

# Navigating Corners



A research study on organizational change  
based on the international experiences  
of the **Institute of Cultural Affairs**

Using analogies from  
The Indianapolis 500  
In a Universe-referent context

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Please address any comments, suggestions or factual corrections directly to the author who assumes full responsibility for the content and opinions expressed herein – and reserves the right to amend any text or presentation in further versions.

Indy car action photos by R. Brooks Stover at time trials ca 1995. Back cover photos by F. Nelson Stover, August 2012 at the Indy 500 museum.

## A Personal Note

In 1945, I was born in Robinson, Illinois amid the dwindling oil fields. My home was located not far from the Ohio Oil Company (now Marathon Oil Company) refinery where both my father and grandfather were on career paths into management. My grandfather retired as Vice-President of Marketing and my father was a regional sales manager for many years.

On Memorial Day at the Stover household, we listened to the Indianapolis 500. It was Memorial Day, we were Stovers, and this is what we did. As soon I as knew how to write the numbers from one to thirty-three, I would help keep the score sheet showing driver positions at the end of every 10 laps. To this day, on Memorial Day weekend, I listen to, watch on TV or attend the Indy 500. I'm a Stover, this is what we do.

By 1959, my family had moved to East Lansing, Michigan, and I had become involved in a high school church group. The church owned a bus and every year the youth group went on a work camp. During the summer of 1960, 18 students and their adult chaperones headed south to help repair the facilities on the campus of a small college in Wadley, Alabama. On the way down, we stopped at a rural Tennessee gas station and I noticed that there were *three* restrooms – men, women and colored. This realization began a dawning awareness within me of the presence of racial injustice in the American society. By the time I completed high school, I was personally committed to getting deeply involved in the process of social change to foster peace and justice among all races. This passion has remained with me since that time. In 1964, I took some training courses at the Ecumenical Institute in Chicago. I was later involved with the Institute in village development work in India, Egypt, Australia and the Appalachian Mountain regions of the US. Between 2006 and 2010, I served as President of the Board of the Institute of Cultural Affairs International (ICAI) ([www.ica-international.org](http://www.ica-international.org)). After retiring from a computer career in 2013, I formed a non-profit organization called Emerging Ecology (<https://emergingecology.org>) in order to continue the service work in which I had been involved.

After settling in Greensboro, North Carolina in 1991, I became acquainted with the Universe-referent thinking and writing of Thomas Berry. He returned to Greensboro in 1993 and lived here until his death in 2009. My meetings with him and studies of his books continue to inform my ways of thinking.

This paper draws on these aspects of the author's life experiences to examine how individuals and organizations get around the corners in the journey which we call "Life".

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## Introduction

Like a braided rug, this paper weaves together three strands of totally different textures and colors, each appears in a unique font.

Observations on the large-scale processes of the Universe as it moves through its 14-billion year history insure that the observations and stories are heard in the largest possible context and any lessons learned may well apply in a wide variety of contexts.

The stories from the history of the ICA and its sister and parent organizations (the Ecumenical Institute and the Christian Faith and Life Community in Austin) provide a case-study in organizational development for people with a general interest in the subject and attempt to make sense out of past and present events for those more directly involved with the work of the ICA. Many of these stories are drawn from the author's firsthand experiences.

The details about the Indianapolis 500 provide a pool of analogies and metaphors through which to tell a complex story and give a kind of mundane reality to patterns and insights which may pervade all of time and space.

As the artisan hopes that the divergent elements of the single rug might enhance the overall beauty of the entire piece, so this author hopes that by contemplating each of the disparate story lines, the reader will come to have a deeper appreciation of each.

The most current version of this paper is available at <https://emergingecology.org/history>. The updated date appears in the footer of each page.

## Navigating Corners

The trajectory of the Universe does not resemble that of a massive expanding ball shot from a giant cannon into a resistance-less space – straight and unbending. Neither does the course of most people’s individual lives; nor does the growth and development of organizations. Newton’s famous law postulates that a “body in motion will remain in motion until” it meets opposing forces. Rather than following a predictable straight course, at all levels, the pathway into the future is filled with twists and turns, corners to be negotiated, opposing forces to be reckoned with. This paper explores some of the major corners that face many organizations and how these changes of direction may be negotiated.

The organizational examples in this paper are drawn from my 56 years of experience in working with the Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA) on five continents and at all levels of the organization. As a metaphor for navigating corners, this paper refers to the annual running of the Indy 500 – an automobile race, held in Indianapolis, Indiana, in which 33 open-wheeled cars travel 200 times around a 2½ mile low banked asphalt oval at speeds that frequently exceed 220 mph. The drivers negotiate the corners, or they fail.

