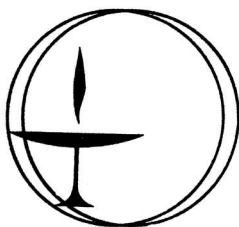

Unitarian Fellowship of Decatur

A HISTORY

by

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five dollars

IN MEMORIAM

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On the rainy night of March 30, 1953 a group of 16 religious liberals met in the Dubonnais Room of the Hotel Orlando in Decatur. Two of them, John Regan and Kenneth Campbell, are said to have arrived drenched.

The group gathered in response to a notice in the Decatur newspapers inviting all religious liberals in the community to meet at the hotel that night. The notice was authored by Monroe Husbands, field organizer for the American Unitarian Association in the Midwest states. Husbands led the discussion, and invited those present to become the nucleus of a Unitarian church or Fellowship.

Their ranks being thin, it was decided to form a Fellowship, and Husbands gave instructions on how to apply to AUA for a charter. The hotel meeting was on a Monday night, and it was agreed to meet the following Sunday night in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Swarm to sign the charter application.

Husbands is said to have come to Decatur because Mrs. Eva Douthit and Paul Swarm were members of the Unitarians' Church of the Larger Fellowship, whose members are scattered in many countries around the world and to whom copies of sermons and other Unitarian literature are sent regularly from AUA (now UUA) headquarters at 25 Beacon St. in Boston. Most of the 16 who attended the two meetings had not known each other. Those at the first meeting were:

Ralph Fredrickson
Franklin and Evelyn MacKay
Mrs. Eva Douthit and her daughter,
Mrs. Mary Kawula
John and Evelyn Regan

Kenneth Campbell
Paul and Bee Swarm
Kathleen and Dotte Turner
Frank Volle
Bud and Marian Brundage
Mrs. Beulah Breuer

The same group attended the second meeting and became charter members. Their petition for a Fellowship charter drew a quick response from national headquarters at 25 Beacon Street and a charter, dated April 6, 1953, was received within a few days.

The Fellowship began at once to hold Sunday morning meetings in the YMCA chapel. There were social get-togethers, usually with refreshments, and discussions of Unitarian philosophy. Only five of the charter member group had been Unitarians, and they provided early leadership of the Fellowship, along with advice obtained from correspondence with the AUA Boston office. The five were Fredrickson, who had been a member of a Unitarian church in Minneapolis; the MacKays, members in Ft. Wayne, Ind., and Mrs. Douthit and Mary Kawula, from the once thriving and influential Unitarian church in Shelbyville, Ill.

Fredrickson was elected first president, and other officers were Evelyn MacKay, vice president, and Dotte Turner, secretary and treasurer. A constitution was drafted and adopted, which divided the office of secretary and treasurer and provided for a board of trustees.

Speakers during the first year were from Bloomington, Champaign and Alton Unitarian churches, and faculty members from James Millikin University at Decatur and Illinois State University in

Normal. When such speakers could not be scheduled, members of the Fellowship group filled in, with Fredrickson and MacKay serving most often.

The going was tough, particularly during the first year when the group had to get along without even a part-time pastor, and finances were meager. Efforts to recruit other liberals in the community brought disappointing results. A religious survey had been held in Decatur the winter before the Fellowship was formed, and the Fellowship sent letters to all in the survey who listed themselves as "no religion." Only one person responded, and he never became active in the group. Letters were sent to 800 teachers, but none came.

During that period the writer of this history heard about the group and began regular attendance. Within a short time Mr. and Mrs. Kurt Lord, Mr. and Mrs. Glenn England, Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Robertson, Mr. and Mrs. Harry Cole, Miss Lena Mills and a few others became active.

Carl Whittier, who had just graduated from the Harvard Divinity School, came during the summer of 1954 as minister and membership recruiter, for a fee of \$250. He lived and batched in the home of Mrs. Douthit, who was out of the city, and took many of his meals at the homes of Fellowship members. His efforts, backed by hard work of some members, produced encouraging results, and meetings that summer were held in the old Jewish Temple on West Prairie Street.

