal *recovery*. The Twelve Traditions ensure the *unity* of the Fellowship. Written by co-founder Bill W. in 1962, the *Twelve Concepts for World Service* provide a group of related principles to help ensure that various elements of AA's service structure remain responsive and responsible to those they serve.

The "short form" of the Concepts, which follows, was prepared by the 1974 General Service Conference.

- I. Final responsibility and ultimate authority for AA world services should always reside in the collective conscience of our whole Fellowship.

- II. The General Service Conference of AA has become, for nearly every practical purpose, the active voice and the effective conscience of our whole Society in its world affairs.
- III. To insure effective leadership, we should endow each element of AA—the Conference, the General Service Board and its service corporations, staffs, committees, and executives— with a traditional “Right of Decision.”
- IV. At all responsible levels, we ought to maintain a traditional “Right of Participation” allowing a voting representation in reasonable proportion to the responsibility that each much discharge.
- V. Throughout our structure, a traditional “Right of Appeal” ought to prevail, so that minority opinion will be heard and personal grievances receive careful concern.
- VI. The Conference recognizes that the chief initiative and active responsibility in most world service matters should be exercised by the trustee members of the Conference acting as the General Service Board.
- VII. The Charter and By-Laws of the General Service Board are legal instruments, empowering the trustees to manage and conduct world service affairs. The Conference Charter is not a legal document; it relies upon tradition and the AA purse for final effectiveness.
- VIII. The trustees are the principal planners and administrators of overall policy and finance. They have custodial oversight of the separately incorporated and constantly

active services, exercising this through their ability to elect all directors of these entities.

- IX. Good service leadership at all levels is indispensable for our future functioning and safety. Primary world service leadership, once exercised by the founders, must necessarily be assumed by the trustees.
- X. Every service responsibility should be matched by an equal service authority, with the scope of such authority well defined.
- XI. The trustees should always have the best possible committees, corporate service directors, executives, staffs, and consultants. Composition, qualifications, induction procedures, and rights and duties will always be matters of serious concern.
- XII. The Conference shall observe the spirit of AA tradition, taking care that it never becomes the seat of perilous wealth or power; that sufficient operating funds and reserve be its prudent financial principle; that it place none of its members in a position of unequalled authority over others; that it reach all important decisions by discussion, vote, and whenever possible, by substantial unanimity; that its actions never be personally punitive or an incitement to public controversy; that it never perform acts of government, and that, like the Society it serves, it will always remain democratic in thought and action.