In this paper, I will describe four kinds of corners that organizations must continually negotiate. These I call: The Corner of Corporateness, the Turn to Service, the Bend of Transformation and the Drive to Sustainability. For each of these, we will explore three options: a) negotiating the corner and moving on, b) smashing into the concrete retaining wall with no possibility of continuing on and c) going through the wall on a straight trajectory – much like Harry Potter goes through the brick wall at the train station and arrives on Platform 9¾ headed to a magical kingdom where no one in the real world can see him. Between the second and third corner lies the Straightaway of Success and between the fourth corner and the reentry into the first corner lies the Start/Finish Line and additional resources for continuing the journey. Thus, goes the journey into tomorrow and tomorrow.

## Getting Started

Initially, everyone shows up at the beginning of life somewhere on the stage of history. Some have different endowments from their parents and the communities in which they are born; for some life starts easily, others face great difficulties. Their appearance in history may be smooth or tumultuous, welcomed or dreaded; nonetheless, life begins for everyone. Like the starting grid at Indy, those who arrive are there with what they have – engines can’t be changed, chassis can’t be rebuilt, and the driver can’t go to any more training or take another test drive. Their pit crew is available as needed to support the drivers’ efforts.

Many people live their entire lives, as it were, sitting at the starting line of life. They continue to trundle on with their daily lives – eating, working, relaxing and sleeping, then starting the whole process over – oblivious to the potential to invest all that they have in the “thrill of the race”, in the opportunity to make an active contribution to the course of history.

But, into some lives comes an unmistakable calling, a beckoning, an awareness of excitement and challenge, and an urge to invest their life in shaping the destiny of the Universe. Sometimes this call begins as only the faintest of whispers, lost in the humdrum noise of everyday living; some choose to ignore the call as long as possible; to some it comes like the announcer's command over the public address system – "Start Your Engines". Some hear the call and respond.

### The Start of the Indy 500

Nearly every year since 1911, 33 of the world's fastest open-wheeled cars and drivers have lined up to see who can complete 500 miles in the shortest amount of time. The colorful cars are neatly arranged in 11 rows of 3 and the drivers strap themselves into the cars' elaborate safety harnesses. The crews wait around the cars for the completion of the opening ceremonies. Then come the now famous words, "Ladies and Gentlemen, Start your Engines." In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, powerful 8-cylinder engines begin to roar, a palpable thrill passes through the massive crowd and television audience and another race with destiny begins.

Once the mighty ethanol powered engines begin to fire on their own energy reserves, and the wheels on the cars begin to roll; every driver begins a long and solitary journey under the gaze of millions and with substantial crews of technicians, mechanics and associates poised to assist as needed. Thus, begins the Indy 500, the largest attended single sporting event in the world, the "Greatest Spectacle in Racing™".

Since the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, some of the individuals who have personally heard the call to service to humanity have been around groups related to the Institute of Cultural Affairs. In the early 1950's, a group of students, faculty and campus pastors at the University of Texas in Austin began to affiliate with each other, sharing their common calling to find ways to give meaningful expression to their lives in 20<sup>th</sup> Century urban America. This group began calling itself the "Christian Faith and Life Community" and developed courses for students and adults designed to help them understand the complexities of life in their changing world.

## The Corner of Corporateness

In the growth of most organizations, the first big turn involves decisions about how to work together, whether to cooperate in a common task – to be an organization with a mission or a loose knit affiliation of friends with similar inclinations. Those who can see through the complexities of the changes that may be required, who can set aside their own personal betterment for the well-being of the whole get through this turn and head into the next one which often follows close behind. Those groups who bicker and fight, who strive to get only their own way at the expense of all others, those for whom any future vision flickers only dimly; these groups crash into the first turn wall and incapacitate themselves for any future creative activity. Others take only a particular aspect of the original larger vision and, still reluctant to operate in a closely-knit organization, pass straight through the wall of the first turn and continue on doing “their own thing” in perpetuity.

About a decade after the beginning of the Christian Faith and Life Community, the group encountered the Corner of Corporateness. Some, under the leadership of Joseph Wesley Mathews (Joe or JWM as he was usually referred to), advocated living and working closely together to provide an intense demonstration of impact of the life-changing courses they were teaching. Others opted for continuing straight ahead on the pathway that they were already on. After accepting the invitation of the Church Federation of Greater Chicago to direct its Evanston Institute of Ecumenical Studies and Affairs, Joe and his colleagues headed north to Evanston and eventually to a vacated seminary which they acquired on the West Side of Chicago. Soon the group would shorten its name to “The Ecumenical Institute” and by the early 1970’s would form “The Institute of Cultural Affairs” to carry on its extensive human development programming.