After Whittier left, the Fellowship members had to take fairly frequent turns "preaching," and for some it was far from easy. Volle, who panicked easily when trying to appear before even a small audience, came near fainting the first two times

he occupied the pulpit. MacKay, who found it much easier, on his first appearance distracted from what he was saying by rattling coins in his pocket; after that, Evelyn emptied his pocket every time he was Sunday morning speaker.

This writer, who had been a newspaperman for 30 years and a member of the Unitarian church in Milwaukee 14 years before coming to Decatur, sought to help members who had not had Unitarian backgrounds by abstracting Earle Morse Wilbur's "Our Unitarian Heritage," which still ranks as the best available history of Unitarianism, into four parts. Reading these provided programs from the pulpit for four Sundays.

Although sources on which the Fellowship drew for Sunday programs were generous and often included persons with expertise on social problems, filling the pulpit on Sunday mornings still weighed rather heavily on members who were willing to take turns at it. So it was with considerable relief that finances in 1955 permitted hiring as part-time minister a student from Meadville Theological Seminary, a school of training for the Unitarian ministry at the University of Chicago.

The first in a series of these young men was Karel F. Botermans. Karel came down once a month for the 1955-1956 church year, and twice a month the next year. To say his services were a boon to the struggling Fellowship would be putting it mildly. A native of the Netherlands and whose experiences in World War II gave him maturity well beyond his years, Karel early showed prospects of going far in the ministry.

What he contributed to growth of the group into a strong if still comparatively small Fellowship

would be hard to measure, and those who were members when he served here give him credit for building a momentum whose thrust can still be felt. His unusual abilities were recognized in the community well beyond Fellowship circles.

Second in the Fellowship's long list of part-time pastors from Meadville was Bill Jacobson, who at the time this history was written was full-time pastor at the more than century-old and very strong Unitarian church in Bloomington. Bill had extensive college training, having graduated earlier from a Lutheran theological school.

During the church year 1958-59 the Fellowship, at the suggestion of Meadville, had three students rotate as part-time pastors, filling the pulpit at least twice a month. The three were Dick Nash, Kenneth Helms and Robert Wolfe. Nash served alone the following year, coming twice a month.

A practice that for a time was an important part of the Fellowship's activities was built up during the period of the first student pastorates. Most of the time the students arrived in town on Saturday afternoon, and as still is being done, they were entertained overnight at the home of a Fellowship member. Discussion sessions were held on Saturday night, with the pastor's hosts serving refreshments. These social occasions enabled the group to get acquainted with new pastors faster, gave them a chance to know the members better and revealed a wide variety of shades of belief among the membership.

Another practice that built up slowly at first but since has become what most members regard as the highlight of the Fellowship's entire program, was a meeting after the services for discussion of

the topic the speaker had presented. This soon was accompanied by coffee, tea and cookies or other light refreshments. The "coffee hour" after services gained greater and greater interest and importance, and mainly as a result of this the Saturday night get-togethers faded out except for special occasions.

It would be hard to overemphasize the importance of the Sunday morning coffee hour over the last 10 years; these sessions often are quite animated, and run for about an hour. Both the student pastors and guest speakers have come to expect to be "shot at" rather sharply and views they have expressed in presentation of the morning topic taken apart. Such attacks from around the table always are friendly and in the flavor of a constructive effort to get at or near the bottom of the subject under discussion, and the speakers like it. Some have said that this period of defending the ideas they had presented was more fun than occupying the pulpit.

Sometimes the speaker's views on his subject were obviously modified during the coffee hour discussion, and divergent views of Fellowship members also were changed. Contributions of individual members of the group, most of whom have a wide reading background, have been helpful to each other and even more to the student pastors. Nearly everyone of them has testified that he did considerable "growing" during his pulpit service in Decatur, and much of it had to take place in the coffee hour discussions.

Visitors to the Fellowship always are invited to stay for "coffee and discussion," and in numerous instances have found the sessions so interesting as to prompt them to become members of the group.

These discussions have become a strong "institution" with the Fellowship, and it is interesting to note that the same thing has happened elsewhere; coffee hours, accompanied by discussion of the morning topic, have come to be an important item in the programs of many Unitarian churches and Fellowships.

