

The Evolution of Rural School Leadership in Nebraska: A History of the Nebraska Rural Community Schools Association, 1979 – 1990

Summary

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As leaders of Nebraska's smaller K-12 schools reflected on the condition of rural education in the late 1970's, frustration must have been the prime emotion they felt. In the decade just ending, rural schools had been the subject of increasing pressure from declining enrollments and eroding financial resources. Double-digit inflation and an increasingly militant stance from the state's teachers' union drove costs up dramatically, as did mandates from the state and federal governments which required extensive expansion of the curriculum and the provision of special education services for the handicapped. The traditional disciplinary authority of school administrators and boards was being restricted and social attitudes with regard to student conduct and academic achievement appeared to be less supportive than previously. And, of course, the nearly century-old debate over school size and reorganization continued the rage. In the minds of many rural school superintendents, these problems were worsened by the feeling that the traditional educational organizations in the state – the Nebraska State Education Association, the Nebraska Council of School Administrators, and the Nebraska State School Boards Association – were little interested in the concerns of the rural schools. These organizations seemed to be speaking primarily to the needs of urban and suburban schools of eastern Nebraska and, to judge from the memos and letters of the period, rural superintendents felt left out.

These frustrations, especially those centering around the lack of organizational support, surfaced at an ad hoc meeting of eight school superintendents on Nov. 6 1979, in Kearney. Present were: Al Nelson, Pawnee City; John Brown, Hayes Center; Jim Breazeale, Venango; Wes Moench, Thedford; Bob Mandeville, Mullen; Dick Finley, Palisade; Jim Allen, Meridian; and Dwain Myers, Southeast Consolidated. Invited but unable to attend were: Gary Oxley, Nemaha Valley; Dean Curtis, Emerson-Hubbard; Everett Schuler, Sargent; and Pete Delgado, Keya Paha County. Discussion turned to efforts in Oregon, Texas, Iowa, and other states to organize rural schools into a political force, and the group voted 8-0 to form an organization to serve the Class C and D schools of Nebraska. The Nebraska Rural Community Schools association (NRCSA) – although the name had yet to be decided upon – had been born.

The founding Eight quickly divided up the organizational tasks and planned a larger meeting the following week at the annual NSSBA Convention in Lincoln. Al Nelson was elected temporary chairman. The Lincoln meeting revealed more interest and a further meeting was planned for Jan. 3, 1980 in Grand Island. As interest grew, another meeting was scheduled for Jan. 23, also in Grand Island. About 60 superintendents attended (lending support to Nelson's statement that "Many superintendents of small school feel they have been disenfranchised...") and the organization was formally founded. A steering committee was selected to draft a constitution, a task that was completed on March 18.

The fierce spirit of Independence of these school leaders was reflected in the first constitution. The centralization of power was avoided and NRCSA was designed as a loose amalgam of seven regional groups, the schools in which were perceived to have "...common affiliation and natural tendencies to work together." Each regional group was to select its own officers, conduct its own meetings, and select two of its members to form the NRCSA Board of Directors. From the Board, officers would be selected – a chairman, vice chairman, secretary-treasurer, and communications officer. The powers of the Board and officers were strictly limited; decisions were clearly to be made by the regional groups and at four annual general membership meetings. Dues the new group's only source of income, were set at \$10 per year.

The constitution was unanimously adopted at the first general membership meeting at the Circle C Motel in North Platte on May 6, 1980. Planned at that time were a summer convention to be held in August in conjunction with Administrator Days, as well as fall, winter, and spring meetings. The group also voted to fire off letters to NCSA, asking for greater representations on its Resolutions Committee for small schools and urging NCSA's new executive director to be chosen from a Nebraska school system, and to NSSBA, criticizing its superintendent search service which was believed to limit the career opportunities of rural school leaders. NRCSA, though small, was fast making itself known.

The August 6, 1980, meeting saw the selection of the first Board of Director and officers. Directors were: Region I: W.D Brawner, Dix; Region II: Stan Kravig, Palisande, Wayne Ferguson, Stapleton; Region III: Gary Fisher, Hildreth, Andrew Hansen, Litchfield; Region IV: Frank Shaughnessy, Trumbull, Mike Ough, Kenesaw; Region V: Pete Delgado, Keya Paha; Region VI: Don Pieper, Fairmont; Region VII: Jim Ossian, Tecumseh, Al Nelson, Pawnee City. Officers selected were: Nelson, President; Delgado, Vice President; John Brown, Hayes Center, Secretary-Treasurer, and Ossian, Communications Officer. The August meeting also constituted NRCSA's first convention. The program included, in addition to the business meeting, a noon luncheon and an afternoon panel discussion, "The Role of the Service Unit", chaired by Mike Ough.

That NRCSA appealed to Nebraska's rural K-12 schools was clear from its rapidly growing membership and financial base. From eight founders in November 1979, the group grew to 51 members a year later, to about 100 schools represented when both individual and school memberships were authorized in 1983, to 185 schools represented when business affiliates were begun in 1988, and finally to 200 schools and 55 affiliates as the decade ended in January 1990. Financial resources also grew. Minutes from the November, 1980, business meeting showed a balance of 319.56 and the Secretary-Treasurer was authorized to pay bills to the extent that funds existed to do so. By the end fo the 1989-90 business year, NRCSA (now a fully authorized non-profit corporation) reported revenues of 76,758.58 and expenditures to date of \$61,821.70. The 1990-91 budget called for revenues exceeding \$91,000 and approximately \$84,000 in expenditures. The \$10 dues in 1980 had grown to \$150 per year for individuals and \$200 per year for schools, still small by comparison with other groups.

Rapid growth was not without its organizational stresses and strains. The regional confederacy was not suitable to a group hoping to become a player in the legislative and educational battles, and the April, 1983, minutes reported bluntly: "The existing by-laws of the

Association are outdated and unused; thus a revision and update are needed.” A committee was formed and by August, 1983, a new structure was adopted. Officer positions were president, president-elect, secretary-treasurer, and past president. These along with three district representatives – one from east of Highway 14, one from the area between Highways 14 and 83, and one west of Highway 83 – comprised the Executive Committee which had expanded powers. Over the next two years minor changes were made, each having the effect of centralizing and stabilizing leadership, and extending the authority of the Executive and Legislative Committees. The last revisions were made in 1988-89 along with NRCSA’s adoption of a corporate form. As previously, the 88-89 revisions increased the powers of the Executive and Legislative Committees, especially in the area of speaking for the membership on legislative issues. Stability of leadership was another theme of NRCSA’s constitutional evolution. The early constitutions put strict limits on officers’ terms. The growth of the organization demonstrated, however, that key leaders, like Duane Stehlik as chairman of the Legislative Committee and Gary Fisher as Secretary-Treasurer, were needed if the group was to maintain its hard-won status. The 1989 constitution limited district representatives to two consecutive terms and the offices of president-elect, president, and past president comprise a three-year cycle, but limits were taken off the secretary-treasurer position and the Executive Board was formally given power to appoint committee heads.

A Legislative Committee evolved fairly rapidly in NRCSA’s early years. Dick Finley and Dwain Myers were the legislative coordinators in 1981-82 and the following year a formal committee, headed by John Brown was formed. In March, 1983, Lloyd McDowell was appointed as lobbyist. The next year, Shari Apking replaced McDowell and she remained as NRCSA’s lobbyist through the 1986 session. By then it was clear that a more intense lobbying effort was needed. The firm of Sullivan and Arthur headed by John L. Sullivan was engaged for \$12,000 to provide lobbying and some office management functions. The 1987 and subsequent sessions were key ones for Nebraska schools. Under the leadership of Sen. Ron Withem, the Legislature formed committees to work on the reorganization and finance problems which had plagued Nebraska’s schools for many years. NRCSA members and their Legislative Committee, led by Stehlik, were actively involved in these efforts. Stehlik served on the Finance Review Commission and Keith Fagot, as president-elect and president, served on the ad hoc committee that pioneered the current affiliation bill. In December 1988, Sullivan resigned to accept employment out of state and the team of Larry Ruth and Bill Mueller, two of the state’s most respected lobbyists, was hired. NRCSA’s legislative efforts now include the adoption of positions on major educational issues, a legislative newsletter, “NRCSA Notes”, which goes to hundreds of administrators and Board members statewide, and a strong and effective lobbying effort. The “Grump Group” of 1980, an image that was a topic of concern at one of the early meetings, had matured into an important political force.

While political power for rural schools has been one factor in NRCSA’s agenda, educational improvement has been a theme since the November, 1979 meeting. “Quality Rural Schools” is a slogan of great meaning to NRCSA and the organization’s sponsorship of an annual convention, awards for excellent rural educators, and, most recently, scholarships for outstanding high school graduates attest to that. In addition, NRCSA played a major role in the founding of a rural education center (NEBCRESS) at Kearney State College, and sponsored an important study of rural education in Nebraska by Dr. Jonathon Sher, a noted North Carolina scholar, in 1988.

As noted, the August 1980 meeting was the first convention. Spring conventions began in March, 1981. That gathering was a one-day effort, keynoted by Commissioner of Education Anne Campbell, and involving a few shorter sessions on topics of interest. Since then extensive growth in the convention's size and influence has occurred. The 1990 convention, keynoted by Dr. Jim Huges, was a two-day meeting attended by hundreds of rural administrators and Board members. It featured addresses by Governor Kay Orr and UNL Athletic Director Bob Devaney, among others, and a wide variety of sessions on educational, legal, and legislative issues. Much of the credit for the growth and improvement of the annual convention must go to Secretary-Treasurer Gary Fisher who is charged with the planning and management of the annual event.

Since 1988, a feature of the annual convention is the recognition of an outstanding rural board member, administrator, an elementary teacher and a secondary teacher. The 1990 honorees were Dr. Roger Meyer, Centennial Board Member; Jim Tenopir, Cambridge Superintendent; Gary Goodchuck, Wauneta secondary teacher; and Virginia Collins, Orleans elementary teacher. Selections are made by the Business Committee under the leadership of Dean Stewart. That committee is also charged, beginning in 1991, with the selection of two students for the new NRCSA scholarships. These grants were made possible by a donation from an anonymous individual to the Lincoln Foundation for scholarships for rural students. Interest on the donation will provide funds annually for the awards.

In 1982, Frank Shaughnessy, NRCSA President, wrote to Dr. Leonard Skov, Dean of Education at Kearney State College. Shaughnessy had attended a rural education conference at Kansas State University and was impressed by the rural education center at that institution. He suggested to Skov that a similar center at KSC be started, writing: "I feel strongly that with proper leadership from a school such as Yours, a program of in-service and other help to rural schools in Nebraska would significantly benefit boys and girls." Skov agreed and in July, 1983, the Center for Rural Education and Small Schools (CRESS) was founded. Dr. Roger Hanson was named director and an Advisory Committee headed by Shaughnessy was formed. The center, now called NEBCRESS and directed by Dr. Leonary Gregory, provides consultative services for schools in the areas of curriculum development, in-service, and cooperative inter-district joint ventures, among other things. It also produces a quarterly newsletter highlighting educational innovations in rural schools.

Another NRCSA initiative was the sponsorship of a 1988 study of rural education in Nebraska by Dr. Jonathan Sher. NRCSA's Executive Board took the risk that the state's rural K-12 schools would withstand the scrutiny of a respected scholar and it agreed to finance the research with no control over the document's contents. That faith was well placed. The study, "Class Dismissed: Examining Nebraska's Rural Education Debate", laid to rest many of the myths of the big school-small school debate and contained an eloquent plea for all of Nebraska's educational community to work together on an improvement agenda. Sher wrote: "Two conclusions are clear. First, in comparison with other states, Nebraskans have ample reason to be proud of all their public schools, urban and rural, large and small. Second, within Nebraska, an analysis of educational input, through-put and output information reveals that there is neither hard evidence, nor a persuasive argument, supporting the contention that educational quality is a function of size." Dr. Duane Stehlik deserves primary credit for developing and bringing to fruition the idea of a rural education study sponsored by NRCSA.

The growth and development of NRCSA is a testimony to the rural educators who served in leadership positions. In this brief report, not all can be listed. Presidents have included: Al Nelson, 1980-81; Pete Delgado, 1981-82; Frank Shaughnessy, 1982-83 and 1983-84; Jim Allen, 1984-85; Gary Rasmussen, 1985-86; Duane Stehlik, 1986-87; Richard Finley, 1987-88; Jim Havelka, 1988-89; Keith Fagot, 1989-90; and Richard Becker, 1990-91. Secretary-Treasurers have been: John Brown, 1980-82; Stan Kravig, 1982-84; and Gary Fisher, 1984-present. Since the formation of the district representative system in 1983, representatives have included: Bob Mandeville, Mike Ough, Dean Stewart, Dallas Watkins, Everett Schuler, Bob Reed, Russ Hopner, Don Leighton, and Glenn Morgan. Officers and Executive Board members for 1990-91 are: Becker, President; Glen Larson, President-Elect; Fagot, Past-President; Fisher, Secretary-Treasurer; Morgan, Western District; Leighton, Eastern District; and Stewart, Central District.

Rural schools in Nebraska now face and will continue to face many difficulties and challenges, just as they did in 1979. But in the decade of NRCSA's existence much improvement has been made and NRCSA has been a crucial ingredient in bringing about those improvements. In the decade of the 1990s, the organization is poised – in terms of membership, financial resources and leadership – to make even more extensive contributions to education in our state and there is no doubt, based on its history, that it will do so.

March, 1991.

Authors Note: This report is a summary of a comprehensive history of the organization now being developed. Several members of NRCSA have assisted me in compiling information. Three deserve special thanks: Frank Shaughnessy, Superintendent, Trumbull; Mike Ough, Superintendent, North Bend Central High School, and Dr. Duane Stehlik, Superintendent, Table Rock. The documents and information they provided to me made the writing of NRCSA's history possible.

NRCSA History Notes

Officers:

1979-80: Al Nelson, Pawnee City, selected temporary chairman on 11/6/79. Continued in that position through establishment of first constitution in May, 1980. New officers selected at Aug. 6, 1989 meeting.