### Heading in to Turn 1

The Indy 500 begins with a flying start. Three by three the cars cross the starting line at more than 200 mph. When the green flag waves, the race begins. The entire field roars into Turn 1 – though everyone knows that the race does not end at the conclusion of the ¼-mile turn. Drivers jostle for position, and bragging rights, but the underlying concern of all is that the entire field passes through safely to engage in a fair and honest 500 mile race. And the crowd holds its collective breath.

Those who remained behind never made the corner and went straight through the wall. During a personal visit to Austin in 2005, I met with some people who still remembered attending programs conducted by Joe Mathews and others at the Christian Faith and Life Community, though the exact content of the message had long escaped and they had had no further affiliation with any of the later manifestations of this group, the memory of having attended an awakening event lingered.

Navigating the Corner of Corporateness is not a one-time occurrence, making one change in your life and then sailing smoothly on to the end does not describe most people’s lives. Rather, like the race at Indy, lap after lap the decision to stick together through the Corner of Corporateness confronts each group and member thereof. As new people come and old friends leave, the decision to continue to work together continually arises.

## The Turn to Service

If the group is still together after rounding the first corner, it quickly encounters the question of “What to do?” For businesses, the answer lies in the articulation of a mission statement; for organizations like the ICA that has attracted people called to service, the answer involves deciding how to serve the world at large and the community in which you live. If the group of people traveling through the corner cannot come to a common understanding, they may crash into the retaining wall and disintegrate into a series of little projects separate from one another. The third option involves the group falling in love with itself and firmly attached to each other but without a common external focus. This kind of group can go straight through the wall and continue its existence as a contented support group of little interest to anyone but themselves.

### Turn 2 at Indy

The second turn at Indy begins just 220 yards from the end of the first one but opens out on to a 5/8-mile straightaway – potentially the fastest part of the track. Usually, the field of cars has fanned out enough that most can pass through in single file. Nonetheless, each one’s position on the track has important consequences for their ability to capitalize on the undistracted run for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Turn. As the race progresses, a well-defined groove emerges for navigating this turn.

In the early 1960’s the staff of the Institute was passionately involved in teaching seminars to college students and adults designed to awaken them to the possibility of living truly significant lives in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. A core curriculum of 14 courses focused on religious and cultural studies provided an in-depth training opportunity for thousands of people across the US and in several other countries. The group encountered the Turn to Service as participants realized that they had to “Do Something” with their new-found lucidity. The group in Chicago began working closely with the neighborhood around the campus in which they lived – an area that would take the name 5<sup>th</sup> City. This predominately black urban ghetto became a visible demonstration of local people’s capacity to enhance the quality of life in

their neighborhood. When the riots which followed the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King spread throughout the inner-city of Chicago, 5<sup>th</sup> City Citizens took responsibility for the care of their community and an eerie calm prevailed throughout the period of urban unrest.

By the early part of the 1970’s, it had become clear that three highly interrelated organizational forms would be required to conduct the work envisioned by the group that emerged from the Turn to Corporateness. Much of the property managed by the group and all the religious and cultural studies programs designed in the early years would be handled by the Ecumenical Institute (EI). The social demonstration programs and work with neighborhoods, organizations and communities – especially in the 3<sup>rd</sup> world – would be done by the newly formed Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA). The two Institutes would share a common Board of Directors and freely exchange their intellectual

properties. The full-time and much of the part-time staff for both organizations would be provided by a financially self-supporting group of families who called themselves the Order: Ecumenical (The Order). This framework allowed charitable contributions made to either the ICA or the EI to go fully into program implementations. The Order took responsibility for caring for the personal and financial needs of its members and their families and developed internal structures for maintaining a high level of motivation and practical skills for those who were to do the work of the two Institutes.

Beginning in 1968, the group on the West Side of Chicago began to send out teams to establish residential outposts, Religious Houses as they were often called, across the US and in Australia, Malaysia and India. Working in concert with the larger group on the West Side, these outpost groups served as field offices and conducted training programs and worked with churches and communities to establish visible demonstrations of local initiative and embodied care. The group had navigated the Turn to Service and drew strength from the successes of their projects and attracted others who had heard the call to service and wanted to join the endeavor.

## The Straightaway of Success

Since time and space and matter and energy became distinct yet related entities some 14-billion years ago, the Universe has had both its violent and serene faces. Giant stars explode, ripping apart themselves and everything within range of their searing heat and unbearable pressures. Throughout space, galaxies collide eliminating any new star creating capacities or pull each other apart leaving unimagined new forms. Mountains erupt and blast rock and dust over surrounding valleys and distant landscapes. Tectonic plates lurch past one another opening gapping cracks in the ground above or setting off massive tsunamis capable of decimating distant shores almost without warning.

