In 1975, Harry Rosenberg (who was then at the University of North Carolina but shortly thereafter became Chief, Mortality Statistics Branch, NCHS) wrote to PAA President-elect Sidney Goldstein about the possibility of including a session at the 1976 annual meeting devoted to state and local demographic issues. Harry was told that program planning was complete, but was urged by Goldstein to work through Jeanne Clare Ridley, then chair of the PAA Committee on Population Statistics. With Ridley’s encouragement, Harry asked Walt Hollmann (State of California) and Doris Slesinger (University of Wisconsin) to collaborate on possibly putting something together outside the regular program. They came up with the idea of a breakfast meeting for the 1976 annual meeting. The hope for the meeting was to provide “a forum in which to discuss issues associated with the growing role and responsibilities of demographers in state and local government.” Forty hearty souls gathered at 7:00 a.m. on April 30, 1976, in Montreal, in what was to become a strong annual applied demography tradition. (These early recollections are largely aided by a historical vignette written by Doris Slesinger and published in PAA Affairs in 1984).

For several years, beginning with the pattern set in 1976, Doris Slesinger, at the time a new assistant professor at Wisconsin, organized the Friday morning PAA applied demography breakfast. Doris would send out a mailing to an early list of people interested in applied demography (at the time, almost exclusively State & Local folks), ask who was coming to breakfast, and then guarantee to the conference hotel a fixed number of breakfast eaters. She and her husband, Ed Wellin, would collect the money at the door on Friday morning earnestly hoping to have enough people show up at that early hour to cover the meal costs that she, personally, had guaranteed to the hotel. While briefly entertaining the idea of subcommittee status under the PAA Committee on Population Statistics (COPS), this small but active group of practitioners retained the “caucus” title they informally adopted for the Montreal meeting. Thus was born the State and Local Demography Caucus (caucuses were definitely the "thing" to be back then). The group functioned as a caucus (under Slesinger’s leadership) for two more years, being granted one formal paper session each at the 1977 and 1978 annual meetings.

Quite naturally, Doris began to get a bit nervous that the annual breakfast system might someday break down, and that she and Ed would end up personally financially responsible to a PAA venue site. Consequently, she petitioned PAA President Dick Easterlin early in 1978 for our caucus to become a "temporary committee" so that we would benefit in terms of room fees for the breakfast meeting and, more importantly, so that the costs of the catered breakfast and the guarantee to the hotel could be a responsibility of the Association. The PAA Board acceded to this request at its April 1978 meeting. Thus the Committee on State and Local Demography was born (for the first time). Doris Slesinger was appointed chair of the new committee; other members included Shirly Goetz – New Jersey Department of Labor and Industry, Walter Hollmann – California Department of finance, Julia Martin – University of Virginia, and Harry Rosenberg – National Center for Health Statistics.

The CSLD quickly established a set of mission guidelines, foremost among them “…to bring together at the Annual meeting those who use and those who generate small area data” (FSCP Newsletter, February 1979). In addition, a regular newsletter was launched in November 1978 under the title “New Notes.” Yet, it was somewhat awkward beginning, for the "Committee" quickly morphed into anyone who wished to associate with it – which clearly marked it as
different from other committees in the association. Early membership was on the order of 50-60 individuals. To avoid confusion and enhance efficiency, a "steering committee" structure was adopted (consisting initially of the five individuals mentioned above).

By the early 1980s, more and more demographers from the private sector were attending the S&LD committee meetings and annual breakfast (including, Mary Kay Healy -- Donnelley Marketing; Joan Finch -- Dayton Hudson Corporation, the early American Demographics folks -- Cheryl Russell, Linda Jacobsen, and others; Bill Francis -- Gerber Products; Carl Frederickson -- Credit Union National Association; Dianne Schmidley -- C&P Telephone; Ed Spar -- Market Statistics; and others). Sometime in the very early 1980s the Committee on Business Demography was spun off the S&LD Committee. The Winter, 1982, issue of PAA Affairs contains a brief note that says, "The [Committee on Business Demography] has identified more than 200 members interested in the field." The announcement goes on to say that "a newsletter is now being published" (although my records show that this probably refers to the new Committee on Business Demography being added to the masthead of the CSLD’s periodic “News Notes.” The first issue of the newsletter “Applied Demography” was jointly launched three years later, in September 1985.) The COBD operated on a parallel structure to the S&LDC (i.e., with a steering committee). The two groups began to meet independently at the PAA annual meetings, but the two groups continued the AD breakfast as a joint activity.

Then, in summer, 1987, a commotion arose. I was on the PAA Board at the time so I have reasonably good recollections of this. President Ron Lee received a letter suggesting that a PAA Committee on International Migration be established. The request seemed innocent enough, but some members of the Board were perplexed. There were five standing committees at the time (Finance, Local Arrangements, Membership, Population Statistics, and Public Affairs), three award committees (Sheps, Taeuber, & Thomas), and three special interest committees (S&LD, COBD, and a recently formed China Study and Exchange Committee). Questions quickly arose: What's the Association's policy regarding committees? Why not a committee on Fertility? On infant mortality? What distinguishes a PAA committee form a mere "interest group"? Shouldn't a "committee" have some clear mandate from, and accountability to, the Association? There was widespread agreement among Board members at the time that the lack of fragmentation and Balkanization into formal interest groups was one of the very positive attributes of PAA. The strength of varying opinions and the general momentum of the debate clearly required a review of the matter, and President Lee appointed -- yes -- a committee(!) to look into the matter and report back to the full Board. Dick Udry chaired the committee and I also was appointed to it. Within a year (formally at the 1988 annual meeting), the Board decided to establish a mechanism for naming “special interest groups” within the Association. Four existing subject matter “committees” were grandfathered into the process and rechristened as interest groups. Thus was born the State and Local Demography Interest Group, the Business Demography Interest Group, the China Study and Exchange Interest Group, and the International Migration Interest Group. The new (and somewhat cumbersome) policy on PAA interest groups was announced in the Summer 1988 issue of PAA Affairs.

Then, in October, 1992, the Board once again took up the issue. I do not know exactly what set this in motion (I was no longer on the Board), but my memory is that an interest group had been proposed, the subject of which some members of the Board felt very uncomfortable. Larry