1980-81: Constitution provided for each of six (seven?) regions to select two representatives to form a Board of Directors or Executive Committee. Officers would be chosen from that group. Selections 8/6/80: Region I: W.D Brawner, Dix: Region II: Stan Kravig, Palisade, Wayne Ferguson, Stapleton: Region III: Gary Fisher, Hildreth, Andrew Hansen, Litchfield: Region IV: Frank Shaughnessy, Trumbull, Mike Ough, Kenesaw: Region V: Pete Delgado, Keya Paha: Region VI: Don Pieper, Fairmont: Region VII: Jim Ossian, Tecumseh, Al Nelson, Pawnee City. Officers selected from this group were: Al Nelson, President; Pete Delgado, Vice President; John Brown (Hayes Center), Secretary-Treasurer; Jim Ossian, Communications Officer.

1981-82: At 8/5/81 meeting, there was a motion to override the Constitution for one year and select officers on a statewide basis. Selected were: Pete Delgado, President; George Wright, Norfolk Catholic, Vice President; John Brown, Secretary-Treasurer; Jim Allen, Meridian, representative to UNL; Jim Ossian, Public Relations Chairman; Richard Finley, Palisade/Stratton, and Dwain Meyers, Southeast Consolidated, Legislative Coordinators.

1982-83: Constitution overridden at the 8/4/82 meeting, but only two officers selected: Frank Shaughnessy, President; Stan Kravig, Secretary-Treasurer. First legislative committee formed in 1982 with John Brown as chairman. Members were: Duane Stehlik, Table Rock; Wayne Ferguson, Richard Finley, Frank Madison, Harrisburg, Bill Reents, Wynot, Dennis Chipman, Sterling, Gary Fisher, Hildreth, W.D. Brawner, and Pete Delgado.

April 7, 1983: An acting executive committee formed by Shaughnessy to revise the Constitution. Members were: Kravig, Allen, Myers, Gary Rasmussen, Roseland, Finley and Fisher.

1983-84: On Aug. 5, 1983, the new Constitution was adopted. District representatives selected were: Bob Mandeville, Mullen, Western District and Legislative Committee, one year; Mike Ough, Central District and Teacher/Administrator Training Committee, two years; Dean Stewart, Bruning, Eastern District and Liaison Committee, three years. Officers: Frank Shaughnessy, President; Jim Allen, President Elect; Stan Kravig, Secretary, Treasurer

1984-85: Jim Allen, President; Gary Rasmussen, PE; Gary Fisher, ST; Dallas Watkins, Dundy County, Western District; Everett Schuler, Sargent, Central (appointed to replace Mike Ough); Dean Stewart, Eastern.

1985-86: Rasmussen, Pres.; Stehlik, PE; Fisher, ST; Bob Reed, Arnold, Central; Stewart, Eastern; Watkins, Western; Allen, Past-President.

1986-87: Stehlik, Pres.; Finley, PE; Fisher, ST; Shaughnessy, Past President (since Rasmussen and Allen were no longer school admin.); Reed, central; Russ Hoppner, Hampton, Eastern; Watkins, Western.

1987-88: Finley, Pres.; Jim Havelka, Rising City, PE; Fisher, ST; Stehlik, PP; Reed, Central; Hoppner, Eastern; Mandeville, Western

1988-89: Havelka, Pres.; Keith Fagot, Loomis, PE; Fisher, ST; Finley, PP; Dean Stewart, Wood River, Central; Hoppner, Eastern; Bob Mandeville, Mullen, Western.

1989-90: Fagot, Pres.; Richard Becker, Wilber, PE; Fisher, ST; Havelka, PP; Stewart, Central; Don Leighton, Winside, Eastern; Mandeville, Western

1990-91: Becker, Pres.; Glen Larson, Adams Central, PE; Fisher, ST; Fagot, PP; Glen Morgan, Paxton, Western; Leighton, Eastern; Stewart, Central.

Legislative Committees:

1981-82: Legislative Coordinators were: Finley, Myers. Key issues included state gasoline tax exemption, county tax collection fees, putting all classes of schools under TPNA, in lieu of school land taxes at 143% of actual value, three-year probationary period, freeholder petitions, SPED costs, paying for federal and state mandated programs, putting Class I's into K-12 setting, Christian schools, four-day school week. Key legislative issue in 1982 was an open freeholding bill that would have allowed any landowner to move to any district on the grounds of "best educative interest". Also, a change in state aid law that removed personal property taxes and provided a state reimbursement under the state aid formula. Rural schools lost considerable money.

1982-83: John Brwn, Hayes Center, Chair; Stehlik, Ferguson, Finley, Madison, Reents, Chipman, Fisher, Brawner, Delgado. Lobbyist appointed in March 1983: Lloyd McDowell of Lincoln, formerly on staff of NASB. Issues discussed in Nov. 82 included state aid, freeholding, four-day week, policies for the new probationary teacher law, new open meetings law.

1983-84: Sheri Apking named lobbyist in April, 1984. Bob Mandeville was Legislative Chairman, but no record of committee members. Most likely continued to serve from previous year. Resolutions were adopted in November. They included putting all property in K-12 districts and that Class VIs become Class II or Class III districts, restricting the PPC, placing SPED costs at the state level, supporting recommendations of the Governor's Task Force on Education including graduation requirements, core curriculum salaries, 1,080-hour school year, and increased state aid, opposed lid laws. All resolutions passed at November meeting.

1984-85: Apking lobbyist. Members: Dallas Watkins (Dundy County), Duane Stehlik. Dan Jantzen (Lawrence), Gary Rasmussen (Roseland), Ferguson (Stapleton), Dale Eberhart (Bartley), Bill Gannon (Kenesaw), Jon Burkey (Perkins Co. – Grant), Larry Bartek (Doniphan). November 1984 resolutions included funding of the LB 994 programs, placing all property in a Class II – VI school district by 1990, placing all counties in an ESU, putting junior high athletics under NSAA

rather than NDE, two-year sequence of course offerings, opposed to lids. 7% lid scheduled to sunset in 1985 and many proposals in effect to put in new lids.

1985-86: Apking lobbyist. No resolutions adopted. Began dealing with legislation as it was introduced. Key bill of the session was LB 662 which placed all land in K-12 districts and added one cent sales tax for state aid. No formula. NRCSA did not take a position despite much argument at the spring, 1986, meeting. 662 defeated in fall election, Members: Watkins, Stehlik, Jantzen, Rasmussen, Ferguson, Eberhart, Gannon, Burkey.

1986-87: Sullivan lobbyist. Committee members were Stehlik, Burkey, Ferguson, Jantzen, Watkins, Eberhart, Gannon, Glen Morgan (Greeley), Shaughnessy, Havelka, Keith Fagot (Loomis). Key issues were a Class II budget bill and a bill to allow biennial courses, and reorganization of ESUs, putting them under the control of NDE. LR 180 authorized Withem to conduct interim studies on reorganization and finance following defeat of 662 in November.

1987-88: Sullivan lobbyist. NRCSA Notes started. Members: Stehlik, Shaughnessy, Watkins, Burkey, Eberhart, Ferguson, Gannon, Jantzen, Fagot, Morgan, Finley, Havelka. Key issues: LB 940, coming out of LR 180 studies revitalized county reorganization committees and introduced the concept of affiliation. Sunsets non-resident tuition. LB 916 restored \$13 million in state aid and provided for a study committee on state aid. This ultimately resulted in LB 1059. Another issue was \$17 million to replace railroad money lost via court decision. Also labor day start for schools. Also early retirement bill which passed.

1988-89: Sullivan resigned in December and Larry Ruth and Bill Mueller hired. Key Issues: affiliation bill and open enrollment. Teacher bonus bill (LB 89) was key issue. Sunset on state in Jan. 1991. Members: Stehlik, Shaughnessy, Watkins, Burkey, Eberhart, Ferguson, Gannon, Jantzen, Fagot, Morgan, Finley, Havelka.

1989-90: Mueller and Ruth, lobbyists. Membrs: Stehlik, Shaughnessy, Watkins, Burkey, Eberhart, Ferguson, Gannon, Jantzen, Fagot, Morgan, Finley, Havelka. Key issues were affiliation bill which passed and a referendum effort failed. LB 1059 which passed and was upheld in November, 1990 vote. NRCSA efforts in the fall to defeat 2% lid and uphold 1059. Both succeeded. Open enrollment law amended to provide for state reimbursement.

1990-91: Members: Stehlik, Shaughnessy, Watkins, Burkey, Eberhart, Ferguson, Gannon, Jantzen, Fagot, Morgan, Finley, Havelka. Mueller and Ruth lobbyists.

Membership Data

Nov. 1979 – first 8 members

Nov. 1980 – 51 Members

Nov. 1981 – 77 members

Nov. 1982 – 86 members. School memberships authorized in April, 1983.

Nov. 1983 – first year of school memberships. Reported as 250 members representing over 100 schools.

Nov. 1984 – Reported as 359 members in over 100 schools

Nov. 1985 – 77 individual members, 48 schools.

Nov. 1986 – 78 individual, 68 schools.

Nov. 1987 – 95 individual, 90 school. Affiliate membership at no cost began in spring of 1988.

Nov. 1988 – No fall report. January, 1989, membership of 91 individual, 108 schools, 32 affiliates.

Nov. 1989 – No fall report. January, 1990, membership of 53 individual and 147 schools. 55 affiliates.

Nov. 1990 – Membership of 26 individual and 167 schools. 30 affiliates.

Finances

Nov. 1980 -- \$10 dues; Balance reported of \$319.56 and the treasurer authorized to pay bills as funds allowed.

Aug. 1981 – \$12 dues; Balance of \$520.60.

Nov. 1982 – \$25 dues; Balance of \$2,323.01.

Nov. 1983 – Dues of \$25 and \$100; Balance of 7,892.27.

Nov. 1984 – Dues of \$25 and \$100; Balance of \$13,615.04.

Nov. 1985 – Dues of \$25 and \$100; \$17,460.30.

Nov. 1986 – Dues of \$50 and \$200; Balance of \$19,099.53.

Nov. 1987 – Dues of \$50 and \$200; Balance of \$24,758.56.

Nov. 1988 – Dues of \$50 and \$200; Balance of \$22,185.34.

Nov. 1989 – Dues of \$100 and \$200; Balance of \$22,220.79.

The July, 1989 balance had been \$205.91. In November, the Executive Committee adopted a budget calling for \$60,644.93 in revenues and \$64,600.00 in expenditures, anticipating a deficit of about \$3,000.00. Actual revenues for the 89-90 year were \$76,578.58 and expenditures were \$61,821.70, as of May, 1990, leaving a balance of about \$14,000.00. An actual ending balance of \$13,686.79 was recorded.

Nov. 1990 – Dues of \$150 and \$200. No November balance presented. Budget for the year is \$91,786.79 in revenues and \$84,175.00 in expenditures.

Constitutions

March 18, 1980 – Initial draft of Constitution put together at a meeting at the Kearney Ramada. A letter from Dwain Myers addressed to the “steering committee” on March 5 indicated that Jim Ossian had volunteered to be the writer. Members of the steering committee unknown, but likely to have included Myers, Finley, Al Nelson, then serving as temporary chairman, and Ossian. Others who attended the Jan. 23 meeting when the steering committee was formed included: Jim Breazeale (Venango), Curtis Norris (Ravenna), Mike Ough (Kenesaw), Jim Allen (Meridian), Bill Schnoor (Coleridge), Darrell Montgomery (Humboldt), Dean Curtis (Emerson-Hubbard), Barry Goddard (Weeping Water), Gary Oxley (Nemaha Valley), Eugene Dirkschneider (Doniphan), and Orwin White (Adams Central).

The March draft did not name the organization, but described it as “an independent organization of administrators of small schools in Nebraska.” The general purpose was to “foster the general welfare of the small Class II, II, and VI school districts of the State of Nebraska through

cooperation with other organizations.” Five specific purposes were listed: to provide a direct voice in legislative matters affecting small schools; to promote active involvement of small schools in the policies and programs of NASA, NSSBA, NSAA, and NSEA; to develop liaison with the State Department of Education concerning small school problems and solutions; to provide in-service programs designed specifically for small schools such as a “Small Schools Conference”; to provide a forum for the discussion of contemporary issues.

Structure of the organization was regional with the rationale for a regional model being “that the emphasis is placed on allowing maximum participation of the membership.” At the top of the model was “district organization” linked through the “Board of Directors” to committees on legislative and resolutions, membership, public relations, basically along athletic conference lines. Each district was to elect a chairman, vice chairman and secretary and two members to serve on the Board of Directors. The Board of Directors would have policy-making and related powers and select a chairman, vice chairman and secretary to carry out the Boards functions. The Board was also to establish committees, but each district was to have two representatives on all committees. The draft included suggestions that the Board of Directors and Committee members serve two years terms and that no one be allowed to hold more than one position in the association in order to get greater participation of the membership.

Following the March 18 meeting a “first draft” was written expanding on the ideas in the initial draft. This draft identified the organization as the Nebraska Rural Community Schools Association. The general purpose statement was to “foster the general welfare of rural community school districts”. Specific purposes were:

1. To provide a voice, programs, or direct influence in those specific concerns of smaller schools which cannot be fulfilled directly at times by other organizations who serve all sizes of schools. It is recognized that educational problems may have many similarities in all schools, but solutions are many times different and should be approached collectively by a specific group from time to time.
2. To provide when necessary a direct voice in legislative matters affecting schools.
3. To promote active involvement of rural community based schools in the policies and programs of NASA, NCSA, NSSBA, NSAA, and NSEA.
4. To develop liaison with the State Department of Education concerning member school problems and solutions.
5. To provide in-service programs designed specifically for member schools such as the “Small Schools Conference”.
6. To provide a forum for the discussion of contemporary issues.

The structure was based on 7 regional groups “who have common affiliation and natural tendencies to work together.” The concept was to tie together regions based on conference or ESU ties. “Regional groups should provide closer, easier access to common meeting sites and times which enable small school administrators to participate on their limited time availability. For designated purposes of a statewide organization to serve the collective intent of the regional groups acting together, a representation from these groups shall be selected to direct the statewide Nebraska Rural Community Schools Association. Impetus of direction, scope and appropriate actions shall originate and be controlled by the regional groups.

Each region was to select its own officers and organize and conduct its own meetings. Each region as to select 2 members to the Board of Directors and two members for each standing committee or special committee of NRCSA. Terms were limited to two years with staggered elections. The Board was given general policy-making and related powers, but was limited by a clause which said "In the event that direction or action is required before the next general membership meeting, the Board may act by two-thirds vote of its members and then it shall present a future direction proposal at the next general membership meeting. Board officers were to serve for one year and were not to be filled consecutively by the same person. They included a chairman, vice chairman, secretary-treasurer, and communications officer. The Board was authorized to create standing and special committees with the leadership of these to come from the non-officer members of the Board.