On other days, brilliant suns warm orbiting planets fostering growing plants and blossoming flowers. Massive dinosaurs roam a fern-rich countryside embodying a myriad of forms and testing diets, lifestyles and mobility patterns that would benefit species of far distant eras. The silvery moon slides from horizon to horizon over an unusually calm sea inspiring lovers and beach goers willing to step aside from electronic distractions and bathe in the beauty of the moment. Organizations and individuals, too, find moments to enjoy the comfort of what they do best; free, momentarily, from the pressures to change.

At least three times the ICA has passed down the Straightaway of Success. Between 1968 and 1973, the Institutes conducted countless Local Community Experiments (referred to in some places as the Local Church Project). Between 1975 and 1984, the ICA encircled the globe with Social Demonstration Projects. Between 1992 and 2000, the autonomous national ICAs each took on their own identities and sought ways to grow and interrelate.

### The Backstretch

On the back side of the Indy oval, the long straightaway provides drivers with a moment's respite from the punishing forces of gravity. Here the fastest, best configured cars can pass the slower ones and enhance their chances for speeding through the forthcoming 2 turns. One way in, one way out – few options and alternatives face the drivers, save how to best take advantage of the opportunities at hand; and possibly a deep breath. Some elect to quit while they are ahead, turn off their engine and pull off into the grass.

Able to draw on a pool of course participants with a common understanding of how to evoke grassroots social change, Institute staff in hundreds of locations around the world teamed with committed volunteers to provide consultative services, motivational experiences and practical decision-making methods to congregations and communities committed to embodying a life of service in their locale. Relaxing mini parks replaced littered lots in a single day to signal the pervasive capacity of a community to accept responsibility for its own destiny. Billboards, like the one loaned to the neighborhood in Adelaide, Australia appeared proclaiming “East Enfield is a Great Place to Live”. Minor miracles occurred with surprising frequency, individual lives formerly filled

with hopelessness and despair found possibility and meaning and courage for tackling ever more challenging opportunities during the Institutes' Local Community Experiment.

Most of the communities involved the Local Community Experiment included middle and lower middle-class citizens just beginning to participate in the growth and development that would characterize the later 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Beginning with the village project in Maliwada, India (in sight of the Daulatabad fort near Aurangabad), the Social Demonstration Projects focused on addressing the fundamental social contradictions of their time – poverty, prejudice and exclusion from the opportunities of the larger society. One project was initiated in each of the 24 global time zones as a signal that no corner of the globe was to be excluded from the possibilities of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Teams of committed volunteers moved into remote and isolated villages, living in houses with no insulation or plumbing. Working shoulder to shoulder with the residents, signs of hope were created amid hopelessness and despair. From these sentinel villages local residents from neighboring towns were trained, in the local vernacular, to conduct similar projects in their own villages. The expansive strategy for these demonstrations included conducting community forums in massive numbers of communities. In the US, as a part of the Bicentennial Celebration a “Town Meeting” was held in at least one community in each county of the country. In India, 232 villages participated in some aspect of Nava Gram Paryas “The New Village Movement”. Similar campaigns were conducted in Europe, Australia and Kenya. In 1984, this phase of the ICA's work culminated with the International Exposition of Rural Development (IERD) which was held in New Delhi, India and drew villagers and village workers from across India and around the world to put a spotlight on approaches that work in rural development.

[Though the ICA story has now gotten somewhat ahead of itself, we will proceed to present highlights of the third pass down the Straightaway of Success and then return to discussions of the details of the ICA's journey through the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> turns which set up these last two passes down the Backstretch of Success.] As a result of the intensive work on the Human Development Projects and the community forums which emanated from many of them, skilled facilitators abounded in all the countries where these projects had been undertaken. National organizations of varying strengths had been put in place to coordinate the projects and their follow-up. The international coordination of these efforts was handled by the ICAI Secretariat in Brussels, Belgium. Based on the success of the IERD and the second quadrennial conference in Oaxtepec, Mexico, ICAI convened the 1992 quadrennial conference in Prague, Czechoslovakia and would continue hosting such events on a regular basis. Each of the national ICAs set about ensuring their sources of funding and providing for necessary staff development and training. Many of the methods developed in earlier decades were packaged into discrete units so that they could be conveyed in standardized ways to others. One example of this can be seen in the development of the *Technologies of Participation (ToP)*<sup>®</sup> and the materials associated with conducting these programs. In Belgium, the UK and the US, people with long histories of conducting Human Development Projects developed 6-week to 6-month residential training programs to equip a new generation of grassroots catalysts. These programs drew participants from many 3<sup>rd</sup> World countries as well as others interested in volunteering to work in distant nations. When these people returned to their homelands, several elected to establish new ICAs in their own countries and sought ways to combine the Institutes' facilitative methods frameworks for community development. Representatives of these newer ICAs along with people with decades of grassroots experience through the ICA gathered at the 5<sup>th</sup> Quadrennial Conference held in Denver, Colorado in the summer of 2000.

