

**Muslim Students
Working
Together
Fi Sabilillah**

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The launch of this site is dedicated to Br Aalim Fevens, former VP (Canada)
& Acting President of MSA National, who pioneered MSA National's virtual presence in the early 1990s.

A Little Taste of History

Did you know that MSA National has been one of the oldest and most influential religious organizations in North America?

Did you know that MSA National was the precursor of ISNA, ICNA, MAYA, IMA, AMSS, AMSE, MYNA, Islamic Book Service, and the North American Islamic Trust?

Did you know that MSA National will be forty years old in the year 2003?

It was in **January 1963** that now some of the most respected personalities in the Islamic movement came together at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and formed the MSA of the United States and Canada. Over seventy people from across the country, including Brs. Ahmad Sakr, Mahdi Bhadori, Ahmad Totonji, Ilyas Ba-Yunus, and others, then all students, met in what would be the first of a number of historic gatherings to discuss the state of Muslims in North America.

Muslim student organizations were popping up all over the country, mainly in the mid-west, and comprised largely of foreign graduate students bent on returning home after their studies. Many of them did. But a significant portion realized that they would still have the responsibility of spreading Islam as students in North America. The main goal was always Da'wah. When the chapters realized that working on a national level, in a coordinated and concerted effort may be advantageous, they decided to put their heads together. MSA of the US & Canada was the result.

The very same year—1963—the first MSA of the US & Canada National Convention was held in Urbana-Champaign. Every year since then, MSA has held some form of national convention without failure. It was not until at least 1982 that the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) — an off-shoot of MSA — held their first major convention in place of the MSA National Convention.

The ISNA Convention has become the largest single gathering of Muslims in the Western world, bringing together over 25,000 Muslims to one place every year.

Since 1963, MSA National has been the landmark Muslim organization in North America.

It was under MSA that the first ever Muslim financial trust company — North American Islamic Trust (NAIT) was formed.

MSA was the first to establish a book depository and resale effort — the Islamic Book Service (IBS).

MSA founded the first Muslim publishing company - International Graphics. MSA was the first Muslim group to publish a regular newsletter/magazine (Islamic Horizons and Al-Ittihad).

MSA was the first Muslim Organization to coordinate a national Islam Awareness Week. It was under MSA that nearly every other major Muslim organization was formed — from IMA and MAYA, to AMSS and AMSE.

ICNA, believe it or not, was an off-shoot of MSA. And finally ISNA grew out of MSA, as the students that once had established MSA were no longer students and now professionals in their communities, building mosques and Islamic Centers. It's now your turn to carry on the responsibilities and the achievements of those who have paved the way for Muslims in North America. It's your chance to make a difference.

(Modified from an article that appeared in MSA Link-Winter 1999)

THE INVESTIGATIVE PROJECT ON TERRORISM