Three general membership meetings annually were specified. The first meeting and the regional meetings to elect representatives was to be held during Administrator Days, the second in conjunction with the NASA-NSSBA fall meeting and the third meeting was to be held in March or April in North Platte.

Membership was opened to administrators and members of Boards in K-12 or 7-12 school districts "who consider themselves as rural community school districts." Dues-paying members were allowed to vote at all regional and general membership meetings and on all proposals. Dues were to cover the cost of regional and state level meetings and registration and other fees were to be avoided. Special assessments could only be made by 2/3 vote of the general membership.

The Constitution could be amended by a majority vote at the general membership meeting if the proposed amendment had been provided to the membership 30 days in advance, or by 3/4 vote of the general membership if no advance notice of the amendment had been given. By-laws could be amended by a majority at a general membership meeting or by a total majority vote at the regional meetings.

By-laws called for \$10 annual dues, restricted members to one office either regional or statewide except the members of the Board of Directors could hold offices on the Board, named two standing committees, In-Service and Liaison with the State Department of Education and other Education Associations, named an audit committee and identified the counties in each region. These included:

- I. Western: Sioux, Dawes, Sheridan, Box Butte, Scottsbluff, Morrill, Garden, Banner, Kimball, Cheyenne, and Deuel.
- II. Sandhills: Cherry, Grant, Hooker, Thomas, Arthur, McPherson, Keith, Lincoln, Perkins, Chase, Hayes, Frontier, Dundy, Hitchcock, and Red Willow.
- III. Central: Blain, Loup, Garfield, Custer, Valley, Sherman, Dawson, Buffalo, Gosper, Phelps, Kearney, Furnas, Harlan and Franklin.
- IV. Loup, Wheeler, Greeley, Nance, Howard, Merrick, Hall, Adams, Clay, Webster and Nuckolls.
- V. Northeast: Keya Paha, Brown, Rock, Boyd, Holt, Knox, Cedar, Dixon, Dakota, Antelope, Pierce, Wayne, Thurston, Boone, Madison, Stanton, Cuming, Burt, Platte, Colfax, Dodge, Washington and Douglas.

- VI. East: Polk, Butler, Saunders, York, Seward, Lancaster, Fillmore and Saline.
- VII. Southeast: Sarpy, Cass, Otoe, Thayer, Jefferson, Gage, Johnson, Nemaha, Pawnee and Richardson.

The Constitution was adopted at a general membership meeting on May 6, 1980, at the Circle C Motel in North Platte. Regional reps were to be chosen in August. These were:

- I. W.D Brawner, Dix.
- II. Stan Kravig, Palisade, Wayne Ferguson, Stapleton.
- III. Gary Fisher, Hildreth, Andy Hansen, Litchfield.
- IV. Frank Shaughnessy, Trumbull, Mike Ough, Kenesaw.
- V. Pete Delgado, Keya Paha.
- VI. Don Pieper, Fairmont.
- VII. Jim Ossian, Tecumseh, Al Nelson, Pawnee City.

Board officers selected were: Nelson, President, Delgado, Vice President, John Brown, Hayes Center, Secretary-Treasurer, and Ossian, Communications.

Constitution Changes.

Aug 5, 1981: Motion to override the constitution for one year to elect officers on a statewide basis. Motion to pay the secretary-treasurer \$50 per year. Both passed.

Mar. 27, 1981: Dues changed to \$12 per year.

August 1982: Dues increased to \$25 per year. Again a statewide selection of officers was held, but only two were chosen: Frank Shaughnessy, Pres., and Stan Kravig, ST.

Nov. 10, 1982: Formation of a Legislative Committee under John Brown of Hayes Center.

April 7, 1983: The minutes reported that “The existing by-laws of the Association are outdated and unused; thus a revision and update are needed. It was moved and seconded that a committee be formed for this purpose as well as to work on a possible name change and a change in the structure of the executive committee.” Members were Shaughnessy, Kravig, Allen, Myers, Rasmussen, Finley and Fisher. Meeting to do this set for May 2 in Kearney.

Aug. 5, 1983: The constitutional changes were adopted by the organization. These included new statewide officers: president, president-elect, secretary-treasurer and past president. These four plus three district representatives comprised the governing body of the organization, the Executive Committee. District reps were: Eastern (east of Highway 14), Central (Between H14 and H83), and Western (west of H83). The district reps were to serve for three years. Those chosen in 1983 had staggered terms: Eastern (3 years), Central (2 years), and Western (1 year). The three district reps also chaired the three standing committees: Legislative, Teacher-Administrator Training, and Liaison. Additional purposes of the organization included recognizing educational leaders and quality programs in small schools, working with the Rural Education Center, and working with Nebraska teacher-training institutions to promote better

teaching. Three statewide meetings were specified: August in conjunction with Administrator Days, fall in conjunction with the NASB-NASA Fall Convention, and one in the spring. Two types of were defined: individual (\$25) and school or ESU membership (\$100). School membership entitled all administrators and Board members to act as members and receive NRCSA mailings. Schools received 2 votes as school members and no school or ESU could have more than 2 voting individual members. The membership year was set from Sept. 1 to Aug. 31.

April 12, 1984: Membership expressed concern about having a simple majority approve resolution and legislative positions and on the one vote for individual members and two votes for school members.

August 3, 1984: Constitutional amendments based on the April concerns were presented. Voting: each individual member entitled to one vote; school members had two votes, one administrative, one Board vote. Legislative recommendations and position statements required 2/3 vote. The Executive Committee was empowered to take positions when time constraints required and communicate these to the general membership as soon as feasible. Only the Executive Committee or its spokesman could communicate an official position.

April 17, 1985: Following the 1985 Spring Conference the Executive Committee made plans for further amendments to the Constitution. These were adopted at the Aug. 9, 1985 meeting.

The preamble now identified the group as an “organization of administrators and board members serving rural community school districts.” The structure called for “a statewide structure with an at-large membership”. The regional structure was completely gone. Specific purposes were edited and incorporated the original six in revised form, plus four adopted in 1983. A three-year term for the Secretary-Treasurer was identified with a two-term limit on that office. A procedure for filling vacancies in which the president-elect would fill the presidency and the last election’s runner-up would fill the office of PE. The Executive Committee was authorized to fill other offices and could fill the offices of Pres. And PE if those offices could not be filled by the constitutional methods. Committees were limited to Legislative and Liaison and the EC was authorized to form special committees for a period not to exceed two years. New by-laws included a stipend of \$300 per year for the secretary treasurer and reimbursement of the EC members for specific expenses. The new constitution began in effect for 1985-86.

Feb. 4, 1988: As a revenue-raising measure, the EC approved a plan to develop affiliate or associate members. These were businesses who were given free memberships for 1987-88, including the right to display at the convention, and were to pay \$75 in 1988-89 with half the money going to Sullivan-Arthur and half to NRCSA.

April 27, 1988: The EC decided to incorporate as a non-profit organization as the revenue of the association was increasing and concerns were raised about the tax liability. Havelka was appointed to handle this.

November 9, 1988: Havelka advised the committee that non-profit status and incorporation required the adoption of corporate by-laws and amendments to the constitution would be required to bring the corporate by-laws and constitution into conjunction. Corporate by-laws

included a requirement for notice of general membership meetings, a procedure for the general membership to establish dues annually, reducing to one standing committee (Legislative) setting the terms of officers from Aug. 1 to July 31, outlining strict procedures for the election of officers, allowing the Secretary-Treasurer to serve successive terms, limiting district representatives to two consecutive terms, authorizing the executive committee to make appointments to fill vacancies, and requiring the EC to meet at least three times per year with a majority of members as a quorum, and allowing the corporate by-laws to be amended or repealed and any meeting of the EC. The new corporate by-laws were adopted Dec. 20, 1988.

March 22, 1989: The new Constitution, in line with the corporate by-laws, was adopted. New purpose statements were added: "To promote the general advancement of education": "To have all other purposes and do any and all other acts not prohibited by the Nebraska Non-Profit Corporation Act or any other laws which the Executive Committee or the members of the organization deem appropriate." In addition to the changes to bring the Constitution into conformity with the corporate by-laws, the Constitution outlined enlarged duties for the EC, including: appointing committees, planning programs and conferences, appointing representatives to work with other state educational organizations, developing strategies to meet the purposes of the organization, approving budgets, paying bills and meeting other financial needs of the organization, selecting and hiring a lobbyist and such other agents as may be required.

Another expansion of power allowed the Legislative Committee to review legislation and determine the official position of the organization on specific bills. As a check on this power any member of the EC could request that the entire EC review the position of the Legislative Committee and the EC could amend the organization's position. Further, any general member could initiate a petition to change the organization's position. The petition required the signature of 5% of the organization's voters (one per individual member, two per school) and the position would then be put to a mail vote of the organization's membership. A majority vote would settle the matter. Position statements on non-legislative items could be developed by the EC and the EC could authorize testimony on behalf of its position. Members could petition in an identical procedure as on legislative positions to have these positions amended. These changes arose primarily over two issues, the organization's opposition to open enrollment legislation in the 1989 session and its testimony with regard to the new proposed Rule 10. Some members felt that the EC and officers had too much latitude to determine and communicate the organization's position, others felt that the leadership had to have the ability to react rapidly to changing legislative situations.

In addition to the Constitutional changes, members were sent a mail ballot on a by-law change and a proposal to restructure dues. The change in the by-laws set the ST's stipend at \$600 and allowed a maximum of \$1000 to compensate secretarial staff for convention and other work. The dues change arose out of a desire to increase revenue and equalize the dues burden among schools. Current dues were \$50 for individual members and \$200 for school members. The difference in voting power did not reflect the dues cost difference. The new proposal would do away with individual dues over three years on the following scale: 1989-90 dues of \$100 and \$200; 1990-91 dues of \$150 and \$200; 1991-92 dues of \$200 with all members being institutional members.

Conventions:

1980—Aug. 6, 1980, at the Kearney Ramada. Afternoon session the day prior to the beginning of Administrator Days. Program included a noon luncheon and a panel discussion, “The Role of the Service Unit”, chaired by Mike Ough, Supt., Kenesaw. Business meeting, a round table discussion moderated by Dwain Myers, Supt., Southeast Consolidated, and Board of Directors organizational meeting.

1981—Mar.27, 1981, at I-80 Holiday Inn in Grand Island. Keynote speaker was Dr. Anne Campbell, Commissioner of Education. Guest speakers included Dr. Roger Baskerville, Supt., Lohrville, Iowa, Community Schools: “Toward Community Growth—A Career Education Model”, and Keith Erickson, Jim Libis, Northwest Eara Multi-District, Lemmon, S.D., “An Educational Program Delivery System.” Session topics included legislative concerns panel with Sen. Rex Haberman, Sen. Wiley Remmers, and Bob Peterson, NCSA Executive Secretary, and negotiations session with attorney John Higgins of Grand Island.

1982—April 1, 1982, at Ft. Kearney Inn, Kearney. Keynote: Dr. Howard Bruner, Professor of Education, Colorado State University. “3M’s—Motivation, Momentum, Morale.” Luncheon speaker: Dr. Rosalie Farley, Director, Nebraska Rural Education Project, UNL; guest speaker: C.L. Stiverson, Regional Field Coordinator, Colorado Department of Education, “An Alternative Calendar—The Four-Day Week”. Topics included an alternative school calendar panel discussion with Stiverson, Dean Bergman, NDE, and Quentin Kravig, Karvel Public Schools, Karvel Colo., use of LP gas, investments, and legislation.

1983—April 7-8, at Ft. Kearney Inn. Theme: “Meeting the Challenge of Rural Education”. Keynote: Russell Hoppner, Supt., Hampton Public Schools. Luncheon speaker: Dr. Allan Hansen, Administrator of ESU #2, Fremont, on the Rural Education Association. Other speakers included: Dr. Jim O’Hanlan, Dean, Teacher’s College, UNL, and Dr. Leonard Skov, Dean, Department of Education, KSG, ‘Role of Teacher Colleges in the 80s’, Dr. G. Kent Stewart, Professor of School Administration, Kansas State University, “Sharpening your management skills”, Dr. Gerald D. Bailey, Professor of Curriculum and Instruction, KSU, “Teacher Self-assessment for Instructional Effectiveness”, Roy Brubacher, Colorado Assistant Commissioner of Education and President, Rural Education Association. Panel discussions included “Planning for Effective Inservice in Small Schools by Drs. Stewart & Bailey, the possibility of a rural education center in Nebraska, Dr. Jim Ossian on “Negotiations strategies for the Small District”, “Role of the Service Units in Nebraska by Rod Smith, ESU #11, Gil Feis, ESU #9, and Bill Kelley, ESU #14. Other topics included effective lobbying and a four-day school update. NRCSA Distinguished Service Award to Max Ingram, Supt., Bartley.

1984—April 12/13, 1984 at Kearney Ramada. Theme: “Rural & Small Schools—Great Places to Learn.” Keynote: Dick Kimbrough, Director of Communications, Doane College, “Values of Rural Education”, Luncheon: Dr. Roger Hanson, CRESS Director, and Evelyn Lavaty, NDE. Other speakers: Dr. Tom Moriarty, Professor of Educational Administration, University of South Dakota, Vermillion, “State Education Policies, Boon or Doggle, John Recknor, “Successful and Legal Teacher Termination”, Friday Luncheon: Sen. Tom Vickers, Education Committee Chairman. Select-a-session topics included positive staff evaluation, administrative uses of the

micro-computer, assisting rural schools achieve quality—the college’s role, enhancing rural learning with flexible time scheduling, ag in the classroom project, cooperative sharing of educational programs, how to plan for curriculum development in the rural school setting, gifted programs in the rural school, stress in the rural school, alternative approaches to educational programs in rural schools, staff development—an important concern in the small school. NRCSA Distinguished Service Award was scheduled to be given to Dr. Rosalie Farley of UNL. However, she did not attend the convention and the award was not given.

