

HISTORY OF THE WESTERN MICHIGAN INTERGROUP

Jack R. Meagher

December 19, 1986

The Western Michigan General Service Committee, formed in January, 1951, in response to Bill Wilson's call for a General Service Conference, was the nucleus of service from which the Western Michigan Intergroup concept evolved.

This history, therefore, traces the early life of the General Service Committee up to January, 1960, when the first Intergroup organizational meeting was held in Muskegon.

Intergroup, meeting monthly in various cities throughout the area, grew slowly. In August, 1960, Intergroup Chairman Don Walker wrote an informational letter to all groups in Western Michigan, detailing the function and purpose of the Western Michigan Intergroup. It was the magic touch! As group involvement grew, so did the activities of Intergroup. Open speaker meetings were sponsored; A.A. Weekend events were held in conjunction with the regular monthly Intergroup meeting; and GSR Workshops were (and are) sponsored by Intergroup.

Today the function of Intergroup is much the same as was outlined so carefully in Don Walker's letter of 1960 (see Packet 11). The key sentence in that letter---just as true today as it was then---was: "AA would not long survive if each group kept to itself."

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Since the Western Michigan Intergroup evolved through the efforts of the Western Michigan General Service Committee, it is necessary to review the early deliberations of the Committee to see how Intergroup came about.

In response to Bill Wilson's call for panel members for the first General Service Conference in April of 1951, the first Assembly Meeting to elect a Delegate and a General Service Committee was held in Grand Rapids on March 9, 1951. Quoting from the minutes of the October 5, 1952, General Service Committee meeting: "The first assembly meeting . . . followed the plan of the pamphlet on General Service Committee organization sent out by the New York Foundation, with the exception that the Western Michigan committee selected its own officers."

The choice of Fisk McIntosh as Panel 1 delegate from Western Michigan was indeed a wise one. His inspiration and dedication to service helped to bring the message of the General Service Conference to the many groups in Western Michigan. By December, 1951, the Western Michigan Area had been divided into nine districts, each represented by a committeeman dedicated to spreading the gospel of service to the groups in his district.

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GSO's interest in the new Committee was reflected in a letter from Midge McFadden to Alice Lee Gould, the Secretary of the Committee, asking for information about the function of the Committee. Midge commented that other states having more than one area and Delegate would be interested, and might want to establish a similar committee.

The minutes of the State-Wide General Service Committee meeting on February 26, 1967 state:

"Secretary received letter from Midge at New York requesting information about our State-Wide General Service Committee meeting. Austin D. reported that he and some other ex-Delegates started the meeting - to unify the state by sharing of experiences. The New York office had correspondence about this in 1960 or 1961. Eve A(nderson) wrote a detailed letter to Midge about Christmas, 1966."



DAGWOOD,
GUESS WHAT!
IT'S THAT
TIME AGAIN!



LET'S
GO!

COME ON, FOLKS—
THIS IS AN
IMPORTANT
MEETING!

STATE-WIDE GENERAL SERVICE COMMITTEE MEETING!

When? Sunday,
November 27, 1966

Time? 1:00 P.M.

Where? Alano Club
1439 South Washington
Lansing, Michigan



WE'RE COMING,
DAGWOOD!

agenda:

1. Committee Reports —
Summary of last two years' activities.
2. Election of new chairman.
3. Appointment of new Committee chairman.

DAGWOOD'S FRIENDS ARE COMING —
HOW ABOUT YOU?

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By early 1952 it was decided that more effort was necessary to inform the groups of the functions and purpose of the General Service Conference, and thus attract more groups and members to service. An "Open Meeting Forum", featuring "four eminent A. A. speakers" was then planned, to which all groups in the area were invited. The event was such a success that another similar Big Open Meeting was scheduled for Grand Rapids in October, this time featuring Ward Montgomery, Panel 1 Delegate from downstate Illinois, and Helen Brown, staff member of the General Service Office.

In October, 1952, the term of service of the Panel 1 delegate was coming to a close, and thought was turned to selection of a new delegate for Panel 3. A quote from the Committee minutes of October 5, 1952, set the tone for the 1952 Assembly, and for all those which were to follow:

"The first assembly meeting, held in Grand Rapids on March 9, 1951, followed the plan of the pamphlet on General Service Committee organization sent out by the New York Foundation, with the exception that the Western Michigan committee selected its own officers. It is the wish of the committee that the coming assembly may also be conducted according to the plans carefully formulated by the New York office."

The Assembly meeting was held on November 7, 1952, a Panel 3 delegate (Vic Kerslake) was elected, and General Service in Western Michigan was on firm footing. Panel 1 delegate Fisk McIntosh held true to the principles of A. A. when he declined the Committee's plea to place his name on the ballot for re-election. In a most stirring speech, he emphasized that A. A. strongly believes in rotation and asked "in the interest of carrying the message to the millions who still do not know" that his name be withdrawn.

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By 1973 the Michigan State-Wide General Service Committee was functioning like a well-oiled machine. There were disagreements, and resentments-----tempers flared, and as quickly cooled. Through it all the sense of unity of purpose prevailed, and individual ideas tended to bend to the will of group conscience.

In addition to the various committee reports, there were by now reports by the Delegates, the Regional Trustee (if in attendance), and reports on the State Conference, and GSR Workshops.