

THE ADMINISTRATORS' ROUND TABLE OF WESTERN ILLINOIS:
AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE WESTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY'S CENTENNIAL
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by

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Greetings to Round Table Members and Guests:

Your Round Table Secretary, Dr. Cynthia Waltershausen, invited me to share with you some of the early history of the Round Table. This seems appropriate since Western is celebrating its centennial year. I am pleased to have this opportunity. I approach this challenge from a background of having served as secretary of this Round Table from 1963 to 1986, a span of about 23 years. But remember, one's memory plays tricks and the good old days were never as good as they "used to was." The complete file of the minutes and the eyewitness accounts of the members and officers could provide a fuller account than the one you will hear today. The successor secretaries, Doctors Frank Sorenson, Max Pierson, and Cynthia Waltershausen, are available to update this report.

Now, how and when did the Administrators' Round Table of Western Illinois get started?

It began in 1963 in response to an invitation originated by J. Harold Voshall and Gerald W. Smith. Harold Voshall was the superintendent of schools at Pittsfield and president of the Illinois Association of School Administrators. Dr. Gerald Smith was the executive director of the IASA. They came to Western in December 1963, and met with about 50 school administrators and professors. Voshall noted that there was no organization in Western Illinois to bring together the superintendents and other school administrators. He also noted that several areas in the state enjoyed flourishing Administrator Round Tables. He said, " Why not Western Illinois?" He suggested that Western Illinois University could be an excellent meeting place. Dr. Fred Abel, Dean of the College of Education, said that WIU would be very pleased to support the organization and serve as the center for its activities.

Smith then described the operation of several regional Round Tables and their relationship to the IASA.

The group responded enthusiastically and unanimously agreed that an administrative association should be organized in Western Illinois. It moved quickly to select temporary officers and establish and staff four committees to: (1) draft a constitution and by-laws; (2) develop programs; (3) provide public relations; (4) nominate officers. It all happened quickly--no "paralysis of analysis."

The constitution and by-laws were adopted in March 1964 and provided the name, "Administrators' Round Table of Western Illinois." Membership was open to males who were administrators in the public schools or in the county superintendent's office; the professional staff of the Office of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction; and instructors and administrators in schools of education. Sam Turner's motion to substitute the word "persons" for "males" was defeated. It should be noted that some women did begin to attend and that the constitution was changed in the 1970's.

The constitution established the Round Table as a freestanding organization, independent of other organizations such as the IASA. However, each regional Round Table was represented on the IASA advisory committee. Western has provided support for the Round Table and served as host for its meetings.

The constitution stated that the purpose of this organization shall be to propose the best in educational practices through research, exchange of experience, the common study of problems, consideration of the newer methods of technology, and cooperation with professional and lay organizations.

Conducting research has seldom been a priority for this Round Table. Several efforts to establish a school study council never got off the ground. However, the annual Salary Survey study has been a very helpful research activity and many of the programs have included reports of research. The programs have included a lot of in-service education. There continues to be a lot of professional sharing, consideration of newer methods of technology, study of problems and practices, and exchange of experience. Some of the best exchanges of experience take place during the coffee hour and at the dining tables or while en route to and from the meetings.

The programs over the years reflect some major social, political, economic, and technological changes and challenges. They also reflect some fads and frills. The programs which have spanned the years include: collective bargaining; managing decline; the life-safety code; due process; student rights; open education; the Elementary and Secondary Education Act with Headstart and other Title programs; computer assisted instruction; the drug problem; "A Nation at Risk;" accountability; and back to the basics. Most of these concerns still persist with varying degrees of intensity.

I believe that our Round Table has enjoyed continued success for two reasons. First, the selection and planning of programs has remained the primary domain of the practitioners. We have selected good officers who felt accountability to the members. Secondly, Western's president, the College of Education and Human Resources, and the Department of Educational Administration, Supervision, and Curriculum have provided ongoing support.

We have made it together for about 36 years because our programming has been dynamic, meaningful, and usually on the cutting edge. The program format has changed somewhat, but the substance of the programs has been and must always be adapted to our current and emerging problems, opportunities, and responsibilities.

Best wishes for many more years of outstanding service and fellowship.