### “As Long As It's Fun”

#### The 50<sup>th</sup> 500 (1966)

Since the first race at Indy, nearly all the cars had their engines located in front of the drivers. But change happens, in the Universe, in organizations and at the Indy 500. The first rear engine car appeared at Indy in 1963 and Jimmy Clark drove it to a 2<sup>nd</sup> place finish just 45 seconds behind the winner. Jimmy's rear engine car won in 1965, becoming the first car to complete 500 miles with an average speed over 150 mph. Only one front engine car entered the 50<sup>th</sup> running of the 500 the next year, and none would ever win again. An era had passed.

But change has its price, experienced drivers in newfangled equipment and new drivers unfamiliar with the idiosyncrasies of the track at Indy led to chaos at the start of the race. Eleven cars ran into each other and the wall in the first turn of the first lap. After more than an hour of moving disabled vehicles and cleaning up debris, the remaining 2/3 of the field restarted their 500-mile journey. The others became spectators.

Roger Ward began the 50<sup>th</sup> in the 5<sup>th</sup> row and thus had gotten through the first turn ahead of the chaos that would eventually eliminate 1/3 of the cars before they had a chance to complete even a single lap of the much-anticipated classic. Between 1959 and 1962, he had won twice and never placed lower than 3<sup>rd</sup>. This 5-year success streak remains unrivaled in the Indy annals. He had failed to qualify for the 1965 race, but in 1964 his rear-engine car placed second to his friend and adversary's front engine car. Roger had lost by 1½ minutes after more than 3 hours of driving. In the weeks prior to the big race in 1966, one of the questions many reporters wanted Roger to answer was, "When are you going to retire?" The answer that I remember him giving was simply "I'm going to race as long as its fun."

No one may ever know for certain what was going on in Roger's mind as he began the 74<sup>th</sup> lap on that Memorial Day weekend in 1966. What they saw was that whereas everyone else came out of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Turn high and fast, heading for the top of the long backstretch, Roger came out of the turn low, he pulled off into the infield grass, turned off the engine, removed his helmet, waved to the crowd, reported that the car had "handling problems", and walked away from the Indy 500; he never drove there again. I've always suspected that he realized that "this wasn't fun any more" – some of his fiercest competitors had been sidelined in the melee at the start through no fault of their own and would give no challenge in this race, his car had never been the fastest on the track and any chance of victory was slim at best, and the "thrill of the chase" had disappeared like a bubble which vanishes into thin air.

Every organization, especially volunteer organizations and non-profit groups, is filled with people who, like Roger Ward, have had stellar careers with the group but who wake up one day to find that "this is no longer fun". Joseph Campbell, one of the sages of the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century, admonished people to "Follow Your Bliss". In the journey through life, when a person realizes that what they are doing is no longer giving meaning and fulfillment to their life, the wise ones seek other opportunities. They wave goodbye before their despair turns to anger and their judgment gets clouded by doubt and their actions become dangerous to themselves and to others around them. Responsible organizations celebrate their decision, bid them adieu, and continue with the task at hand.

## The Bend of Transformation

Most days begin and end more or less like the one before. The sun creeps over the tree tops, the birds sing their songs, maybe the rain drops fall / maybe they don't, cars pass back and forth on the roadways, the dog communicates with the fire hydrant and information passes between one person and the next by any number of channels. Then the sun slips below the western horizon, nighttime things happen and every creature prepares for another day. But sometimes – the radically new appears, shackles that have stifled creativity are broken forever, boundaries that seemed formidable and impassable are shattered by a novel and often unimagined approach. This manifesting of the radically new, this breaking of

pressing contradictions to unleash a brighter future; this unimaginable creativity happens in the Bend of Transformation.

### The 3<sup>rd</sup> Turn

Most drivers navigate the 3<sup>rd</sup> turn smoothly by not trying to make a big issue out of its potential complexities. The trick in this corner is to capitalize on the advantages gained on the backstretch and to ensure an advantageous position for facing the choices posed in the next turn which lies not far away. One must also pay careful attention to other drivers as they, too, try to anticipate the ambiguities that lie close ahead.