Our coffee hour got its start while the Fellowship was meeting at the YMCA chapel. Following services, the group adjourned from the chapel to a back room where there was a table and chairs, for discussion of the morning discourse. Members took turns in preparing the coffee at home and bringing it in thermos containers. No kitchen facilities were available; the coffee cups had to be taken home for washing, and sometimes paper cups were used.

Early members of the Decatur group will remember that Frank MacKay, one of the most dedicated and hard working members of the Fellowship, helped build the coffee hour into something worthwhile. In the days when some of the members were too timid to jump in, Frank would make a provocative comment or ask a question that was certain to evoke response.

There was about a two-year suspension of having Meadville students as pastors, during which the Fellowship engaged Prof. Stanley Norton of Illinois State University to serve two Sundays a month as pastor. Prof. Norton was very able and his pastorate added considerable strength to the Fellowship, whose members were saddened by his untimely death from an illness that developed while he was on a tour of duty teaching in Jordan.

As the membership grew stronger, the need to acquire meeting quarters of its own came to be recognized by the Fellowship, and a "steering committee" to look for a site was named. Ed Seymour, a Decatur realtor, was made chairman and others who served on the committee were John Heil and David Macarus. After much searching early in 1961, the membership agreed to purchase the two-story residence at 716 West William Street, at a price of \$13,500. A down payment of \$2,500 was made, with the remainder to be paid off monthly under a land contract.

Raising the down payment and getting the building ready for church use gave the membership a busy summer in 1961. The Fellowship gratefully accepted from the few remaining members of the old Shelbyville Unitarian church an offer of the furniture and carpets from their church building, which was no longer in use. This was arranged through Mrs. Douthit and Dr. and Mrs. Elvin Clark, who had been among the last half dozen of the Shelbyville church congregation.

Everyone pitched in, and within two months the Shelbyville church furnishings had been moved up to the new quarters. Part of the furniture was painted white, Sunday school rooms organized and equipped on the second floor, and arrangements made for parking on the rear lawn. A first church service was held on June 18 with Ralph Fredrickson, the Fellowship's first president, as speaker.

Unitarian House, as the church building was named, was dedicated on Aug. 13, 1961, with Karel F. Botermans, then pastor of the Unitarian church in Flint, Mich., delivering the dedicatory sermon. Rabbi Leo F. Turitz, of Temple B'Nai

Abraham, extended greetings of himself and his congregation, with whom the Fellowship for several years held joint services once a year, alternating in their church buildings.

It was peculiarly fitting that at this point in the Fellowship's history, Frank MacKay was president. His enthusiasm over the Fellowship having a church building of its own prompted him to make a talk that reflected his deep feeling on the occasion. There should be room in the Fellowship history to quote briefly from Frank's talk, which he had written in longhand and read. Here are excerpts:

"This is a wonderful day for us. Our cup runneth over. Eight years ago, 16 of us met to form this Fellowship, through which we could merge and share our liberal religious beliefs.

"The first year, with Ralph Fredrickson as our president, we had some discouraging moments. We were few and funds were meager, but we felt we had something we wanted. We owe so much to the many people who gave us needed help . . . to Kenneth Walker and members of his Bloomington church congregation, to Karel Botermans and the other fine young ministers from Meadville, and to our good friend Rabbi Turitz who has been more than generous and is with us today.

"Several years ago we had a dream, and set up a savings account which we have called our "Cathedral Fund." I believe the first year the savings amounted to \$75; last year they had grown to \$500 and Dave Macarus who was then our president said, 'we need and want a home of our own, and let's get it.' A request for the necessary funds was mailed, and the response was wonderful. Our House

Committee with the aid of John Regan, our attorney, bought this house, and I am sure all of us are proud of it.

"We have common ground in that we recognize that we all have prejudices and are willing to discuss them. We are deists, theists, humanists, and our social and political beliefs differ as widely. And we are vocal in defending our positions.

"We are still few in number and our funds are meager, but we are enjoying our experience as a Fellowship. Our doors are open and all are welcome to join us. We simply ask that you unite with us in search of truth in religion and in life."