1985—Mar. 13-14, 1985, Kearney Ramada. Theme “Rural Community Schools—Unique Opportunities for Children.” Keynote: Dr. Alan Peshkin, Professor of Education, University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana. “The Nature of Rural Schools and Their Communities”; Luncheon: Daryl Hobbs, Director of Office of Social and Economic Data Analysis, U. of Missouri, Columbia, “Opportunities for Involving the School in the Community and the Community in the School”; Dr. Joe E. Lutjeharms, Commissioner of Education; General: Jim Gessford, John Recknor, “Board’s Role in Hiring and Termination of Certified Staff”. Sessions: Telecommunications and networking, effective schools, NSAA—role and function, Project Innovate Curriculum. Activities—Do they interfere with the educational process, block scheduling, Chapters 14 and 15, developing policies on teacher evaluation, non-certificated staff hiring, evaluation and termination, and “Rural Education Project” by Paul Nachtigal, Director Rural Education Project. Mid-Continent Regional Educational Laboratory, Denver.

1986—March 20-21, 1986, Kearney Ramada. Theme: “Rural Schools—A Place to Grow.” Keynote: Dr. Joseph Scherer, Associate Executive Director, American Association of School Administrators, “Rural America: Country by Day, City by Night.” Other speakers: Dr. James Jess, Supt., GAL Community School, Latimer, Iowa and national advisor to People United for Rural Education (PURE). Dr. Jerry Horn, Professor of Curriculum and Instruction, KSU, and president of the Rural Education Association, “The Rural Education Association”, Dr. Joe E. Lutjeharms, Commissioner of Education, “Relevant Issues in Education.” Topics included: four-day school week, marketing your school, independent study high school telelanguage program, cooperation without reorganization, the school administrator as legislative lobbyist, insurance bidding, negotiations, teacher termination, administrative contracts.

1987—March 26-27, 1987, Kearney Ramada. Theme: “It’s a Small School World”. Keynote: Charles P. “Chuck” Schroeder, Vice President of University of Nebraska Foundation, “Don’t Let Your Schoolin’ Interfere with your Education”. Other speakers: Bernie Saggau, Executive Secretary, Iowa High School Athletic Association, “Sometimes You Don’t Know When You Are Well Off”, Dr. Joe Lutjeharms. Select-a-sessions included: Dr. Paul Kennedy, Professor of Educational Administration UNO, on effective school board meetings and the board’s role in personnel functions, a demonstration from TI-IN Network on interactive instructional satellite technology, a mock termination hearing, mediated foreign language, alternative instructional delivery systems, effective legislative lobbying, rights and responsibilities of the press, cooperative activity programs, insurance bidding, and self-evaluation for school district planning.

1988—March 24-25, 1988, Kearney Ramada. Keynote: Dr. Jonathan P. Sher, President of Rural Education and Development, Inc., Chatham County, N.C., “Heavy Muddle: The Controversy

Over Rural High Schools in Nebraska.” Other speakers: Dr. Joe Lutjeharms, Sen. Ron Withem, Dr. Ronald Roskens, President, University of Nebraska, Lincoln. Select-a-session topics: Why do we keep forcing the large school model on small schools, how to implement writing across the curriculum, coping with staff and/or student deaths, an AIDS victim in my community, creative leadership, the Oakland-Craig experience, business enterprises in schools, effective schools model, mini-sessions, satellite transmitted academic courses, discrimination, AIDS. Liability issues and insurance, asbestos.

1989—Mar. 22-23, 1989, Kearney Ramada. Keynote: Dr. Howard Bruner, Professor, Colorado State University. Other speakers: Mayor Bill Harris of Lincoln, Dr. Joe Lutjeharms, James Monahan, Chairman, State Board of Education, Sen. J. James Exon. Session topics included: Building positive self esteem, Nebraska’s regional high school system, Sargent alumni and community scholarship, a rural school for the year 2020, cooperative ventures in education, what does restructuring mean, HIV-ARC-AIDS, effective board meetings, parental choice, governor’s school finance committee, a revisit to the Nebraska four-day school week, mini-sessions, recent initiatives if the State Board of Education, pertinent legal issues in education, corporal punishment, recent court developments, discrimination in the public schools, death in school settings, positive values-moral literacy, Chapter I program improvement legislation, schools in the stars.

1990—Mar. 22-23, 1990, Kearney, Ramada. Keynote: Jim Huge, Supt., Cheery Creek School District, Denver, Colo., “The Joy of Achievement”. Other speakers: Gov. Kay Orr, Dr. Joe Lutjeharm “Summit Goals and Nebraska’s 91st Legislative Session: Where Do They Direct Us?”, Bob Devaney, UNL Athletic Director. Topics: Unlocking the school climate puzzle, school finance issues, achieving the district mission or vision, superintendent-board relations, regional course sharing in education, early childhood education, elementary counseling, long-distance learning, career counseling, turning stress into success, rural school and community development, Beaver County interactive TV Cooperative, accessibility studies, mini-sessions, certificated employee termination and reduction in force issues, special education due process issues, school district reorganization, the old school building—renovate or evacuate, positive values-moral literacy, tired or retired. Implementing big school ideas in small schools, interactive educational television.

AWARDS

In 1983 and 1984, NRCSA Distinguished Service Awards were planned.

1983—Max Ingram, Supt. Bartley

1984—Dr. Rosalie Farley, UNL. Award not presented.

The awards program was re-established in 1988. Given were Outstanding Service awards to a teacher, a school board member, and an administrator.

1998—Gurn Curry, Ponca, Board

Bonnie Moody, Trumbull, Teacher

Frank Shaughnessy, Trumbull, Superintendent

1989—Ira “Dick” Paisley, Garden County, Board.
Christy L. Wegner, ESU #11, Teacher
Eugene “Hopy” McCue, Alma, Superintendent

1990—Dr. Roger Meyer, Centennial, Board.
Gary Goodchuck, Waunetta, Secondary Teacher.
Virginia Collins, Orleans, Elementary Teacher.
Jim Tenopir, Cambridge, Supt.

NEBCRESS

The impetus for NEBCRESS came from Frank Shaughnessy, then NRCSA president, who wrote to Dr. Leonard Skov, Dean of the School of Education at KSC, on Dec 22, 1982. Shaughnessy had attended a rural education conference in Kansas and was impressed with the rural education center at Kansas State University and its activities. Shaughnessy identified KSC as the logical place for such a center. “I feel strongly that with proper leadership from a school such as yours, a program of inservice and other help to rural schools in Nebraska would significantly benefit boys and girls.” Working with Gil Feis, director of ESU #9, FS invited Skov to area Superintendent’s meetings in January, 1983.

By July 1983, Skov had prepared a plan to present to the State College Board of Trustees. His proposal noted that 262 of the 344 Class II-VI and larger Class I districts in the states had enrollments of less than 500. These schools were identified as small and rural. He wrote: “Two conditions are apparent: (1) The rural and small schools of Nebraska are a very real subset of all schools in Nebraska; (2) The rural and small schools are here, are the sources of educational opportunities for thousands of students, and deserve to be the best schools they can.” Skov proposed 10 functions for the Center for Rural Education and Small Schools (CRESS), including coordinating research activities, developing strategies and delivery systems, disseminating information, maintaining cooperative relationships with the state, regional, and national agencies, providing a forum for discussion, coordinating pre-service and in-service programs, establishing an advocacy role for rural schools, providing leadership for workshops and seminars, serving as a brokerage for nationally developed curricular programs, and providing consultative services for rural schools. He proposed that CRESS be developed in cooperation with NRCSA with a 1/4-time director and in-kind services from the college.

On July 22, 1983, the Board of Trustees approved. Functions were identified as: (1) To provide consultative services for rural and small schools in the areas of curriculum revision and development, in-service, cooperative inter-district joint ventures, and other services upon request; (2) To provide leadership for workshops and seminars that lead to more effective educational practices in small schools; (3) To serve as a broker for identifying the resources necessary to address the problems of small schools—resources to include both human and fiscal elements; (4) To coordinate and disseminate information about rural education and small schools; (5) To coordinate and conduct research and development activities that address the unique needs of rural and small schools; (6) To provide a forum for the discussion of issues, practices and problems confronting rural and small schools.

Dr. Roger Hanson of the KSC Ed. Ad. Department was named director. An advisory committee was appointed including 15 voting members who were administrators of rural schools in Nebraska and 5 ex-officio members representing ESU's, NDE, and McRel. The first advisory board members were: Bob Mandeville, Mullen; Kenneth Babcock, Bassett; Cecil Fields, Leigh; Richard Finley, Palisade Stratton; Mike Ough, Kenesaw; Dick Chochon, Palmer; Wayne Ferguson, Stapleton; Gene Panning, Marquette; Dean Stewart, Bruning; Keith McMann, Oxford; Larry Lindquist, Polke; Jerry Ehlers, Ainsworth; Frank Shaughnessy, Trumbull; Jim Allen, Meridian; Russ Hoppner, Hampton; Alan Hansen, ESU #3; William Kelly, ESU #14; Gil Feis, ESU #9; Evelyn Lavaty, NDE; and Paul Nachtigal, McRel. The inaugural meeting for CRESS was held at KSC on October 24, 1983. Guest included Dr. Joe Lutjeharms, Commissioner of Education, and Dr. Dan McPherson, chairman of the EDAD Department at KSC, and Paul Nachtigal, representative from the Mid-Continent Regional Laboratory (McREL). Shaughnessy was elected Advisory Committee Chairman and Finley, Vice Chairman.

Shortly thereafter the first (undated) issue of the CRESS newsletter was published. It reported on the Project Innovative Curriculum (PIC) project involving Doniphan, Giltner, Harvard, Kenesaw and Trumbull, reported on the upcoming Spring Conference of NRCSA in March 1984, ESU staff development programs, the U.S. Dept. of Education national conference on rural education, and idea "grab bag" for rural schools, and a research report on "The Status of Curriculum Coordination Between Class I and Class VI School Districts in Nebraska." During the 84-85 school year, Jane Ziebarth Buckley, had been named Information Specialist for CRESS and Dave Melick was serving in CRESS as an EDAD Graduate Assistant.

In 1985, due to a name conflict with another organization, the Center was re-named NEBCRESS. In March 1986, Dr. Hanson resigned to take the superintendency at Silver Lake Public Schools and Dr. Leonary Gregory was named director. That year (86-87) the pattern began of having the NRCSA president serve as the Advisory Board chair. Duane Stehlik served in 86-87; Richard Finley in 87-88; Jim Havelka in 88-89. NRCSA has continued to provide support to NEBCRESS, primarily in terms of financing for the newsletter.

SHER STUDY

Study was released in March, 1988. Called: "Class Dismissed: Examining Nebraska's Rural Education Debate." Author: Dr. Jonathon Sher, President, Rural Education and Development, Inc., of Catham County, N.C. Recognized as an expert on education and economic development. Previously Dean for Research and Graduate Studies at North Carolina State University School of Education. Previous work included Education in Rural America: A reassessment of Conventional Wisdom (Heavy Meddle).

Sher emphasized that Nebraska had high test scores, excellent dropout rates, and a high percent of graduates going onto further education, and was accomplishing this with teachers who are less well-credentialed, below average per capita income, low state aid and a ranking of 35th in overall per pupil expenditures. Spoke of this as Nebraska's "educational magic."

"The irony is that, viewed from within the state, Nebraska education seems to be in trouble, in turmoil and in transition toward an uncertain future. Far from projecting the aura of celebration

and the boundless optimism an outsider might expect from such a successful state, the state's education community appears to be both embattled and embittered.”

Sher's goal was that the report will help preserve and improve Nebraska's rural schools. He noted that factual data on educational performance in Nebraska was in short supply. Most data was anecdotal. He noted that data showing a size/quality relationship was virtually non-existent. He reviewed the analysis of school quality based on inputs and noted that no data supported greater inputs as determinants of quality. Addressed specific inputs of teacher credentialing and course offerings. Also looked at “through-puts”, the environmental and process factors that promote educational excellence. Noted that small schools could meet the process factors of effective schools. In looking at outputs, he noted that little data was available. “If ignorance is bliss, Nebraskans should feel positively ecstatic about what is known about the educational performance of their children.” Noted low dropout rates in rural districts as compared to larger ones.

“Two conclusions are clear. First, in comparison with other states, Nebraskans have ample reason to be proud of all their schools, urban and rural, large and small. Second, within Nebraska, an analysis of educational input, through-put, and output information reveals that there is neither hard evidence, nor a persuasive argument, supporting the contention that educational quality is a function of size.”

Next took on the issues of economy and efficiency. Key question is “efficient at doing what”. Pointed out that necessary costs. Such as transportation, and the effects of sparsity made rural education more costly, but not necessarily less efficient. Noted that personal attention to students and direct participation were factors to consider in gauging cost-effectiveness.

Speculating on the future of education in Nebraska. Sher noted that it was losing ground since spending has not kept pace with the rest of the country and that divisions within the education community are a key factor. “This negative result is avoidable if, and only if, Nebraska's education community starts pulling together – instead of allowing itself to be pulled apart.”

He noted the economic and demographic changes in Nebraska in the past generation. The state is experiencing rural depopulation and urban growth, agricultural decline and non-farm economic development, and a movement away from a traditional agrarian culture and toward a more cosmopolitan way of life. This has resulted in a rural/urban split in the legislature on education funding and other key issues. One result is little sense of interdependence and mutual support between rural and urban interests. Sher urged both rural and urban groups to work together. “The simple truth is that no matter who ‘wins’ the on-going urban/rural fight, the state's children and the state's economy will be the ultimate losers.”

School finance. Sher noted that a major source of the tension between urban and rural interests is the high reliance on local property taxes to finance schools. He felt the system needed to be overhauled in terms of fairness and in terms of a new financial commitment to educational excellence. Noted that between 1983 and 1986 spending throughout the nation on education increased dramatically, but in Nebraska state aid dropped by 7%.

Sher called for a statewide school evaluation process emphasizing two areas: (1) the extent to which schools actually are behaving in accordance with the research-validated elements of effective schools and positive learning environments and (2) the actual performance of schools on a diverse set of output measures. He called for statewide standards, but not statewide standardization.

Finally, Sher identified rural paths to educational excellence. These included: (1) making the rural community the foundation of the curriculum; (2) pushing to connect rural education and rural economic development in mutually supportive ways; (3) promoting creative methods of individualized small group instruction; (4) making a renewed commitment to strengthen and extend the traditional rural emphasis on “learning by doing”.

