

N.A. Guardian Consult
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TEN YEARS OF ENGAGEMENT

We are going to celebrate this weekend in a very special way by looking ahead at the next 10 years. It's going to be a fine time. I thought one of the ways we could celebrate could be to make a list; just compiling the things that have gone on. You know, how many telephone calls have you taken in the last 10 years? or how many gallons of gas have been burned? or cars? And the airline tickets - How many times have you heard that woman say "and when the oxygen system fails the---" How many miles have we travelled, or how much dust have we inhaled, or bugs have we seen, or snakes? How many heads of state or presidents of companies have we seen in the midst of this engagement? Have you ever counted up how many of those little rolls of masking tapes, those little loops, you have made?

I noticed we've got a picture over here of a guardian in his painting clothes. I have painted buildings, and I am sure others have too. And, how many rocks have been painted with white paint? And finally, how many development calls have you been on, or have been on you? Well, 10 years of engagement is really something to talk about, and we are looking forward this week-end to some of those events going up on these panels. We are going to pass some cards around to give you a chance to put up some of the things that you remember about engagement during the last 10 years. And for a few moments we are going to look back at 1972 when this all began, to talk about it just a bit for those who may not know the story, and for those of us who do. Just to refresh our memories as we start off this week-end.

Just how were the guardians launched? At that time the Ecumenical Institute declared its intent to turn to the world, and the times were calling for a new direction. The student protest, and the urban riots have died down in the United States. It was a bit quiet socially, at least compared to the late 60s. And it was a time that called for new directions and new initiatives. The Ecumenical Institute which had focused its energy on awakening and training in the local church, and developing there a servant force to change the structures of the world, had become increasingly aware of the sensitive and caring people beyond the institutional church. It was at that time that this symbol in the front of the room was created to describe that shift, that turn to the world, and to describe the dynamics of on-behalf of care. The circle in that symbol represents, as you might expect, the whole world. The vertical line down the center describes, or is a way of marking the kind of tension that exists in all human communities and structures, between the conserving and the venturing dynamics. Between those who invest in maintaining the established order/system, and those who are left out and who seek to establish other forms. The wedge blade

was the symbol of the Ecumenical Institute--as a statement of the decision to be on the creative, cutting edge of history. And, as it was added to the half circle, it introduced the third dynamic of care. Those who base their decisions and actions on what history is calling them to do. Well, they beckoned both the conserving and the venturing into the future. The Institute had found that as a group with some members in the structures of society and others who were outside those structures that it was inappropriate for them to take action in either one or the other of these worlds, and impossible or quite absurd to operate in those worlds simultaneously. Or to be one on one day, and one on another. The symbol holds these dynamics before us.

Well, maybe a couple of more images of ways that we experience care. In communities there are people who have been there a long time. You probably know communities where the following kind of situation could develop. Where some people have been there a long time, and others are newcomers. There is tension there. And in these communities, coming from these dynamics, there are people who are global citizens. We heard about the women we met in Jamaica this past year, who has served successfully in both the Manley government and presently in the Seaga government...her decision to care first for the long range needs of the people of that country has made this possible much to the consternation of her family and also to their disdain. One of my images for these aspects of the social process has been the Ins, and the Outs, and there is the Wedge Blade, and the "Who are you?" Now I don't know if you have had that question asked of you recently, but I have. Well, 10 years ago or today, I think our experience says that this symbol does describe a dynamic tension that requires careful work to keep that tension creative.

Ten years ago that realization resulted in an invitation to a group of businessmen at a conference here in this building to be Guardians of the Movement. I think you will enjoy one line of that talk--"I have never been interested in another club, or another organization. And I think that a part of the wonder in our group is that we have kept organization to a minimum." Now some of you obviously agree with that--But we also know that style required by the task of caring comprehensively for the globe by bridging the gap between the 15% who have most of the resources and make most of the decisions, and the 85% who live in poverty and powerlessness, demands flexibility and mobility. The staff of the Institute must be free to move where there is need. And that's where we come in. We are the anchors. The Guardians are the roots in local communities and in the structures that guard the Mission of the Institute by enabling its staff to be this mobile flexible servant force. Our globe trotting as Guardians is memorable and essential, but our roots are crucial.

Have you ever flown a kite, and you are out there, and the wind is blowing and it is really up there, and it is pulling, and suddenly you come to the end of the string, and the kite is gone? Well it does not stay a kite very much longer, and you are no longer a kite flyer when that kind of thing goes on. I'd like to say that's a bit like the

relationship between the Guardians and the Institute staff. The Guardians and the staff need each other like that. We Guardians are also those who seek to discern what history is demanding, and as we are rooted in geography and structures, we can provide the crucial liaison with local communities. The Institute enables us to participate in perhaps the only global task force on this planet that operates ecumenically, without barriers of class, or race, religion, sex or nationality.

The functions of the Guardians during the past 10 years have related to supporting the finances and the program of the Institute. In order to maximise the effectiveness of the Institute's mission Guardians have encouraged healthy financial practices, provided expertise in program and project development, arranged introductions, established appropriate authorization to develop a sound public image, and persisted in raising crucial questions. Guardians have also contributed substantially to provide needed resources, money, housing and transportation. In recent years we have been a catalytic force in both the workplace and community, working alongside Institute staff in Town Meetings, Consults, and countless other efforts to release local creativity.

My husband and I first attended a Guardian's Meeting in October 1975. People had been encouraging us to try it for a long time. We were not sure whether we were Guardians or not, so it made sense to come. At the conclusion of that consult which was the ninth, we finally got an answer to what the guardians were about and what it might mean to be a guardian. I know that there are people here who have many stories to tell this weekend about the myriad ways that people have been engaged as a result of this last 10 years. Let me mention just a few to spark our memory. The first convoy course in 1971. The Lens treks in 1974. The Global Odyssey. The orchestration of a Town Meeting in 1976. Participation in a Human Development Project in places like Kawangware, Tairgwai the, Maliwada, Isle of Dogs, Sudtonggan, Ombulgurri, Sungei Lui and Kelapa Dua. Living in an HDP for an extended period of time. Participating in a development call. It's going to be exciting to see these events go up on our wall of wonder.

This weekend we will talking about the next 10 years. We have concerns and challenges in areas where our regional teams are experiencing something new happening in the cities, in the social structures across this continent. They are seeing the need to intensify marketing and develop tools and methods to nurture the human factor in the workplace, the schools and the hospitals. We are going to have a chance this evening to hear first hand about what is going on across the continent in three different symposia. It should be an exciting evening of interchange.

Earlier we were trying to count up how many guardians were involved this past year in some trip, meeting or trek outside their own continents. We are sure that it was way over 30. It has been particularly exciting to know of the guardians from outside North America who are participating also. In Australia while we were on the Panchayat trek we suggested to Mike

Chapman that he might go to Africa, and sure enough, Mike thought that it would be a great idea, and he went. When we were in Tokyo we ran into Dick Wanger coming back from China. I know that there are alot more stories like that. We need to find ways for more. Guardians especially those outside North America, to do that kind of traveling and sharing. The guild is going to be our focus of attention this weekend. Tomorrow morning we will be working in four guilds: health, education, information systems, and business. It is one of our challenges to figure out how to maintain the communication of quality information from these areas so that we maintain up-to-date, accurate information. In the afternoon we will continue our role as advisors to the ICA and will work with task forces in six areas: methods, marketing, treks, the regions, deferred giving and the IERD. And we are looking forward to having fun in both reminiscence and looking ahead.

Judy Lindblad