The Fellowship's furnishings from the old Shelbyville church included walnut pulpit, two pulpit chairs, some pedestals, bookcases, tables, an old organ, and 99 oak chairs. There also was a small library of books and the communion silver of Jasper Douthit, a pioneer minister in the Shelbyville community whose ability was so outstanding that he was nationally known for quite a period. He was active in promotion of chautauquas, for which he helped make Shelbyville famous. One of the most interesting volumes in the library is an autobiography of Pastor Douthit which treats extensively with life in south central Illinois nearly a century ago.

Work of painting the chairs and some of the other furniture, refinishing the cupboards, tables and bookcases, along with touching up the exterior of the house and grounds, was not completed until late fall of 1961. As funds became available, major repairs including a new roof, painting the exterior and interior, an overhaul of the furnace and some lesser items had to be taken care of.

Special mention should be made of the 99 chairs, which serve as the church pews. They are oak and of a style much in vogue before and for awhile after the turn of the century. They are a Windsor-type identified in the antique books as "arch back," with five spindles. Some of them were used a few years ago in Decatur Theater 7's presentation of *Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Also with moving into the new quarters, other chores developed. Until the annual budget made regular janitor services possible, members of the Fellowship served, usually as couples, a month at a time in sweeping, dusting, shifting furniture as needed for special occasions — then shifting it back, and whatever other tidying up was needed to keep the place in order. There always has been plenty of "involvement" in being a member of the Fellowship, and the willingness of almost everyone to handle his share of the chores is something about which all have been proud and have derived a recognizable benefit. This has enabled members to feel that they are a part of something that is very much alive, and to recognize a closer relationship to each other than is possible in a larger church.

This flavor of the Fellowship has been enhanced noticeably by the greeter service provided on Sunday mornings by Glenn England, often with some backing up by his wife, Mildred. Glenn not only extends greetings and a welcoming hand at the door, but if some younger member hasn't already taken care of the chore, sees that the front steps are clear of leaves and other minor debris, or ice and snow.

Similar dedicated service in brightening the meeting room and dining room coffee table with arrangements of cut flowers, was handled for some years by Mrs. Frieda Seymour and more recently by Mrs. Carol Banton. Frieda rated as a professional, and qualified as a flower show judge. Carol has varied the program with dried arrangements and pine cones in winter when cut flowers were not available.

The first funeral conducted in Unitarian House was the memorial service held for John S. Heil, whose sudden death on Oct. 18, 1961 while alone in his home in Eastmoreland, was a shock to the members. Robert Reed, then pastor of the Bloomington Unitarian church, officiated. John, who had extensive real estate ownings in the community and was a former newspaperman, had a deep interest in the Fellowship and had an important role in acquisition of its church building. He left the residue of his \$215,000 estate to the Fellowship. The gift, said by his administrators to amount to \$82,778, was to come into possession of the Fellowship in 20 years or late in 1981.

First special occasion in Unitarian House was the holding of "Jasper Douthit Sunday" on Jan. 21, 1962, in recognition both to the memory of the illustrious pioneer preacher and educator and to the Shelbyville church for the Decatur church's furnishings. Speaker for the occasion was Dr. John F. Hayward, professor of theology at Meadville Seminary and who had served as student pastor at the Shelbyville church while attending the seminary. A potluck dinner was served following Dr. Hayward's address.

The evening before, the first wedding performed in the Unitarian House united Miss Rita Braddy, a member of the Fellowship, and Richard Hughes, who later also became active in the group. Officiating at the wedding was Rev. Kenneth Walker, pastor emeritus of the Unitarian church in Bloomington. A reception in the church followed the ceremony.

Along with most of the Unitarian and Universalist churches and Fellowships around the country, the Decatur Unitarian Fellowship voted for the merger of the two denominations, which took place in negotiations that were completed in Boston May 11, 1961. At that time the membership of the American Unitarian Association in the United States and Canada was 118,000 and that of the Universalist Churches of America was 71,000.

It was later voted not to change the name of the Decatur Fellowship to include the word "Universalist," mainly because of the length of the combined name. A few of the Fellowship members have had Universalist backgrounds, and Universalism actually came to Decatur 99 years before any organized Unitarian group was formed.