About 5 billion years ago the Sun, surrounded by eight planets (as astronomers say now) with their various moons and rings along with a host of other smaller bodies in multiple shaped orbits, had collected enough debris from previous supernova explosions in this remote arm of the Milky Way galaxy to ignite into a blazing inferno. Warmed by this constant source of gentle heat plus energy from its own internal pressures; Planet Earth separated into seas and land masses. After about a billion years of lightening storms followed by calm days and moon-lit nights, simple life forms emerged in the roiling seas. For another 3½ billion years life thrived in the nutrient rich seas. Plants learned how to harness sunlight through photosynthesis and to breathe the oxygen that came as a harmful by-product thereof. Nonetheless, getting out of the sea and staying alive on dry land, remained impossible for eons. The limiting factor wasn't the heat of the sun or the power of the torrential rains. The powerful forces of gravity threatened to flatten

any creature that ventured out of the buoyant ocean. Then one day, a transformation occurred; some cell somewhere became a wood cell with walls strong enough to withstand gravity and impermeable enough to hold within its walls the vitalizing water necessary for conducting the life processes. The doorway to the land had opened. Within 200 million years, ferns covered the plains and hillsides and dinosaurs were feasting on their bounty. Within another 200 million years the flowering plants could provide seeds and nutrition for an expanding array of mammals thus creating the climate into which the human species could emerge about 4 million years ago.

Some organizations are focused on maintaining the Status Quo; these never have to pass through the rigors of the Bend of Transformation. They often go straight through the wall to carry on their successful operation as long as possible. Other organizations self-consciously set about bending the trends of history and relish in the complexities, ambiguities, challenges and opportunities that lie beyond the end of the Backstretch of Success. The dangers in this turn come from attacking problems held in being by forces that destroy all advocates of change or in falsely identifying the root causes of the problem so that even after diligent effort, the symptoms remain.

In 1975, Joe Mathews took a trip around the world to meet with the ICA staff locations in various locations. While praising them for their successes up to then, he challenged them to locate, in their particular countries, communities and neighborhoods that represented the fundamental social pain of their time. He then used the last two years of his life to ensure that radical demonstrations of profound social change became visible around the globe. This work had become possible due to the countless training programs and staff

development opportunities that the Institutes had experienced in their previous twenty years of work. Furthermore, Joe and the leadership of the Institutes had focused hard during the past few years on developing transparent spiritual methodologies – practices through which anyone, irregardless of their intellectual background or religious affiliation, could tap into the deep well springs of profound living. The Institutes’ staff had learned how to live among the poorest of the poor – in some of the harshest conditions – and yet to work side by side with the local residents to find creative ways into the future. The Institute navigated the Bend of Transformation by daring to address the contemporary social pain, which many people experienced but few could face, by standing on a profound awareness that transcended any particular race or creed. Nothing less would have sufficed.

## The Drive to Sustainability

Throughout time and space, the Universe exhibits both cyclical and linear tendencies. The cycles are obvious as winter follows fall year after year. Creativity emerges unpredictably; but predictably newness will break through somewhere. The dogwood tree knows that in the late fall it must invest whatever energy it can harvest from the sun to prepare the buds that will survive the winter and blossom in the spring before the larger trees can produce their leaves and overshadow the lowly dogwood. One cycle leads to the next but often adjustments and changes may need to be made to accommodate changing external conditions or internal realities. The linear, time directional, element of the Universe means that the past can never be recreated (really, exactly). Old forms pass away, forever, and new ways provide new opportunities and new challenges.

### The 4<sup>th</sup> Turn

While the final turn at Indy is the same shape and length as all the rest, it is the only one which offers the driver an option of how to exit – head for the Start/Finish Line or turn into the pits for fuel and tires. The biggest danger in this turn is to lose concentration on the moment and to bask in the comfort of the pit or the glory of the victory that lies ahead.

Organizations, too, must face these two dynamics within their own operations. The Drive to Sustainability represents the fourth major turn on organizations’ journey. Having basked in their success and, if possible, contributed to shaping the destiny of the society in which they are a part, each organization must decide whether to continue forward in the new reality, to take a brief break to regroup and reenergize itself or to go out of being having completed a full journey around the track. If they decide to go on, they must sort out the sustainable forms, the decision-making mechanisms and long-term resource pool and the operating culture which will carry them through the now too familiar curves which lie ahead.

Some groups elect to ignore the new opportunities and challenges at hand and take their past accomplishments with them through the wall into irrelevancy. Others fail to see the gravity of the situation they face in remaining a sustainable organization for the long-term future, fail to turn into the pits, and either run out of

resources in subsequent years or, by failing to adjust their operational patterns and structures, find themselves incapable of functioning in their new environment. Still others lose site of the moment at hand, either regaling in past glories or anticipating victories not yet achievable and encounter the unforgiving wall of reality often damaging both themselves and others associated with them.