Sher noted that urban schools stressed education as preparation for the socio-economic competition students will enter in the larger society. Rural schools put an emphasis on self-employment and cooperating within the community. Thought Nebraska must recapture the sense of interdependence.

“The first challenge for Nebraska’s rural educators is to move beyond old enmities with urban educators and to form a united force capable of securing the major new funding both require to continue along their differing paths to educational excellence. The second challenge is to create convincing visions of the meanings and manifestations of a first-rate rural education. The final challenge is to effectively implement these visions.”

“Nebraska already has the foundation upon which to build the finest rural schools in the nation. However, if this potential is discarded, and rural schools are forced into becoming pale imitations of metropolitan ones, then Nebraska will end up as a state in which ‘geography is destiny’.

“And yet, if the inherent strengths of rural schools are embraced and extended, then Nebraska will end up as a state in which educational equity and rural rejuvenation become more than mere rhetoric. In either case, it is certain that Nebraska will reap precisely what it sows.”

NRCSA History Notes III

CHRONOLOGY

Nov. 6, 1979 – Informal meeting held in Kearney (most likely at Ft. Kearney Inn) to discuss concerns about the status of rural education in the state. Eight Superintendents attended: Al Nelson, Pawnee City; John Brown, Hayes Center; Jim Breazeale, Venango; Wes Moench, Thendord; Bob Mandeville, Mullen; Dick Finley, Palisade; Jim Allen, Meridian; Dwain Meyers, Southeast Consolidated. Invited, but unable to attend were: Gary Oxley, Nemaha Valley; Dean Curtiss, Emerson-Hubbard; Irv Schuler, Sargent; and Pete Delgado, Keya Paha.

Topics included discussion of small school groups in Oregon, Texas, and Iowa. A need was expressed for a group in Nebraska to speak for small schools. Felt that NCSA and NSSBA (now NASB) were not an adequate voice. A vote was taken (8-0) to form a small schools group

separate from existing school groups. Discussion occurred on what constituted a small school; consensus to include schools up to 500 enrollment. Some common concerns were defined, including: the special curriculum problems of small schools, speaking to political issues affecting small schools, survival where consolidation was no longer a viable solution, personnel issues including retirement and teacher housing, discipline issues unique to small schools, Special Education mandates, funding for mandated programs, teacher certification and endorsements.

Decision was made to hold an organizational meeting during the NASA-NSSBA Convention in Lincoln on Nov. 15, 1979. Much discussion occurred with some seeing the new group as a replacement for NCSA and NASA for small schools and others seeing the new group as one that would work with the other groups on common goals and separately on separate goals.

Al Nelson was elected temporary chairman of the group. A committee was formed to plan a small schools conference. It included: Nelson, Breazeale, Brown, Delgado, Oxley, Finley, Allen, Myers, Curtiss, and Schuler. Dwain Myers was made responsible for communications, notices, etc.

Nov. 15 1979—About 30 met at the Nebraska Education Center in Lincoln during the NASA-NSSBA State Convention. General consensus was that ties with the NCSA should not be broken, but there was interest in a small schools conference or convention. This topic was brought up at the NASA Region I and Region IV meetings and NASA President Harold Bennet of McCook asked to have another meeting of small school representatives so that the conference idea could come to the NASA Executive Committee. A meeting was called for Jan.3.

May 6, 1980—First official meeting held at the Circle C Motel in North Platte. Apparently only about 10 people present. Decisions included: setting up a fall conference in Lincoln, winter conference in Kearney, and spring conference in Scottsbluff; accepting the Constitution; deciding to elect officers at the regional representatives meeting Aug. 6 in Kearney. Group voted to send letters to John Prash, then NCSA President, urging the search committee to select the new Executive Secretary from a Nebraska school system; to Justin King arguing that organizations should urge boards to establish their own hiring practices rather than rely on commercial administrative selection services; and to NCSA Resolutions Committee urging restructuring that committee to include 50% representatives of small schools, representatives to include principals regional representation of 5 small school representatives. Concerns for the discussion at the summer meeting included state-aid, Commission of Industrial Relations, lid bill and in-service possibilities.

Aug. 6, 1980—First annual NRCSA convention held. SEE CONVENTION NOTES. Business meeting held in conjunction. Al Nelson as temporary chairman presided. First Executive Board chosen: Region I—W.D. Brawner, Dix; Region II—Stan Kraving, Palisade, Wayne Ferguson, Stapleton; Region III—Gary Fisher, Hildreth, Andrew Hansen Litchfield; Region IV—Frank Shaughnessy, Trumbull, Mike Ough, Kenesaw; Region V—Pete Delgado, Keya Paha; Region VI—Don Pieper, Fairmont; Region VII—Jim Ossian, Tecumseh, Al Nelson, Pawnee City. Among those appointed to committees were Abe Dick, John Brown, Rich Finley, Dwain Myers, and Jim Allen.

Letters were approved to NCSA, NSSBA, and NDE on Special Education urging consistent evaluative criteria, new rules, interpretations, policy provisions required in writing, assessment of penalties and speedy return of evaluation. Letter approved to NSSBA on alternatives to SRI-type selection process. Committee formed to look at possible legislation to change ESU boards from elected to local district appointments. Following the meeting the Executive Board met and elected its officers for 1980-81: Al Nelson, President; Pete Delgado, Vice President; John Brown, Secretary-Treasurer; Jim Ossian, Communications.

Nov. 19, 1980—Annual fall meeting held at Holiday Inn (Northeast) in Lincoln. Dick Finley made the opening address and Jim Ossian's report on the status of the organization included the question: "Grump Group—why the image?" Mrs. Maurice Clark, representing the Association of Nebraska Schools, asked whether NRCSA was willing to merge with that group. The membership indicated no interest in that proposal. A winter conference was planned for January, 1981 in conjunction with Kearney State. A conference committee was formed: Finley, Richard Cameron of Stratton, Wayne Ferguson, Frank Shaughnessy, and John Brown. An alternative idea was a March conference in conjunction with UNL. Finley and Nelson were to study and report back. Reports showed 51 members and \$319.56 in the treasury. A variety of concerns were discussed including: more equitable representation on the CIR, placing the county treasurer's collection fee under the county lid not the local one, control of ESU's by NDE, small school representatives on the NCSA Executive Committee (A note in the minutes said: "It could be concluded that NRCSA is now recognized as a group genuinely interested in quality education and that we can and will work cooperatively towards that goal."), restricted access to administrative positions by NSSBA processes. Other issues included: paying state gas tax for buses, rural education directors for colleges, Class I consolidation (Note: "urge consolidation by consultation and advisement of senators"), the need for an NDE rural education director, student teachers for small schools, and the Teacher Professional Negotiations Act (TPNA). A telephone calling tree was developed.

March 27, 1981—First spring conference held at I-80 Holiday Inn in Grand Island, SEE CONFERENCE NOTES. Business meeting held in conjunction. Planning discussion for summer meeting during Administrator Days in Kearney. A dues change to \$12 per year beginning Sept. 1, 1981, with dues due each Sept.1. Membership reported at 63.

Aug. 5, 1981—Summer conference and business meeting held in Kearney. Balance of \$520 reported. Dr. Anne Campbell, Commissioner of Education spoke on the Chapter II program. NRCSA concerns for 1981-82 included: small schools share of block grant monies, cost reimbursement for state gas taxes, county treasurers' collection fee, the telephone tree, review of Rule 14 by NDE, and payment for regular education transportation. Motions were made to support these concerns. Motion was made to override the Constitution and elect officers on a statewide basis rather than regionally. Elected were: Delgado, President; George Wright (Supt., Norfolk Catholic), Vice-President; John Brown, Secretary-Treasurer; Jim Allen, representative to UNL; Jim Ossian, PR Chairman; and Finley and Dwain Meyers, Legislative Coordinators.

Nov. 11, 1981—Fall meeting at Omaha Holiday Inn. 77 members listed. A winter meeting committee to plan the March conference was appointed: Stan Kravig, chairman; Gene Panning, Marquette; Marvin Schleeman, Culbertson; Wayne Ferguson; Henry Potts, Bladen, Wilber

Brawner, Dix; Jim Allen, Meridian; and Rosalie Farley, UNL. Agenda items for “association reaction” included: exemption for state gasoline tax, county tax collection fees, TPNA, a bill to increase the in-lieu of school land reimbursement, teacher tenure, teacher education, certification, freeholder’s petitions, special education costs, federal and state mandated programs, appointment of ESU boards, consolidation of Class I’s, Christian schools, and the movement for a four-day school week.

INTERIM COMMUNICATIONS

Feb 4, 1982—Alert sent regarding LB 259, the proposed tenure law. Concern was that tenure might be granted too soon. Also concern with LB 709, early graduation for seniors. Also concerns about bills removing restrictions on Christian schools and on requiring a student school board member.

Feb. 18, 1982—Alert on LB 208 which eliminated restrictions on freeholding. Any parent could freehold in if they felt the move would be in the “best educative interest” of the child. This became a major issue in the 1982 session. Eventual compromise reached allowing freeholding only from approved to accredited districts.

Mar. 18, 1982—Alert on LB 816 which absorbed the personal property tax relief payment to schools into state aid. Feared that small schools would lose money.

Mar. 19, 1982—Letter from John Brown to members noting that only 23 people had registered for the spring conference and that only 12 of these were NRCSA members.

April 1, 1982—Spring meeting at the Ft. Kearney Inn in conjunction with the conference. Informational reports were given on energy grants and negotiations. Legislative topics included the school land tax, TPNA, freeholding, personal property tax, etc. A committee was set up to plan the summer meeting. No actions recorded.

Aug. 4 1982—Only two officers were elected: Shaughnessy as President and Kravig as Secretary-Treasurer. Goals for 82-83 included pushing for the 4-day week, a possible law suit over LB 816 dealing with personal property tax relief statements, a resolution requiring the state to fund mandated programs, and communicating with the NSAA re head-to-head football playoffs. Dues were set at \$25. Thereafter, Shaughnessy sent out a strong recruiting letter noting: “The NRCSA is going into its third year of service and has already made an impact on rural education in Nebraska by: (1) speaking to legislative issues affecting rural schools in Nebraska. NRCSA led the fight. With others, to keep LB 208 from emasculating small schools through unrestricted freeholding; supported reimbursement of school land taxes at 143%; worked hard against LB 816; kept members informed through newsletters of the impact of certain bills on rural schools. (2) Keeping NCSA and NASA aware that there are rural schools out there who need support and inservice. (Notice how many more programs for small districts there are the past couple of years?) (3) Developing a spring workshop with issues of concern of rural educators in mind.” The fall membership list showed 86 members.

Nov. 10, 1982—Fall meeting held at the Howard Johnson’s in Omaha. Treasury showed a balance of 2323.01. John Brown was named to head the Legislative Committee. Charter members were: Stehlik, Table Rock; Wayne Ferguson, Crawford; Dick Finley, Palisade/Stratton; Frank Madison, Harrisberg; Bill Reents, Wynot; Dennis Chipman, Sterling; Gary Fisher,

Hildreth; Wilber Brawner, Dix, and Pete Delgado, Keya Paha. Brown was also designated to look into hiring a lobbyist. Topics discussed included personal property tax relief payments, freeholding, Rulles 11 and 14, the four-day week, and the new tenure and professional growth legislation. The group planned to arrange a meeting with the new governor, Robert Kerrey, to make him aware of the organization's goals. Concern was again expressed about NASB's involvement in the selection of Superintendents.

Dec. 22, 1982—A letter from Frank Shaughnessy to Dr. Leonard Skov, Dean of the School of Education at KSC, led to the formation on CRESS. FS's letter noted the success that Kansas State University was having in helping rural schools and noted that Kearney State was the logical school to host a rural education center in Nebraska. Called for a program of in-service and other help to rural schools.

Mar. 4, 1983—FS letter to membership noted that the Executive Committee had engaged NRCSA's first lobbyist—Lloyd McDowell of Lincoln. He had previously been on the NASB staff. Letter also noted KSC's interest in forming a rural education center similar to that at Kansas State. Noted that the National Rural Education Association was seeking a sponsoring organization in Nebraska. Key legislative concerns included: TPNA, early graduation from high school, a bill to close schools with less than 25 students in grades 9-12, and a revision of the non-resident tuition law.

April 7, 1983—Spring meeting at Ft. Kearney Inn in conjunction with Spring convention. Balance of 3987.28. Justin King spoke on the NASB's Superintendent Search service. Key item of business was formation of a committee to revise constitution. SEE CONSTITUTION NOTES. Members included Kravig, Allen, Myers, Gary Rasmussen, Finley and Fisher. Summer meeting planned for Aug. 5, 1983. Discussion occurred on holding the fall meeting in conjunction with NASB/NCSA which groups had expressed a willingness to assist. Annual dues were set at \$25 for individual members and it was moved that there be a school membership at \$100. Such a membership would mean administrators and board members would be considered NRCSA members and be on the mailing lists. Pending the revision of the Constitution, the election of officers was delayed until the summer meeting. Noted that over 100 people attended the conference on the first day.

June 29, 1983—Letter from Secretary-Treasurer Stan Kravig reported that Dr. Skove was taking the idea for a rural Education Center to the State College Board of Trustees in July. His letter and that from Frank Shaughnessy asked for letters of support.

Additional information was presented on the proposed Constitutional changes which brought about the modern NRCSA Constitution. It proposed a President, President-Elect, Secretary-Treasurer and Past President and 3 district representatives to compose the Executive Committee. Three standing committees—legislative, teacher/administrator training and liaison—were to be chaired by district reps. Dues were planned at \$25 individual and \$100 institutional with no institution having more than 2 voting members.

Aug. 5, 1983—Annual spring meeting held. It was reported that the State College Board had approved CRESS and Dr. Roger Hanson was named director. An advisory committee was to be

formed. The proposed Constitutional changes were adopted. New officers were: Shaughnessy, Pres., Jim Allen, Pres-Elect, Kravig, ST. Bob Mandeville, Western Dist., 1 year; Mike Ough, Central Dist., 2 years; Dean Stewart, Eastern Dist., 3 years. Legislative concerns included the Deist case which was a SPED case from Adams Central seeking to clarify the amount schools were responsible for in residential placements, and LB 43, a revision of the open meetings law. The spring convention was planned for April 12 and 13, 1984, at the Kearney Ramada.