A small brick church was built in the 100 block on East Prairie Street in 1854 by a group of Universalists headed by Rev. D. P. Bunn, who was the church's first pastor and later served as chaplain for a unit of Decatur troops in the Civil War. He afterward became one of the best known Universalist leaders in Illinois.

Accounts differ on whether a second story was added to the church building in 1875, or whether the first building was replaced by a new one. At any rate, the ground floor was rented for use of a

store and the second floor, which was made into a hall, served as the meeting place of the congregation which had a maximum of 110 members. The original structure had been the first brick church in Decatur. Records differ on whether the charter members numbered 9 or 28.

The second church, which is still standing and whose tall arched windows contrast greatly with architecture of other buildings in the block, was built by Ichabod Baldwin, father of Hester I. Baldwin, leading Decatur grain dealer and who was one of an impressive list of prosperous members of the little church. Other families included the Spanglers, after whom Spangler bridge — now William Street bridge — was named; the Reas, for whom Reas bridge was named; Capt. Seth Post, a lawyer; the Bushers, Taits, Mr. and Mrs. J. B. Hanks, the Capps, and a member of the Powers family.

David L. Bunn, son of the original pastor, became one of Decatur's leading attorneys and his son Frank and daughter Edna were talented musicians. It is recorded that the Universalists had a quartet which the First Presbyterian church pastor invited to sing in his church one Sunday. They are reported to have limited their repertoire to hymns, but a woman member protested to the pastor that she never again wanted to hear "opry music" in the church.

Years later, after the Universalists ceased to operate — the last recorded church meeting was in 1907 — First Presbyterian borrowed from its musical talents by making Miss Edna Bunn its organist, a role in which she served for nearly a half century.

During its active period, the Universalist church had served the needs of religious liberals who had moved to Decatur from the East and who believed that salvation was vouchsafed to all and need not be procured by conversion; they also rejected orthodox beliefs in hellfire and damnation. The fact the church's members dwindled after 1895 and the church faded out just after the turn of the century is doubtless due mainly to the fact that evangelical churches became more liberal and ceased to stress tenets that had been objectionable to the liberals.

There is no noticeable evidence that the Unitarian Fellowship has attracted to its ranks any descendants of the families that had been active in Decatur's Universalist church; apparently they feel comfortable in the liberalized Methodist and Presbyterian congregations.

During its 20 years, the Fellowship has brought some well known speakers to Decatur and has engaged in or originated several important community activities.

Preston Bradley, nationally known radio pastor of Chicago's Union Church, was the first, and was brought here through the efforts of the Fellowship's aggressive President Fredrickson on Oct. 18, 1953, a few months after the Fellowship was organized. A sizeable auditorium was needed, and the well attended meeting was held at night in the First Congregational church, then at the corner of Eldorado and Church streets.

Other well known speakers, whose addresses were heard by members and invited guests included:

Dr. Henry Nelson Wieman, distinguished visiting professor of philosophy at Southern Illinois Uni-

versty, writer and professor emeritus of the University of Chicago's Divinity school.

Dr. Samuel Marti of Mexico City, Mexican educator and visiting professor at Western Illinois University at Macomb.

Dr. Rudolf Dreikurs, Chicago psychiatrist and editor at the Adler Institute.

Dr. D. Paul Miller, professor of sociology at Illinois Wesleyan University in Bloomington, occupied the pulpit about once a year for several years, and whose appearance always was a special occasion.

Dr. Harry Tiebaut, professor of philosophy at the University of Illinois.

The Fellowship is indebted to Dr. John Westover of Western Illinois University, where he was active in a Unitarian church group, for bringing Dr. Marti, and speakers from India, Sweden, and a member of the Mohammedan faith while they were under visiting assignments at Western.

Another highlight appearance in the pulpit was that of Dr. Dana McLean Greeley, past president of UUA, whose address was an inspiration to the Fellowship.

Besides Rev. Kenneth Walker of Normal, who has been pressed into service on numerous occasions, other nearby pastors who have appeared as Sunday morning speakers and otherwise helped the Fellowship include Arnold Westwood of Champaign and Zolton Nagey of Alton. Dr. John Kinne-man of the Bloomington Unitarian church and member of the faculty at Illinois State University also has spoken before the group several times.

