



Susan Decker and Barbara Decker Wachholz
Co-Founders and Vice Presidents
Eastland Disaster Historical Society



As youngsters growing up in the Chicago area, sisters Susan Decker and Barbara Decker Wachholz listened to their grandmother tell them her story of staying afloat in a compartment between decks for hours while surviving the Eastland Disaster. Years later, Susan and Barbara co-founded the Eastland Disaster Historical Society, and thereby assumed their grandmother's former role of storytelling. Of course, the stories that Susan and Barbara tell today are the stories of the thousands of people whose lives intersected on the day of the Eastland Disaster.

In a matter of a sixteen short years, Susan and Barbara have shared the story of the Eastland Disaster with several million people. The personal warmth and compassion that they naturally add to every-thing they do has resulted in the development of an international community of people interested in and connected to the tragedy. This community has enabled the Society to gather, archive, and share names and stories from over 2,000 families with direct connections to the tragedy.



Ted Wachholz
Executive Director and Chief Historian
Eastland Disaster Historical Society

Ted Wachholz took a nearly century-old, obscure tragedy and from it spawned the Eastland Disaster Historical Society (EDHS). Now in its seventeenth year of operations with Ted as the Executive Director, the Eastland Disaster Historical Society has shared the history and stories of the Eastland Disaster with millions of people in the Chicago metropolitan area, across the country, and around the world.

In 2005, Ted authored the third book ever written about the Eastland Disaster. Published by Arcadia Publishing and now in its 4th printing, the book combines captivating images with compelling narrative taken from firsthand accounts of families of victims, survivors, responders, and others directly affected by the tragedy. Ted's passion and interest in the Eastland Disaster was sparked by his personal connection to the tragedy: His wife's grandmother, Borghild "Bobbie" Aanstad, survived the tragedy as a young teenager.



About the Eastland Disaster Historical Society (EDHS)

EDHS passionately preserves and shares the legacies of the tens of thousands of people who were affected by the tragedy, connecting people today to these personal stories and the history of the tragedy.



EDHS is the chief steward of the history of Chicago's greatest loss-of-life tragedy. Organized in 1998, the initial seeds for the Society were planted decades earlier when the co-founders' grandmother, Borghild "Bobbie" Aanstad, told her harrowing story of survival in the Chicago River that morning 100 years ago. The Society has worked to legitimize the importance of the history of the Eastland Disaster, and they have altered the collective historical consciousness of society by sharing the story of the Eastland Disaster with several million people.