As an entire organization, the Institutes have passed through the Drive to Sustainability on at least 2 occasions that can be described in ways that have relevance to its current overall global situation. After the successful completion of the IERD in 1984 and the summer program in Chicago a few months later to which as many as possible of the ICA staff gathered together in the ICA's 8-story office building in Uptown Chicago for a grand conclave, substantial cracks began to appear in the organizational form that had carried them through the past decades. In third-world locations, the decision to provide health care for the ICA staff women who became pregnant raised complex financial issues. Women from America chose to go to international level hospitals (and pay international prices) while the village women with whom they were working on a day to day basis delivered their children in government hospitals at little or no cost. All the children and mothers survived but the cost inequities could not be ignored. Autonomous organizations had been set up in each of the countries in which the Institute was working and over time most of these had established effective national leadership no longer requiring extensive international assistance or input. Simply put, trying to manage the entire expanding operation of the global work of the Institutes was becoming increasingly ineffective.

After the second ICA quadrennial conference in 1988, the representatives of the staff of the Institute remained on for a few extra days to decide the future direction of the complex interweaving of organizations that had brought the group to this point. In the end, those present decided that the formal structures of the Order: Ecumenical were to be taken out of being and that the entire weight of conducting the Institutes' work was shifted to the respective national ICAs working in concert with ICAI in Brussels. Although the Order structures had provided a consistent platform through which to serve the Institute in the past, they no longer seemed adequate for the future. The annual international assignments which the Order had negotiated for its members to serve in the multifarious locations of the ICA were discontinued – people were where they were, and any future changes would be negotiated by individuals and the various national entities. The Panchayat, a team of five people who oversaw the care and operation of the Order in ways patterned after the village councils of five elders in India, was dissolved and no further leadership team was elected. The long-term care funds which the group had amassed for retirement, children's education and long-term health care over the past decades had mostly been loaned to the Institute to fund its international programming (these loans were largely forgiven); the remaining available cash balance was eventually disbursed among the current members in a one-time final payment in amounts based on the number of years of service. For some this was harsh medicine, for others it was simply acknowledging the current reality, for others it provided a unique opportunity for the national ICAs to flourish in their own unique ways. The outcomes of these decisions are highlighted in the discussion of the Institutes' third pass down the Straightaway of Success earlier in this paper.

The Institute's most recent Drive to Sustainability happened at and between the 6<sup>th</sup> quadrennial meeting in Guatemala in 2004 and the organization's General Assembly that was held in Toronto Canada in 2006. Representatives of the various national ICAs met for two days after the Guatemala conference and thoroughly discussed the options facing the group. After this meeting, the elected leadership of ICAI gathered briefly to make an important decision. The then vacant position of Secretary General of ICAI was offered to a dynamic young Ghanaian, Lambert Okrah. Lambert had started ICA Ghana a decade earlier and had built it into a vibrant and financially viable national organization. Furthermore, he had established important contacts within the UN network. He accepted the position beginning September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2004 and began providing valuable direction, passion and leadership at the international level. In 2005, the Executive Committee of the Board formalized the decision to move the international office from Brussels to Montreal in order to locate the headquarters of the organization closer to the major bodies of international policy, like the UN, as well as to capitalize on Canada's positive role in global politics and its extensive network of consular offices.

By the time that the 2006 General Assembly (GA) was ready to begin, the legal arrangements for moving the offices and finances to Canada were in place pending official votes. Furthermore, negotiations were underway with Montreal International (MI) to provide major financial assistance for the move. MI, a partnership among government and business, is dedicated to helping international organizations locate their international headquarters in Montreal. The alternatives facing the delegates to the GA were whether to maintain the status quo of an international organization with a small volunteer staff that was totally reliant on member dues or to expand to five full-time staff, with competitive salaries, and an organizational budget that included member dues, individual contributions and foundation grants. A skilled facilitation led the group through five days of intensive deliberations and planning that resulted in the adoption of a 5-year business plan for a staff of at least five people. The plan included a substantial budget that provides the resources for enhancing the organizational capacity of the member ICAs and ensuring that the ICA's grassroots wisdom is included in the global policy dialogues. A major five-year financial grant for ICAI was approved by MI in November. The ICAI Secretariat staff moved into its new office in April 2007 and a staff of 5 was appointed. ICAI began 2007 poised to enter the next major phase of the organization's growth and development.

## Pit Stops

At night under the light of the moon, the rabbits rest in their burrows and the birds quit singing until the next sunrise. The world rests at night to gather strength for the coming day. This break from the hustle of the day provides an important rejuvenation, essential for the long-term functioning of individuals and organizations.