The most important community activity the Fellowship has generated is the Planned Parent-

hood unit in Decatur. The first meeting leading to its organization was held in Unitarian House, and several Fellowship members served on the steering committee that led to application to the state for incorporation as a not-for-profit agency. Serving on the committee were Mrs. Irene Pillow, Miss Lena Mills, Francis Person, then Fellowship president; Charles Myerson and Mrs. Ruth Philleo. Several committee meetings were held in Unitarian House from January to June 1 in 1966.

The Decatur Planned Parenthood Clinic was opened Nov. 6, 1967, in the Wabash Hospital Building. First pieces of furniture for the clinic were a physical examination table and two cabinets, gifts of Dr. and Mrs. Elvin Clark of the Fellowship. On Nov. 2, 1967 the Fellowship gave the clinic \$50, and on March 28, 1971, it gave \$200 more. A similar gift followed in 1972. The clinic had gifts of \$2,000 the first year and Mrs. Pillow, who had been clinic president during the organization period, resigned that role to become volunteer director.

Mrs. Pillow served in that capacity two years without pay, and since then the clinic has had financial aid from the state. Financial help was given the clinic during its lean years by several individual members of the Fellowship. One of these, Wendall Price of Assumption, brought his truck and helped the clinic move from the Wabash Hospital to its new quarters at 1891 North Water street, and installed locks on the filing cases.

Another civic activity of the Fellowship for a period in the late 1960s was entertaining on weekends foreign soldiers who were in training at Chanute Airforce Base at Rantoul. The soldiers were kept overnight in members' homes, attended

church services Sunday morning and were taken to potluck dinners in the city parks on Saturday night. Religious discussions on the latter occasions proved stimulating in both directions; the visitors were of the Moslem, Buddhist and other faiths.

Two Fellowship families, Howard and Lorraine Peterson and Chester and Virginia Strohecker of Arthur, have had foreign students live with them for a full academic year. These students have attended Fellowship services regularly and some have taken part in the coffee hour discussions. On one occasion two of them gave talks, illustrated with color slides, of their homelands.

Deaths of three dedicated members, Frank MacKay, Kenneth Campbell and Howard Peterson, were severe blows to the Fellowship. Peterson and MacKay were former presidents, and Ken's services in the early years in arranging for outside speakers was a great boost. He also promoted two or three series of forums, and interviews by Fellowship members with public officials and others over TV Station WAND in Decatur on subjects of current interest. Frank died in 1966, Ken in 1967 and Howard in 1972.

Good working relations have been maintained with other Unitarian-Universalist groups in central Illinois. On Easter Sunday, 1961, the Fellowship as a body attended services at the Unitarian church in Bloomington where Robert Reed, who appeared once as a student pastor in Decatur, was minister.

Regional meetings and conferences have been attended by the MacKays, Ken Robertson, James H. Beaumont, both former presidents; this writer and others in St. Louis, Milwaukee, Chicago, Bloomington, Champaign and Springfield. Joint summer

picnics have been held with the Springfield Fellowship, which was founded in 1951.

Student ministers since the Fellowship moved into its own house have included Vernon Tegtmeyer, Rupert Lovely, Jack Wentz, Frank Carpenter, Rainford Gaines, Michael Cunningham, Vern Barnett, Robert Karnan, Douglas Gallagher and Bruce Marshall.

While occasionally it has been a struggle, the Fellowship has kept a Sunday School going most of the time since the first year of operation. Heading this activity was a difficult role, and superintendents and teachers who deserve special mention include Evelyn MacKay, Ken and Jeanne Robertson, Leonard Woodyard, Dee Meyerson, Lorraine Peterson, Ann Cushing, Tom and Ruth Warfield, Bob and Phyllis Hathaway, Irene Pillow, Helen Nichols, Tom and Sara Abbott, and Ann Stanhope.

A peak period for the Sunday School was the early and mid sixties when Anne Person, talented violinist and music teacher, directed a sizeable choir group of young people, whose choir robes were made by women of the Fellowship. Much of the church music now is provided by a record player, purchased as a memorial to Ken Campbell.