Nov. 16, 1983—fall meeting at the Omaha Holiday Inn. Balance of 7887.27 and 250 members representing over 100 schools. Mandeville assigned to head Legislative Committee, Stewart the liaison committee, and Ough heading the teacher/admin training committee. A 20-member CRESS Advisory was appointed. Jan Knight of the Nebraska Energy Office spoke on regulations for energy grants, and Finley reported on Governor Kerrey's Task Force on Education of which he was a member. Much debate and a split vote occurred in NRCSA Resolutions for 1983-84. The key resolution urging that all property in Class I districts become part of a Class II-V district and that Class VIs become K-12 districts was passed 21-17 after two amendments to leave Class VIs alone failed. Other resolutions including amending PPC regulations, placing residential and medical costs for handicapped students on the state, and commending the Governor's Task Force on Education for its recommendations in increasing graduation requirements, core curriculum, increased salaries, a 1080-hour school year and state aid programs (this including a proviso that rural and small schools be given opportunities to share in the incentives and that the unique qualities of rural schools be recognized). And opposing changes to the 7% lid.

April 12, 1984—At the annual meeting accompanying the convention, Sheri Apking was introduced as lobbyist. New officers elected were: Gary Rasmussen, PE, Roseland; Gary Fisher, ST, Hildreth, and Dallas Watkins, Benkleman (Dundy County), Western District Rep. Logo designs were presented and members were urged to testify at the Rule 14, 15 and 21 (certification) hearings in July in Kearney.

Aug. 3, 1984—Summer meeting held in conjunction with Administrator Days in Kearney, Dr. Roger Hanson spoke on CRESS and Jim O'Hanlon spoke on UNL-NRCSA cooperation. Everett Schuler, Sargent, was appointed Central District Representative, replacing Mike Ough who had left Kenesaw for North Bend. Constitutional amendments approved: these gave individual members one vote and school members one administrative and one board vote, requiring a 2/3 vote of the members present at a regular or special meeting on legislative recommendations and position statements and empowered the Executive Committee to take a position and communicate it to the members when feasible. The spring convention was planned for Mar. 13 and 14, 1985.

Oct. 25, 1984—A memo from Fisher noted 359 members representing over 100 schools. Legislative Committee members included Watkins, Stehlik, Dan Jantzen, Lawrence; Gary Rasmussen, Wayne Ferguson, Stapleton; Dale Eberjart, Bartley; Bill Ganon, Kenesaw; Jon Burkey, Grant; and Larry Bartek, Doniphan.

Nov. 14, 1984—Fall meeting at the Omaha Holiday Inn. Treasury was reported at \$13,615.04. Reports were presented by Justin King of NASB and Evelyn Lavaty of NDE on taxes and state aid programs. A legislative calling tree was announced. Reports presented on PIC project and

CRESS. Six resolutions were passed. Topics included: state funding of all mandated programs including those in LB 994, placing all taxable property into Class II-V or VI districts by 1990, placing all counties in ESU's, regulating junior high athletics via NSAA, biennial curriculum offerings, and opposing changes in the lid law, including sunset provisions.

Mar. 13, 1985—spring meeting held in conjunction with convention. Gerald Sughroue made presentation on Rules 14 and 15 and Rule 34, a new rule requiring schools to develop teacher evaluation policies. Shari Apking gave legislative report. Justin King, Dale Siefkes and Martha Fricke reported on state aid plans and the new NASB Rural District Forum. Candidates for President-Elect were Bob Mandeville and Duane Stehlik, Fisher was selected for Secretary Treasurer with no opposition. Bob Reed of Arnold and Pat Osmond of Sandhills Dunning were nominated for Central District representative. Those elected by later mailed ballot were Stehlik, Fisher and Reed. Lengthy discussion on LB 662. A motion to oppose 662 failed, 11-23, and the Legislative Committee urged members to contact then concerning the bill. No position was taken.

April 17, 1985—Executive Committee meeting. Pledged financial support for CRESS newsletter for 85-86. Discussed constitutional revisions to be voted on in August including a 3-year term for the secretary-treasurer and procedures for filling offices due to death or resignation, reducing standing committees to Legislative and Liaison and providing a \$300 stipend for the ST and expense reimbursement for EC members.

Aug. 7, 1985—Executive Committee. Gave Fisher \$100 stipend for 84-85.

Aug. 9, 1985—Breakfast meeting in conjunction with Admin. Days. Balance of \$14,292.74 reported. Constitutional changes adopted. Rasmussen installed as President, Stehlik as PE and Reed as CD rep. Fall meeting set for Nov. 13, 1985.

Sept. 26, 1985—Executive Committee in Kearney. Motion to hire Shari Apking as 85-86 lobbyist: Legislative Committee appointed: Watkins, Stehlik, Jantzen, Rasmussen, Ferguson, Eberhart, Gannon, Burkey. Plans for Nov. 13 meeting made. EC discussed legislative resolutions for 85-86, but no action was taken. A follow-up memo from Fisher noted that the EC proposed no resolutions, but said members could present resolutions at November meeting. Members were urged to serve on NCSA sub-committees and Frank Shaughnessy was recognized as a member of the NCSA Legislative Committee. Noted the change from CRESS to NEBCRESS due to name conflict with national organization.

Nov. 13, 1985—Executive Committee. Discussion of fall meeting and spring convention

Nov. 13, 1985—Regular fall meeting. Reported 475 members, 77 individual and 48 school. Siefkes spoke on LB 662. No resolutions were presented. John Windhusen reported on the NCSA state aid committee which was working to a new state aid formula. Balance at \$17,460.30. Follow-up memo from Fisher noted legislative progress of LB 325, an early retirement bill.

Mar. 19, 1986—Executive Committee meeting. Motion to fill past-presidency with a former president if the immediate past president was not available. Representatives of Class VI's met to discuss common interests with NRCSA. While it was recognized that there were areas of

disagreement, Class Vi's would benefit from NRCSA membership. Key discussion was on the future of the organization. A Mar. 19 letter from PE Stehlik noted: "NRCSA has developed rapidly and matured quickly since the inception of the organization. We are probably at a crossroads now and need to make some deliberate plans as to where we go from here. Accidental growth and direction are not a luxury we can afford." Stehlik analyzed NRCSA's strengths and weaknesses, including, the lack of permanent staff, office space, regular mailings, etc. He attached a proposal from John L Sullivan to provide management services such as office agreement with Sullivan or others for those services, expanding Apking's role as lobbyist, regular legislative mailings, increased dues and actively promoting NRCSA as an alternative for representing Class II, II, and VI schools and ESUs. Sullivan was representing ESUs at the time. No specific actions were taken at the EC meeting of Mar. 19.

Mar. 20, 1986—spring meeting in conjunction with convention. Dr. Jerry Horn, president of the Rural Education Association, spoke on NRCSA being one of the first three state organizations to become an affiliate member of the REA. Spring Conference registration showed 237 individuals. Membership showed 98 individuals and 55 schools and 6 ESUs. Dr. Roger Hanson gave a summary of NEBCRESS activities. Frank Shaughnessy had been selected to chair a committee to look into expanding the role of NEBCRESS. Evelyn Lavaty, NDE Coordinator of Rural Education, reported on McRel activities and cooperative sharing programs in vocational education. Nominees for PE included John Vanderford of Johnson-Brock and Richard Finley of Palisade/Stratton. Fisher elected ST by unanimous ballot. Nominees for Eastern District rep were Russ Hoppner, Hampton, Larry Lindquist, Polk, and Richard Becker, Exeter. Finley and Hoppner were elected by mail ballot.

Mar. 26, 1986—Letter from Ned H. Meier, chair of Class VIs to Rasmussen. He urged combining efforts with NRCSA. "The feeling persists in our minds that there is a major effort in the State Department of Education to force consolidation of all rural schools into large K-12 school districts." He urged NRCSA to become an organization in which both board members and administrators could take an active role.

May 7, 1986—EC meeting. Reviewed three proposals based on Stehlik's earlier recommendation. John L. Sullivan proposed lobbying and office management for an annual fee of \$12,000. Apking proposed to serve as Executive Secretary and lobbyist for \$4400 for 90-day sessions, \$4100 for 60-day sessions and \$200 per month for non-session months. NASB proposed office management at no charge and fees for mailing and other services. Discussion occurred; only action was to hire Shari Apking for months of June-September at \$200 per month to attend legislative hearings and monitor State Board meeting. Also agreed to pay Fisher \$250 for running 85-86 spring conference.

June 4, 1986—The EC interviewed Apking & Sullivan. Motion was made to hire Sullivan-Arthur and Associates as Executive Coordinator, Public Relations Manager and Chief Legislative Engineer for \$12,000 from July 1, 1986 through December 31, 1987, and to raise dues to \$50 (individual) and \$200 (institutional) to meet these costs. A June 17 letter from Stehlik explained: "Your executive Committee feels an expanded role for NRCSA is essential at this time to help enhance and promote the future of rural education. The firm of Sullivan and Arthur will provide us with a continuous Lincoln presence, a research staff, publications,

membership mailings, positive PR concerning rural education, a greatly expanded lobbying effort, a meeting facility and other numerous services.”

Aug. 6, 1986—Executive Committee. Shaughnessy appointed as past president as Rasmussen and Allen no longer employed in education. Stehlik and Fisher sent as delegates to the NREA convention in Little Rock, Ark. Authorized “It’s a Small School World” pin for fall meeting.

Aug. 8, 1986 Membership voted to approve Sullivan-Arthur proposal. Dues increase to \$50 and \$200 approved.

Aug. 28, 1986—Follow up letter from Fisher to members noted that NRCSA had its “best year ever” in 85-86 and noted increased membership, the convention and work with NEBCRESS.

Oct. 9, 1986—EC meeting at KSC. Balance of \$17,920.18 and membership of 49 schools and 56 individuals. Discussion of expectations for Sullivan-Arthur. Agreed to pay \$1600 for mailings of NEBCRESS newsletter. A key discussion issue was Referendum 400, a referendum to repeal LB 662, which was voted on and succeeded at the November election. The group also discussed endorsing an insurance company and Sullivan was directed to look into this.

Nov. 17, 1986—Executive Committee. Fred Schiek and Jack West of Employer’s Mutual Company addressed the group. Sullivan was authorized to negotiate with the company for an endorsement. Reported 68 school and 78 individual memberships. Sullivan reported on his activities with ESU’s. Upcoming legislative concerns included the Ed. Committee chair, consolidation, re-classifying Class III’s and requiring Class II’s to have 35-50 students and allowing a deviation from that for only one year instead of three.

Nov. 17, 1986—Regular meeting. June Remington discussed NCSA legislative proposals including additional state aid. (A special session of the Legislature was about to be called resulting in a reduction of state aid.) Balance reported at \$19,099.53. Fred Hoke, Dale Siefkes and Justin King addressed the group. No legislative resolutions were offered.

Nov, 18, 1986—Legislative Committee Meeting. New members included Keith Fagot, Loomis, Dick Finley and Glenn Morgan, Greeley. Don Flakus resigned. Discussion of upcoming Rule 15 hearings, Rule 51, state aid formulas, ESU’s. A key item was the naming of a new Education Committee chair in the 1987 Legislature. A strong candidate was Ron Withem. Class VI’s, represented by Gayle Mueller of Lakeview and Ned Meier of Grand Island Northwest asked support of a bill allowing formation of new Class VI’s.

Dec. 9, 1986—Executive Committee. Balance of \$20,089.02 reported. Motion to send letter to Justin King and others on NRCSA concerns.

Dec 10, 1986—Stehlik wrote to Justin King asking NASB to oppose closing Class II’s with under 35 or 50 students for one year. A Dec. 19 response from King said NASB would oppose changing the present statutes which require closing for less than 25 for 3 year. He pledged cooperation with NRCSA.

Dec, 17, 1986—NRCSA reps met with new Senators Scott Moore and Ron Withem. RW sought support for election to head education committee.

Dec. 27, 1986—NRCSA had bill introduced to change Class II budget hearings to be the same as other classes.

Jan. 19, 1987—Joint meeting of the Legislative and Executive Committees. Much discussion of legislation and communication within the organization. Motion passed to have regular monthly legislative mailing during December through May. A key item was testimony on a bill to allow biennial course offerings.

Mar. 18, 1987—Letter from Stehlik to EC following meeting with state department personnel asking EC to respond to NDE request to identify services it could provide to small schools. Mar. 20 letter restated intent as NDE wanting rural schools to ask Legislature for money to provide rural services.

Mar. 25, 1987—Executive Committee. Discussion of refunds due to bad weather. Decided no refunds after Mar. 20. Finley appointed liaison to NEBCRESS. Motion to charge reps from NASB, etc, who attend convention. Stehlik assigned to begin legislative mailings. NRCSA Notes. Motion to commission a study on effectiveness of rural schools. This became Sher study. Motion approved to pay expenses for President and Secretary to NREA Convention at Lake Placid, N.Y. in fall.

Mar. 26, 1987—Regular spring meeting. Noted that Class II budget bill passed. Discussion of confusion over NRT law. Some schools concerned that they could not accept NRT students in 87-88. Gregory reported that NEBCRESS was pursuing 5 studies. Nominees were: Jim Havelka, PE, and Bob Mandeville, Western District rep.

April, 1987—Withem formed Public School Ad Hoc Committee for discussing reorganization and finance. Stehlik named NRCSA rep. Later split into two committees, one of which became Governor's Commission on School Finance which eventually produced LB 1059, and a task force on reorganization which eventually produced LB 259.

April 14, 1987—NRCSA received a proposal from Jonathon Sher to write a report on rural education in Nebraska for a cost of \$10,000 with Sher retaining complete control over contents. Sher also agreed to keynote 1988 convention as part of cost.

May 13, 1987—Executive Committee. Agreed to mail School Law Update from Nelson/Harding to NRCSA members. Showed conference profit of \$217. Approved a stipend for \$300 for Fisher for conference, certified Havelka and Mandeville as officers for 87-88.

June 23, 1987—Executive Committee. Reviewed a McRel study of rural schools in 7 states. Discussed a Kid-Pac proposal from Sullivan which would generate money for legislative issues, appointed Havelka, Hoppner, and Finley to write a NRCSA belief statement, reviewed progress of Sher study, and agreed to hire Sullivan-Arthur for \$15,000 to cover Jan. 1, 1988 through Dec. 31, 1988.