During the summers in the 1960's and 1970's the Institutes held Summer Programs at the centers in Chicago. These drew together staff and related volunteers for times of

## Pit Lane

Pit Lane runs parallel to the front straightaway between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> turns. Each car has a well marked spot to stop for fuel, new tires and minor repairs and adjustments. When the driver pulls into Pit Lane and swerves into their pit, a flurry of activity begins. A pneumatic jacking system lifts the car off the ground. Individual crew members change up to 4 tires as needed. Minor adjustments may need to be made to the front and rear aerodynamics with the turn of a wrench. The fuel-man attaches a large hose to a sealed fitting and the gravity pulls 22 gallons of ethanol into the car's puncture-proof fuel cells. Ten seconds after arriving in the pit (less time than it took you to read this box of information), the driver races the engine, the jacks drop the car to the ground and racing continues.



Photo Left:  
Pit Stop Practice

celebration, reflection and research. Using the ICA's *Technologies of Participation*, extensive in-depth analysis was conducted in the social and religious arenas. One summer focused on developing an elaborate 36-Tactic system for local congregation renewal. Another created a multi-level systematic analysis of the Social Processes that could be applied in any cultural framework.

Beginning with the IERD in 1984, the global gathering and research dimension of the Institute has been conducted on a four-year cycle. These events draw together people associated with the ICA as well as others concerned about similar grassroots issues. The week-long format includes sharing approaches that work and analysis of ways to be more effective in the communities in which people are working. The next quadrennial conference will be held in Tokyo, Japan in October 2008. Details of this conference are available on the ICAI website – [www.ica-international.org](http://www.ica-international.org).

## The Future

ICAI enters 2007 with the largest full-time staff and budget in recent history. Around the globe, national ICAs are taking renewed interest in working together and are focusing on some of the major issues of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century including HIV/AIDS, women's empowerment and reforestation. In thinking about the long-term future, the ICAs are designing programs that take into account three major unique realities of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Simply put: 1) the daily production rate of oil can not be substantially increased (by any means), 2) the quantity of fresh water is limited and many communities' needs are approaching the amount that is available to them and 3) the actions of the human species are having dramatic long-term effects on the entire eco-system of Planet Earth. When asked to summarize the Institute's vision for the future, some people say that we are working toward: Sustainable Environmental Practices, Participatory Social Structures and an Inclusive Profound Spirituality.

Individuals and organizations wishing to join in the work of the ICA should contact their nearest ICA office and plan to attend the Quadrennial Conference in Tokyo in 2008.

## The Following Circuits

The original paper ended with the above invitation to the ICA's seventh Quadrennial Conference in Tokyo. In 2010, ICA International held a general assembly at ICA India's Environmental Education Center in Talegaon. At that time, the organization disbanded the Secretariat staff and reorganized itself as a peer to peer network. One additional Quadrennial Conference on Human Development was held in Nepal in 2012.

The author updated the original paper in 2020 and made it available to people interested in the growth and development of the ICA in response to a specially held board meeting of ICA-USA. The meeting focused on creating 10-month action items to deal with short-term needs. As this paper indicates, such course corrections and adjustments have occurred before in an organization which understands itself to be shaping the future direction of Planet Earth.

## Appendix A

### General Insights About Navigating Life's Corners

1. *Corners Come* – operating in life as though changes of direction will not be required will definitely lead to problems.
2. *Prepare to Turn* – successfully navigating tight corners requires properly approaching the change and finding a reliable line through it.
3. *Look Sideways* – looking straight ahead when encountering a turn – anticipating more of the same – will usually lead to pain and disaster.
4. *Get Through* – remember the objective of the turn is to get through it, give a little if needed, and take creative chances when they emerge.
5. *Find the Groove* – remember carefully your pathway through each turn. Life is pervaded by a kind of cyclicity and the questions and concerns of each turn will probably arise again.
6. *Envision the Exit* – going into the turn, or as soon as possible thereafter, try to imagine where you want to be when you leave the turn. Take the appropriate measures to position yourself for the long journey that follows.
7. *Pit Stop Under Yellow* – choose carefully when to stop for nourishment and regrouping; if possible, pick a time when others, too, have slowed down, when the tumult of transformation has temporarily subsided. At Indy when an accident occurs, a yellow caution light appears, and everyone must drastically slow down and not pass anyone on the track. Since everyone has slowed down, this is a good time to stop for fuel and fresh tires.



Above: 1911 winning car (yellow) and the 2011 winning car (orange and white). 100 years of transformation at the Indianapolis 500.

Below: Leader Card Offenhauser powered roadster, that Roger Ward drove to victory.