Serving as president of the Fellowship is recognized by all members as a responsible role, and those who have accepted the office have given it their best. With the latest election of officers — for the 1973-1974 church year — the twenty-first president is now serving. The list includes:

Ralph Fredrickson, for the	
year	1953-1954
Evelyn MacKay	1954-1955

Kurt Lord	1955-1956
John Regan	1956-1957
Ken Robertson	1957-1958
Harry Cole	1958-1959
Lena Mills	1959-1960
David Macarus	1960-1961
Franklin MacKay	1961-1962
Francis Person	1962-1963
Ken Robertson	1963-1964
Robert Hathaway	1964-1965
Howard Peterson	1965-1966
Evelyn MacKay	1966-1967
Gordon Snoeyenbos	1967-1968
John Regan	1968-1969
David Snoeyenbos	1969-1970
James Beaumont	1970-1971
Roger Leiser	1971-1972
Raymond Stanhope	1972-1973
Jon Baxter	1973-1974

For seven years the Fellowship has operated what it has called the Unitarian Book Table in the library room at Fellowship House. Books of interest to religious liberals are available for reading and some are for sale.

The activity, which for some time has had its own fund, was started at the suggestion of John Heil, who thought Fellowship House should have a library. John contributed several boxes of books, and others helped. Books from the library of the old Shelbyville church were added, and included some historic volumes. Irene Pillow was the first to have charge of the Book Table.

Evelyn MacKay took over during expenditure of the approximately \$300 that was paid into the Frank MacKay Memorial Fund after Frank's death, and this enabled a big expansion of the library facilities. Included was purchase of lumber for bookcases, which were built and painted by Ralph Donovan. Evelyn also helped with starting a small children's library upstairs for use of the Sunday School. Some of these books were given by Fellowship members in memory of Mrs. Eva Douthit.

Sue Donovan has been librarian for the last few years, and catalogued all the books except those for sale. Profit from book sales and sale of note-paper is keeping the library going and growing.

A LRY (Liberal Religious Youth) group was formed among high school age young people in the Fellowship in 1964. This action followed attendance by four young members of the Fellowship at a spring conference of LRY held in Third Unitarian Church in Chicago. The four were Richard Peterson, Mick Mecklenburg, Tara Seymour and Joline Hathaway.

The group grew in size over the next few years, with John Peterson, Charla Hathaway, Steve Seymour, Dale and Marcy Kubbs, Dave and Genanne Vance, Richard Pillow, Scott Eakin, Kathy Weaver, Jane Strohecker, Greg Traxler and Kevin Berbaum among those who became active. During the period, LRY conferences were attended by delegations from Decatur in Milwaukee, St. Louis, Evanston, Peoria and Urbana. Senior advisers for the group included Ken and Jeanne Robertson, Evelyn MacKay and Lee Mills.

After having an important role in formation of LRY groups in Springfield, Charleston and Clinton, and being recognized as one of the largest locals in the Missouri-Illinois Conference of LRY, the Decatur group dwindled in size until it faded out. It was reorganized two years later and for the last few years has been active but with a small membership.

The LRY has established the practice of providing one Sunday morning program a year for the Fellowship, and on one occasion provided service for the coffee hour. Its biggest undertaking was renovation, decoration and equipping the church basement, for LRY and other activities that since have been held there. They credit Ray Evans for donation of a heater for the basement room, and Ed Seymour for supplying paint for the walls and filling in what had been a dirt section of the floor.

With James H. Beaumont as advisor in 1970 and 1971, the LRY studied comparative religions, visiting services at several Decatur churches and the Mennonite church in Arthur. Jon and Ann Baxter are now LRY advisors, and special activities in the last year have included attending a circus, going on a nature hike, ice skating, holding a Hallowe'en party and horseback riding.

A special activity that has come to be recognized as useful is the holding of an occasional congregational meeting and evening potluck dinner. While there had been a few earlier, the practice was instituted by Evelyn MacKay during her last term as president; she cooked up a big kettle of

soup for the first one. In a relaxed atmosphere, the members are able to discuss problems of the Fellowship and consider future programs.

Out of these discussions, it is expected a long range planning committee may be organized soon to consider major plans for the Fellowship, including the possibility of acquiring or building larger church quarters when the John Heil legacy becomes available.