

The North Shore Cadre

The “beginning” of the North Shore Cadre dates back to the development of the Global Women’s Forum, called at various times, “LIFT,” “The New Women’s Forum,” and the “FEW.” This group of twelve Chicago suburban women answered the Institute staff’s call to “do something.” Initially this took on the form of volunteering in Fifth City. For about three years, at least once a week, the twelve went to the West side of Chicago, where they worked in the Preschool, helped get out mass mailings and did other tasks. These women, committed to each other in this service, decided to meet weekly to discuss how they could best promote the Institute’s courses and their goals in community development as modeled by Fifth City. They were eager to spread the word of possibility for other suburban women to participate. Following the riots sparked by the death of Martin Luther King, Jr., the children of EI’s staff families were taken to suburban homes for a few weeks so that the Institute could repair the damages caused by the fires. This simple act enabled the Fifth City story to be told to friends and neighbors of the “FEW,” as these people offered to provide housing, clothing and other necessities.

By the fall of 1968, the New Women’s Forum decided that it was time for their husbands to meet each other. Nicki Dresslar spoke up, “Okay, let’s have a cocktail party at my home in Park Ridge.” Two couples come from the Institute, Joe Mathews, Charles Moore and their wives. In a fairly “artful” way, the invitation to “do something,” was repeated – this time to the suburban men.

Early in January 1969 ten couples gathered at the Dresslar’s farm near Crystal Lake for a weekend of getting to know each other. Joe Mathews shares Fifth City plans and issues. Joe’s energetic affirmation communicates a compelling invitation for the men to be supportive of Fifth City.

The weekend closes Sunday noon as all prepare to go home to watch the Super Bowl. But before the close, Don Moffett stood up and asked a question individually of each person. “Do you want to continue to meet together each week to study and plan how we support Fifth City?” Only two couples decided they do not want to meet each week.

Sixteen of us started meeting once a week at the Pesek’s house on Waukegan Road in Lake Forest. We named ourselves the North Shore Cadre.

One night in August the North Shore Cadre spent from 7:30pm until about 2:30am discussing the fact that we all needed to live in one community. The Dresslars and Phillips both lived in Park Ridge and the Wilsons lived in Norwood Park. All the others lived in Wilmette or Lake Forest. The conversation swirls around Wilmette and Lake Forest and finally the decision was made that all needed to live in Lake Forest. The North Shore Cadre had the strange idea that it would be part of a church in Lake Forest – possibly even buying the empty church building in downtown Lake Forest. This proved to be unworkable.

Summer 1970 had Institute people and lay folks from across the country come to Chicago’s West side for the July Research Assembly. This summer was designed to build the Local Church Experiment for local churches across the country. The Cadre spent most of the month of July at the Institute as the form of the Local Church Experiment was flushed out.

By fall the women – still eager to volunteer, but now more “full time” than “weekly” – were assigned to work with Institute staff, mostly in the various arenas of the Local Church Office. As an example, Priscilla Wilson was assigned to work

with the galaxies, four church units working together in numerous towns across the country. Other women are assigned in other arenas and the men continue their pursuit of their jobs.



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Len Dresslar, Betty Pesek, George McBurney, LaVerne Phillips, Betty Hill, Don Moffett, Mary Warren Moffett, Jim Phillips, Rodney Wilson, Nicki Dresslar, Priscilla Wilson, Sheldon Hill, Jana McBurney.

The men began to get involved with the work of Fifth City, frequently in ways that reflected their professions. As examples, Martin Pesek, an orthodontist, arranged for dental clinics for Fifth City children; Sheldon Hill, an architect, provided the plans for remodeling the community center; etc.

Early in the NSC first year three statements were jotted down as crucial to our mission:

- sharpen articulation of the Word for our time and enable the whole church to reshape its witness.
- intensify the service of man (woman) and thus lead the whole church toward a more relevant social engagement.
- demonstrate fresh forms of the presence of the church to enable the whole church to move toward more wholesome forms of Christian life.

The North Shore Cadre went down to the West side for weekend courses with the Ecumenical Institute in Fifth City: cultural studies, individual and the family, world religions, and imaginal education. We wondered if we were ready to learn the Institute's courses so we can teach others. The poetic images of Nikos Kazantzakis's *Savior's of God: Spiritual Exercises* raised questions for us all about our life's journey.

Each weekend that we spend at the Institute two people from the North Shore Cadre are assigned to care for all of our children at one of our houses.

The Institute ran a camp for the staff's children every summer in a location around North America and Canada, usually selected by working with "host" organizations whose campsites were donated. Cadre children were invited to go to these camps and many of them did. During the 1971 summer, the site was on the

Gulf Coast just outside New Orleans. The three Wilson children went to that Camp that summer. It was held in an old school building. Every one of the kids became very sick after drinking some lemonade made with water from a bad pipe. Ben Wilson and Kay Pesek had gone to town and were the only ones who did not get to drink any lemonade or get sick. That is how the Institute staff figured out what caused it all.

Family incomes within the NSC were widely divergent. Accordingly, we created a “unit system”, within which each family contributed to corporate activities in proportion to economic resources. This system permitted equal participation by each family in financial responsibilities.

The New Women’s Forum continued meeting and working. Other women joined this Forum. They decided to design a one-day seminar to aid women to reflect on who they are and what they want to be. They called it the “Global Woman’s Forum.” By training other women to present this program it was given on six continents.

Full-time volunteering with the Institute of Cultural Affairs (the secular arm of the Ecumenical Institute) focused the women’s care for the next decade. The men spent a portion of time each year on research and training trips with the ICA staff.

One of the concrete manifestations of this work was the course, Living Effectively in the New Society – LENS.