August 5, 1987—Executive Committee. Frank Shaughnessy appointed to audit books. Renewed as affiliate of NREA.

Aug. 7, 1987—Regular meeting. Noted retention of Sullivan-Arthur and the hiring of Sher to prepare a study. Special guest was Senator Scott Moore. Legislative Committee for 87-88 included Stehlik, Shaughnessy, Watkins, Burkey, Eberhart, Ferguson, Gannon, Jantzen, Fagot, Morgan.

Oct. 8, 1987—Executive Committee. Membership reported at 65 school and 60 individual. Concept of associate membership for businesses was discussed. Sullivan reported on his effort in seeking a meeting with Gov. Orr or her chief of staff. Agreed to fund the NEBCRESS newsletter again. A Past President's advisory council was formed. Havelka asked to draft a letter to Burma Kroger, president of NASB, regarding relationships between NRCSA and NASB. Justin King had announced his resignation and NRCSA sought input into selection of a new Exec. Secretary.

Nov. 18, 1987—Executive Committee. Report of 185 members vs. 169 at the end of 86-87. Sullivan, Stehlik. And Havelka reported on meeting with Hans Brisch, Orr's chief of staff, and Cynthia Milligan, an education advisor to Orr. The Sher visit in November was announced.

Nov. 18, 1987—Withem spoke on the "Year of Education" at the state level.

Dec. 10, 1987—Letter from Frank Shaughnessy to Finley suggesting NRCSA Achievement Awards for outstanding rural teacher, administrator, and Board Member.

Dec. 16, 1987—Executive Committee. A committee was formed to consider affiliate memberships. Discussion was held on sponsoring a Distance Learning Conference Feb. 15 in Kearney. Dennis Paley of Central Health and Life Company was present to discuss a proposal on NRCSA endorsing a cancer insurance policy. Discussion of dissatisfaction with arrangements for NRCSA at NASB Convention. Room for Withem's speech was too small, etc.

Jan. 14, 1988—Meeting of NRCSA reps with Sen. Stan Shellpepper to discuss his proposal for starting school after Labor Day. Also discussed loss of railroad funds.

Dec. 22, 1987—Letter from Finley to Burma Kroger pulling NRCSA meeting out of NASB Convention.

NRCSA HISTORY NOTES IV

CHRONOLOGY (Cont.)

Feb, 4, 1988—Executive Committee. Membership reported at 195. Provided endorsement of cancer insurance plan from Central States Health and Life as presented by Dennis Paley. Plan was that Sullivan & Arthur would receive 8% of all first year premiums and 5% fee on renewals. NRCSA to receive 50% of that amount from S&A. NRCSA to provide membership list to Paley. Planned Distance Learning Conference Feb. 15 in Kearney. On affiliate members, it was decided membership would be free for 87-88 and \$75 per year in 88-89 with half that amount going to Sullivan. Membership allowed affiliates to exhibit at conference and operate hospitality room at no cost; non-members charged \$100 for exhibit. NRCSA achievement awards approved to begin at 88 conference. Letter approved to be sent to membership noting dissatisfaction with NASB legislative cooperation so far this year.

Mar. 24, 1988—Executive Committee. Dates set for 89 and 90 conventions. Announcement of Class Dismissed study, including press conference. Voted \$600 to Fisher for convention manager expenses. Brief discussion of the possibility of a NRCSA lawyers group. Some interest among school attorneys on starting such a group.

Mar. 25, 1988—Regular meeting. Withem spoke on cooperation within the educational community. Sullivan announced his candidacy for State Board of Education vs. Helen Greene. Gregory reported on NEBCRESS: Idea of setting up a rural education division within the State Department. Nominees for President-Elect were: Richard Becker, Exeter; Keith Fagot, Loomis; Don Leighton, WInside. Nominees for Central District Representative were: Bob Reed, Arnold; Dean Stewart, Wood River; George Bauer, Kenesaw.

April 27, 1988—Executive Committee. Fisher voted \$600 for person expenses in regard to convention and \$400 to reward secretarial help. Distribution of Class Dismissed via ESU's approved. Stehlik recommended to serve on Withem's Finance Review Commission. Decided to incorporate and Havelka assigned to arrange lawyer to draw up articles of incorporation as a non-profit corporation. Moved to table re-negotiation of Sullivan contract. Motion to send a letter to members on limitations of cancer insurance endorsement. This was due to misinformation that was being spread with regard to it.

June 15, 1988—Executive Committee. Further discussion of cancer insurance endorsement. Possibility of a sub-committee to analyze member services before they are considered by executive committee. No action. Fagot appointed to represent NRCSA on Withem's Ad Hoc committee on reorganization. November meeting moved to Howard Johnson's in Omaha. Full expenses approved for Fisher and Havelka to attend NREA convention in Bismark, N.D. Discussion of ways to involve Board members more in NRCSA. No action taken on a request from Dwight American Legion to support a state lottery. Agreed to form a NRCSA "buddy system" to assist new administrators. Frank Shaughnessy appointed to audit books.

Aug. 6 1988—Regular. About 90 attended. Recognition given to Finley and Redd for their service. Buddy system announced.

Nov. 9, 1988—Executive Committee in Omaha. Executive session held on charges levied by a former colleague against Sullivan who was then running for a seat on the State Board of Education. Committee expressed its support for Sullivan. Legislative reports given on Finance Review Commission (Stehlik represents NRCSA), affiliation (Fagot) and performance-based accreditation committee (Havelka). Bylaws for articles of incorporation adopted. NRCSA and Sullivan to sponsor workshops on asbestos. Dean Stewart was appointed to form a Business Committee. Purpose of this group is to evaluate endorsements before Exec Board action. Approved \$1500 to pay for mailings of NEBCRESS Newsletter. Metro Superintendents requested support for a \$38 million increase in state aid. NRCSA response was that it was supportive of Withem's efforts and would support dollar increases if it did not interfere with those efforts. Agreed to pay full expenses annually for Pres. And Sec. to attend NREA Convention.

Nov 9, 1988—Regular meeting at Howard Johnson. Reported increase of 20 members over November , 1987. 32 businesses reported as associate members. Withem spoke on restructuring. Announced that The Country Teacher would be distributed to all school members.

Dec. 5, 1988—Sullivan announced his resignation. Special meeting set for 12/14 to interview potential lobbyists. Fisher to testify on behalf of NRCSA at hearing on Educational Technology on Jan. 19. Stewart reported on preliminary plans for Business Committee. Plans made to revise Constitution in accordance with the new articles of incorporation. Decided to invite Commissioner and State Board members to do a panel discussion at the spring convention. Sullivan to try and line up Sen. Exon as luncheon speaker. Fisher will try to arrange Lincoln Mayor Bill Harris.

Dec. 14, 1988—Joint meeting of the Legislative and Executive Committee to interview lobbyists: Wiley Remmers, Bruce Cutshall, and Larry Ruth/Bill Mueller. Mueller/Ruth offered contract for \$15,000 for 1989 session.

Jan. 31, 1989—Executive Committee. Business Committee to survey members. Key issues are expansion of services to members, endorsements, dues income. Constitutional revisions discussed. Initial discussion of a professional association management firm. Also discussion of paying Hildreth for a shared computer and extra office help for NRCSA business. Much discussion of whether Legis. Committee has acted appropriately in taking a position on opposition to LB 183 and having Havelka and Stehlik testify against the bill. EC decided to survey members on their views on 183. Main objection comes from Russ Hoppner who testified in favor of the bill.

Feb. 9, 1989—Letter of EC from Havelka noting that LB 183 survey showed members opposed by about 5:1. Mueller/Ruth working on amendments.

Feb. 20, 1989—Business Committee met. Committee to select NRCSA award winners for spring convention. Representatives from Dougherty Dawkins met with the committee about endorsing its Tax Anticipation Notes program. Also meeting with the group was a representative of Insurance and Personnel Services of Grand Island. They work with schools on Section 89 and Section 125 plans. Award recipients selected. Motion to expand teacher award to two wards:

elementary and secondary. Also motion to require Board and teacher nominees to be from school members; administrator from either individual or school members. Recommended that dues be raised to %75 for individuals and that school dues remain unchanged, a 15% profit for the convention as a means of raising revenue. Increased compensation to Sec.-Treas., and establishment of a cash reserve to cover unexpected expenses, conduct a staff development program for members, keep affiliate dues at \$75.

Feb. 28, 1989—Executive Committee. Voted to support Leonard Gregory as a candidate for NREA President-Elect. Business committee recommendations reviewed. Adopted a 3-year plan for dues: School membership to stay at \$200. Individual at \$100 in 89-90; \$150 in 90-91; all \$200 in 91-92. Discussed convention profit of 15%, but no action taken. Set secretary-treas. Stipend at \$600. Fisher directed to discuss with Hildreth Board how his school could be reimbursed for lost time, etc. Motion to pay Hildreth \$75 per month for computer rental.

Mar. 21, 1989—Executive Committee. Reported 54 affiliate members. 309 convention pre-registrations. Voted \$400 to pay convention helpers for 89 and 90 conventions and \$600 to Fisher for convention work. Finley to work on NRCSA History and brochure. Motion to invite Kay Orr as 1990 convention speaker. Fisher discussed reimbursement with Hildreth Board. Amount to be presented at next meeting.

Mar. 22, 1989—Regular Business Meeting. Revised constitution was unanimously adopted as presented. Dan McPherson of KSC presented a report on NEBCRESS. Duane Stehlik presented the Legislative Report. Bylaw amendments to go on the mailed ballot were: dues proposal and increasing Sec-Treas stipend to \$600. Nominees were: Richard Becker, Pres.-Elect, and Rick Black, Conestoga. Don Leighton, Winside, and Dale Eberhart, Weeping water, for Eastern District Rep. Fisher nominated for Sec-Treas. On the mail ballot, Becker, Fisher, and Leighton won.

June 14, 1989—Executive Committee. Reported 110 school members and 90 individual members. Motion to reimburse Hildreth schools \$2000 for 1988-89. No further discussion of association management occurred. President and Secretary to attend 1989 NREA Convention in Reno, Nevada. The annual Legislative meeting is to be a joint meeting of the Legislative & Executive Committees.

Aug. 3 1989—Executive Committee. Decided to set budget for 89-90 after Aug. treasurer's report revealed that our balance was at \$3414.06. Tentative budget called for \$60,644.93 in revenues and \$64,600 in expenditures, resulting in a deficit of \$3,955.07. However, dues were deliberately underestimated since no one could predict how members would react to the change in dues structure. Same Legislative Committee as 88-89 appointed with Stehlik as Chairman. Plans made to set up a liaison within each legislative district. Rick Black of Conestoga was appointed to represent NRCSA on the Staff Development Network. Mueller and Ruth rehired at \$17,500 plus reasonable expenses. 1990 spring convention set for Mar. 22 and 23. Rich Becker reported on a meeting he had attended involving leaders of educational organizations throughout the state. Goal is to develop an overall cooperative attitude among educational groups. Fall meeting planned for Nov. 15. Guests to include Mueller/Ruth and Withem.

Oct. 19, 1989—Executive Committee. Budget presented. Reported 29 individual members and 109 schools. Slightly down from previous years. Fagot working on developing a data base for press releases in cooperation with the Nebraska Press Association. Becker reported on the UNL Committee he is serving on. NRCSA also represented on the Commissioner's Advisory Committee. Group delayed action on supporting the NEBCRESS newsletter this year. Decided not to mail Country Teacher to members. Motion to allow Hildreth to hire part-time clerical help for NRCSA work and bill NRCSA for the costs of that individual.

Nov. 15, 1989—Executive Committee. Group divided membership list for personal contacts with Superintendents to renew memberships. Havelka and Becker to attend Commissioner's Advisory Committee as NRCSA representatives. Legislative issues, including affiliation and the Finance Review Commission, were discussed with Stehlik. Also discussed sessions for spring convention.

Nov. 15, 1989—Regular Meeting. 140 present. Bill Mueller reviewed legislation. Membership approved tentative budget. Members urged to recruit new members.

Jan.11, 1990—Executive Committee. 53 individual and 147 school members reported, a slight increase from 88-89. New NRCSA brochures were presented. Gary Tunnison from the Lincoln Community Foundation presented a proposal. An anonymous donor had set up a scholarship fund for rural students which should yield about \$1500 annually. Motion to have NRCSA participate in the scholarship program passed. Fees for the spring conference were increased: for members, \$70 early bird and \$85 regular; non-members \$100 early and \$115 regular. Spouses can attend without registration fee, but must pay \$12.50 for meals. No refunds will be made after Mar.15.

Mar. 13, 1990—Business Committee meeting. Selected awards winners: Elementary, Virginia Collins, Orleans; Secondary, Gary Goodchuck, Wauneta, Administration, Jim Tenopir, Cambridge, Board, Dr. Roger Meyer, Centennial. Recommended paying expenses for Fisher to go to AASA Small Schools Convention. Sub-committee approved to plan the scholarship program. Plan is to give two, one boy, one girl, at \$650-\$750 each for the 91-92 school year.

Mar. 21, 1990—Executive Committee. Announced 54 individual and 147 school members. Joe Toczek appointed to chair golf tourney. Decided to announce Lincoln Community Foundation Scholarship program at spring conference. Jim Havelka appointed to write history of the organization. Legislative issues including LB 1059 (state aid) and LB 259 (affiliation) discussed. Discussed certificate or award for retiring administrators.

Mar. 22, 1990—Spring Business meeting. Gregory spoke on NEBCRESS projects including research projects and facilities studies. Nominations for President-Elect were Bob Mandeville. Mullen, Glen Larson, Adams Central, and Stan Kravig, Palisade. Larson elected by mail ballot. Nominations for Western District Representative were Wayne Ferguson, Crawford, and Glen Morgan, Paxon.

May 29, 1990—Executive Committee. Despite planning for an end-year deficit, the organization will finish the year with a positive cash balance of \$8000 to \$10,000. Stehlik authorized to

negotiate with Mueller and Ruth for a fee of \$20,000 from July 1, 1990 to June 30, 1991. Decided not to fund efforts to fight repeal of 1059 since organization was split on the bill, but to continue efforts to support the bill. Approved sending Secretary-Treasurer to AASA Small Schools Conference with expenses not to exceed \$1000. Planned to make appointments to business and legislative committees Aug. 2 exec. Meeting. Final report of revenues and expenditure showed revenues of \$76,578.58 (vs budget of \$60,644.93) and expenditures of \$61,821.70 (vs budget of \$64,600). Balance of \$14,756.88.

NRCSA ENTERS THE 90'S: AN UPDATE OF THE NEBRASKA RURAL COMMUNITY SCHOOLS ASSOCIATION 1990-91 AND 1991-92

BY

JAMES HAVELKA
Superintendent, Rising City Public Schools

(NOTE: In 1990 a summary of NRCSA's history from 1979-1990 was prepared for the membership. The report below summarizes the next two years and it is hoped that updates will be issued annually hereafter—JPH)

After ten tumultuous years of growth, the Nebraska Rural Community Schools Association (NRCSA) entered the decade of the 1990's at a peak in membership, political power, and educational influence. From its beginnings at a meeting of eight frustrated superintendents in November, 1979, NRCSA had become by the advent of 1990 the pre-eminent voice for rural education in Nebraska. It represented more than 200 schools, sponsored a stimulating annual convention, recognized rural educational excellence in a variety of ways, and was a highly respected player in the legislative battles facing Nebraska schools.

The first two years of the new decade, however, produced strong challenges to education in Nebraska in general and to rural schools in particular that prevented NRCSA from resting on its laurels. As the state became increasingly urban and suburban in population and outlook, rural schools were attacked for "inefficiency" and rural economic and social conditions received little sympathy in the political arena. To meet these challenges over the last two years, NRCSA has instituted new initiatives, and the autumn of 1992 finds the organization more formidable than ever in membership, financial base, leadership, and influence.

1990-91

Legislation

Two major ballot questions, both with the potential for a great effect on Nebraska's schools, were facing voters in November of 1990. The first was a constitutional amendment imitative to limit expenditures by governmental subdivisions to two percent per year. The proposal, advocated by Ed Jaksha, was the subject of an intense fall campaign. It is a certainty that most, if not all, NRCSA members were opposed to the amendment, but legal restrictions on

administrators and board members in commenting on a ballot question limited the direct opposition the organization could take. Nevertheless NRCSA members did what they legally could and the amendment was soundly defeated.

The second issue, a referendum on LB 1059, was controversial even among NRCSA members. The law significantly revised the state aid formula and instituted increases in income and sales taxes to fund it. Some rural schools were strongly in favor of 1059 because a large amount of new state aid was involved. Other schools saw problems with the formula, but opposition was generally muted because no school could lose money under the “hold harmless” formula. The referendum failed and LB 1059 was retained.

Following the hectic fall campaign, NRCSA leaders should have been able to look forward to a quiet 1991 legislative session. But the harmony among rural and urban school advocates that was present in the fall was sorely missing by spring. Near the end of the session, Sen. Dan Lynch introduced an amendment that would limit schools of 200 or fewer students to one administrator and pro-rate the percentage of administrative staff a school district could have based on enrollment. Other legislation was introduced to increase the minimum enrollment for high schools and to have an interim study on “efficiency” in small schools. Late session maneuvering resulted in a series of compromises which killed Lynch’s amendment, but kept the interim study on efficiency and required schools of fewer than 35 high school students to report annually on efforts they were making toward cooperation with other schools.

The attack on small, rural schools led to an important NRCSA initiative the following summer. At a joint meeting of the Executive and Legislative Committees in July, there was agreement on the need for NRCSA to put out a positive message to counteract the anti-rural bias of the “efficiency” advocates. Duane Stehlik and Glen Larsen were appointed to negotiate a contract with Bailey, Lauerman and Associates. A Lincoln public relations firm, to assist NRCSA in increasing media contacts, etc. The general membership meeting in August approved the proposal and a series of activities, including appearances on radio talk-shows, was undertaken the following fall. The efficiency interim study was conducted, but it did not result in immediate legislation in 1992. The NRCSA initiative continues, however.

Other key issues in the 1991 legislative session included self-insurance, elementary planning time, separate contracts for activity sponsors, modifications to the option enrollment law, abortion notification and affiliation. The final affiliation bill passed at the end of the session although the circumstances of its passage were questionable enough to require re-passage of the bill in the 1992 session.

NRCSA’s legislative leadership for 1991 included lobbyists Larry Ruth and Bill Mueller, Duane Stehlik, Legislative Committee Chairman, and the following Legislative Committee members: Frank Shaughnessy, Dallas Watkins, Jon Burkey, Dale Eberhart, Wayne Ferguson, Bill Ganon, Dan Jantzen, Richard Becker, Richard Finley, Jim Havelka, Glenn Larsen, Glenn Morgan and Jim Ossian.

Membership and Finances

NRCSA's membership continued to grow during 1990-91. The March rolls, normally the peak membership period, showed 179 school members, 27 Individual members and 69 business affiliates. This compared to 147 schools, 54 individuals and 55 affiliates in March, 1990. The year was the last in which NRCSA offered an individual membership following a three-year phase out. The adoption of the phase out plan in 1989 had raised concerns that overall membership would drop, but that did not prove to be the case.

The solid membership gave NRCSA a sound financial base in 1990-91. The year's budget called for an estimated \$91,786.69 in revenues and \$84,175 in expenditures. However, actual revenues for the year were \$100,073.80, and expenses were \$88,376.49. Dues revenue which had been only \$17,650 in the year before the phase out had grown to \$32,250 in 1990-91. Convention revenues also grew, rising from \$29,064.50 in 1989-90 to \$38,893.90 in 1990-91. These rarefied amounts were a far cry from the \$10.00 dues and \$500 ending balance of 1980-81, NRCSA's first full year.

Spring Convention

The 1991 Spring Convention expertly organized by Secretary-Treasurer Gary Fisher, showed a record registration of 475. James A. Knight Jr., an educational consultant from Tucson, Ariz., delivered the keynote address: "Education in the 21st Century: A Vision Beyond Tradition." Governor Benjamin Nelson addressed the organization at the Thursday luncheon and former Husker assistant coach John Melton ended the convention on a light note Friday. Commissioner Joe Lutjeharms presented a special session on current educational issues on Thursday afternoon.

Session topics at the convention included effective schools, NSAA, regional course-sharing, affiliation, open enrollment, goal-setting, accessibility, mini-sessions, First Amendment issues, community revitalization, Chapter I program improvement, Rule 10 and dealing with patron complaints. The Friday morning session featured a mock termination hearing in which serious personnel law issues were nearly buried by some of the worst ham acting ever to appear on a Kearney stage. Convention-goers nevertheless judged the annual event a success and were lavish in their praise of Fisher's convention management.

Awards & Scholarships

A highlight of 1990-91 was the awarding of the first NRCSA scholarships to a rural young man and young woman seeking careers in education. An anonymous donor has provided an endowment through the Lincoln Foundation the annual revenue from which will be sufficient for two \$750 scholarships. The first winners were Tammy Stout of Tekamah-Herman and Jason Schmaderer of St. Paul.

The annual NRCSA awards to outstanding educators continued. The 1991 winners were Mary Ellen Tunnell, Arnold, Outstanding Elementary Teacher; Rosalea Gift, Thedford, Outstanding Secondary Teacher; Dennis Wentz, Wauneta, Outstanding Administrator; and Don Ellison of ESU #7 and Rising City, Outstanding Board Member.

The Business Committee, under chairman Sean Stewart, organized the selection for scholarships and awards. Members were: Randall Anderson, Leroy Bruce, Gary Fisher, Gail Koplín, Ron Oswald, Rich Schlesselman, Mary Thomsen, Joe Toczek, and Dallas Watkins.

Leadership

Executive Committee members for 1990-91 were: Richard Becker, Wilber-Clatonia, President: Glenn Larsen, Adams Central, President-Elect: Keith Fagot, Loomis, Past President: Gary Fisher, Hildreth, Secretary-Treasurer: Glenn Morgan, Paxton, Western District Representative: Dean Stewart, Wood River High Schools, Central District Representative: and Donovan Leighton, Eastern District Representative. Executive Committee members has a busy year planning the convention, overseeing legislative activity and exploring such items as insurance endorsements and legal services for members.

Nomieses for President-Elect for 1991-92 were Bob Mandeville, Mullen: Bruce McCoy, Exeter, and Mike Cuning, Sutherland. Nominees for Central District Representative were Rod Ross, Phelps County, and Nate Stineman, Oxford. Mandeville and Stineman were elected.

1991-92

Legislation

NRCSA went on offense early in the 1991-92 school year with the help of its new public relations consultants. Duane Stehlik and President Glen Larsen appeared on numerous radio talk shows bringing the “good news” about rural education to the state and efforts were made through member schools to keep Nebraska informed about the quality of its students and schools. Testimony at the LR 187 hearing stressed similar themes. The “efficiency” issues quieted, at least for the time being.

The personal property tax issue kept the state’s senators preoccupied during the 1992 regular session. NRCSA legislative leaders supported rural Nebraska interests, but realized that compromises were going to be necessary. Early in the session NRCSA lobbyist Bill Mueller played a major role in eliminating a devastating zero percent lid on school budgets proposed by Gov. Nelson and fashioned a series of workable compromises that left the LB 1059 lid basically intact. Ultimately the senators sent a constitutional amendment to the voters modified the taxation uniformity clause in the state constitution and gave the Legislature latitude tp classify property in different ways. Accompanying this was LB 1063 which returned some agricultural personal property to the tax rolls and imposed other new taxes. The constitutional amendment was approved in the May election and, although the solons met in special session in the summer to re-enact LB 1063 to ensure its constitutionality, the new tax system was put in place.

(Not that this was the end od tax troubles, of course. In August the Nebraska Supreme Court ruled the short-term personal property tax measure of 1991 unconstitutional and opened the prospect of massive refunds of 1991 property taxes. As this is written the Legislature is in special session to confront a major revenue shortfall and the 1993 session will surely be dominated by tax issues and the question of rural school efficiency again.)

Other key issues in the 1992 legislative session included a negotiations time line bill, multi-cultural education, extension of the hold harmless provision in the state aid formula, elimination of wards of the court funds, all-day supervision of students, school board member expenses, and using the asbestos abatement levy to finance school facility modifications required under the Americans with Disabilities Act. The Nebraska Schools Accountability Commission and a Youth Services Planning Commission were created. Much of the education legislation was shoe-horned in the waning days of the 60-day session into two "Christmas Tree" bills, but the session was productive for schools overall.

The three key NRCSA legislative players in 1992 again were lobbyists Mueller and Ruth and Legislative Committee Chairman Stehlik. The Legislative Committee members were: Frank Shaughnessy, Dallas Watkins, Jon Burkey, Dale Eberhart, Wayne Ferguson, Bill Ganon, Dan Jantzen, Richard Becker, Glen Larsen, Richard Finley, Jim Havelka, Keith Fagot, Bob Mandiville and Jim Ossian.

Membership and Finances

Another banner year for NRCSA membership was recorded. The March count showed 206 member schools and 73 business affiliates. No loss from the previous year was recorded as the organization went to solely institutional memberships.

The financial base also grew. The 91-92 budget called for \$100,547.31 in revenues and \$103,555.79 in expenditures. Actual revenues were a record \$117,702.14 and spending rose to \$105,995.47. Dues revenue rose to \$42,200 from the previous year's \$32,250 and conference registration revenues also increased, rising to \$46,622.89 from \$38,893.90. Business affiliate revenues grew, too, increasing from \$6047 to \$8450. The extra revenue easily covered the new expense of the public relations contract.

Spring Convention

Record numbers out for the 1992 Spring Convention and all paid tribute to Gary Fisher's efforts in organizing the annual event. Registrations of 490 were recorded. Dr. Melvin P. Heller, a professor at Loyola University of Chicago, delivered the keynote address entitled: "Lead or Be Led." Thursday's luncheon speaker was Dr. Graham B. Spanier, new Chancellor of UNL. The scheduled Friday luncheon speaker, Bernie Saggau of the Iowa High School Athletic Association, had to be replaced at the last minute and veteran raconteur Paul Kennedy, Emeritus Professor of Education at UNO, ably and wittily filled in. Associate Commissioner Doug Christensen made a special presentation on the opening day on fitting assessment into school improvement.

Session topics included working with the media, school finance, restructuring, strategic planning, crisis planning, Nebraska 2000, administration, AIDS, athletic health education, hazardous materials awareness training, mini-sessions, Americans with Disabilities Act, and other items. The state's best school attorneys and some of the worst NRCSA thespians conducted a mock school board meeting for the entertainment, if not education, of the Friday morning attendees.

Awards & Scholarships

Awards for excellence at the convention went to Darlene Darbro, Bradshaw, Outstanding Elementary Teacher: Robert E. Feurer, North Bend Central High School, Outstanding Secondary Teacher: Virgil Combs, Potter-Dix, Outstanding Administrator, and Paul J. O'Conner, ESU #6, Outstanding Board Member. Winners of the NRCSA scholarships were Ruth Hartmann, Minden, and Eric Field, Burwell.

Dean Stewart and the 1992 Business Committee again organized the selections for scholarships and awards. Members were: Randall Andersen, Wayne Bell, Leroy Bruce, Gary Fisher, Gail Koplín, Wayne Koehler, Ron Oswald, Dave Schley, and Dallas Watkins.

Leadership

President Glen Larsen led the 1992 Executive Committee: Other members were Bob Mandeville, President-Elect: Richard Becker, Past President, Gary Fisher, Secretary-Treasurer: Glenn Morgan, Paxton, Western District Representative: Nate Stineman, Central District Representative, and Donovan Leighton, Eastern District Representative. Executive Committee members worked with Dr. Clark Gardner of Chadron State College on the formation of the Panhandle Center for Rural Education and Small Schools, attended the National Rural Education Association convention in Jackson, Miss., debated a new federal vocational education initiative, and oversaw the organization's annual activities ranging from the convention to the golf tournament.

Nominees for President-Elect for the 1992-93 were Mike Cuning, Sutherland, and John Brown, Maxwell. Nominees for the Eastern District Representative were Donovan Leighton, Winside, Bob Norton, Sterling, and Rolland Fenster, Diller. Gary Fisher was unanimously elected Secretary-Treasurer and Cuning and Leighton won the two contested offices.

In Sum

The first two years of the decade were difficult, but not daunting, for rural education and the coming years promise more of the same. But, because of NRCSA, rural schools are in a much stronger position organizationally today than it had been a decade previously. NRCSA continues providing the framework to help Nebraska communities revitalize through quality rural education.