

**Report on ICAA Professional Presentation Event**  
**August 20-25, 1995**  
**by Erik R, WSC PI Vice-Chair**

The display booth set up

Beginning on Sunday, August 20th, I assisted George Hollahan, Mary Van Every and Carl Prescott from the WSO in moving materials and setting up our display booth in the exhibition area for the ICAA. This exhibition area was in the gym of the University of California, San Diego (UCSD).

The new booth purchased by the WSO is both smart and professional. It's very easy to move and assemble. Its presentation quality was very good. Only Carl was allowed to actually assemble the booth due to exhibition rules. It only took 35 minutes to assemble the booth. I was quite impressed with the quality and ease that it took to set up (it was just as easy when we broke it down!).

The rest of us (including Tony W, WSC PI Chair) assisted with unpacking and setting up literature on the booth and display table. We did well, sharing our experiences with setting up a booth.

For literature, the WSO brought the Basic Text in English, Portuguese, Brazilian Portuguese, Spanish, German and French languages. Also there were two issues of the NA Way magazine, the "Introduction to NA" booklet, and the pamphlets "Am I an Addict", "Who, What, how and Why", and "For the Newcomer". The WSO staff also assembled a packet using the white NA folder, enclosing a copy of "A Guide to the World Service Office", the "Facts About NA", known as the "Berlin Paper", a WSO product list outlining various languages products are available in, and a geographic presentation of NA meeting concentrations worldwide. Available were copies of the presentation paper to be delivered by Donna M, a Spanish translation of the "Facts About NA", an open invitation for ICAA participants to visit the WSO in the week following the ICAA.

A TV monitor and VCR were rented from the exhibition authority to display the PSA's and the "Just For Today" video.

We also went around to all the exhibitors, exchanging business cards and being "neighborly". This was the beginning of our "networking" exercise.

The exhibition lasted from Monday through Wednesday, between the hours of 12:30 PM and 2:30 PM. After the various ICAA presentations, I would hustle to the Gym and assist with greeting ICAA participants and giving out information, collecting business cards. (This was my first experience in this type of activity. I participated on the Hawaii Regional PI Committee with two booth displays at the Hawaii State Bar Association's Annual Convention. We weren't participants per se in the convention and did not participate in the ritual of exchanging business cards. We tried to engage participants as they came by the booth, inquiring of them and handing out local information and pamphlets.) At the ICAA, I learned to be more engaging and requesting of the participants for their business cards.

We spoke to a lot of participants, encouraging questions, handing out literature with our presentation papers. Many of our contacts knew about NA. Their perceptions seemed mostly positive. We were asked on how to solve certain problems for these professionals. We tried to

help them by making a referral to the WSO, a local NA source or advising them on why the problem they had with NA back home was simply a misunderstanding of how our fellowship works (traditions, committees, etc.). We had a directory of fellowship contacts worldwide and gave this information when needed. We also encouraged all contacts to attend our presentation on Thursday morning.

I think the booth, materials brought and assembled by the WSO were excellent. Our display was professional and inviting. Members of NA who attended the ICAA thanked us and expressed pride in seeing the message of our fellowship available there. I think Carl and Mary did very well and contributed lots of presentation value to our booth.

#### What to improve for next time?

First of all, we should have some type of dolly to assist with moving the heavy boxes of literature. A simple luggage cart would be sufficient. It would be easy to store at the booth or carried away.

Second, we said reconsider whether or not to rent video equipment to show our PSA's and the "Just For Today" video. It seemed to be a distraction and I can remember only one person of many who actually stood there to watch. We set up two chairs for participants to view the videos, but I did not observe anyone actually sitting down to watch.

Third, agreement should be reached by the NA participants on handling inquires and contacts at the booth. At times it seemed like competition by some members to make a contact or answer a question. I backed off a few times to allow the other member handle a contact I was conducting. I understand everyone's enthusiasm, mine included! However, the next time I am involved in the same situation, I would make some "ground rules" on how contacts are handled and referred. I would suggest one person should handle a contact from "cradle to grave". Also we shouldn't "gang up" on contacts. When it was slow, we seemed to surround some of our contacts, which can be uncomfortable to that contact.

Fourth, a policy or procedure should be outlined on the use of business cards by WSO employees and trusted servants at an NA professional presentation. Members of the WSO and both Trustees had business cards with their names on it. All the cards used the WSO address and phone numbers. Myself and Tony W were given "plain" Narcotics Anonymous business cards. There were several reasons given by the WSO for their decision to provide Donna M and Garth P with these special cards. The one I can remember was because the trustees were presenters at the event. In my experience as a trusted servant, I learned not to treat other NA members at a PI event as less than. I felt that the business cards demonstrated to myself and to those we met at the ICAA that we, Tony and I, were different. I feel that all trusted servants are important, regardless of their responsibilities, length of commitment, and length of service to NA. I also feel that the special workers of the WSO are our partners in carrying out this service, I would hope and expect to be treated as such by them.

#### The presentation session to the ICAA

Our presentation was given by Donna M on Thursday, August 24 at 11:00 AM. The location for the presentation was where the plenary sessions were held each morning, the Price Center Ballroom. The audience size averaged about 50 persons with about 20 of the participants entering and leaving during the 90 minute session.

We placed our PI folders at the foot of the stage and then at one of the entrances. I walked through out the ballroom handing out our PI folders with presentation papers and the "Introduction Guide to NA".

There were four papers given, with our paper presented first. Donna did very well. The time allotted was not enough to cover all aspects of written presentation paper. This was inherent in all presentations, as it seemed everyone had 50 minutes worth of material to squeeze into only 15! Her delivery was articulate and was engaging.

We used the overhead projector to display highlights of our paper. It was realized the night before that no provision had been made to use the available audio-visual equipment. Having gone through the week seeing other presentations, it was obvious that smart, concise visual aids kept the audience's attention. Donna worked late into the night creating the overheads. We should be better prepared at the next event!

After Donna finished, the person presiding made a positive comment and then asked the audience if there were any questions for Donna. Questions on methadone versus abstinence, youth in recovery, NA in developing countries, and nicotine use in NA were asked. Donna was very informative in answering them. Also a comment about NA was made by a ICAA participant thanking us for being there.

The focus of the session remained on NA after our presentation. A researcher, Mary O'Brien, gave a research paper entitled "The meaning of recovery: An ethnographic study of Narcotics Anonymous (NA) in Melbourne, Australia". All members of the NA contingent were impressed by her presentation for its quality and informative nature. It was unique to hear my experiences working the 12 Steps of NA presented in a research paper! I think it was fortunate to have her presentation scheduled at the same session.

The other two presenters mentioned twelve step recovery in conjunction with their programs, with NA mentioned several times. They were positive references. After the last presentation, the person presiding asked if there were any more questions or comments from the audience. There were a several questions by professionals of Mary O'Brien. This demonstrated the interest that professionals have on scientific data about Narcotics Anonymous.

It was disappointing that our presentation session was not attended as well as others sessions we had been to during the week. The nature of the host facility, i.e., the UCSD campus, resulted in most of the meeting locations being relatively distant and contributed to attendance choices. It wasn't very easy to change your mind and go to another concurrent session. Once you were there, you stayed.

#### Garth P as discussant

The format for this session was that after all of the presentation papers were given, a "discussant" would present comment on their relevance to the theme for this year's ICAA meeting ("Building Global Bridges"). This was Garth's assigned role as requested by the ICAA.

The presenters covered topics such as "Alcoholics Anonymous and other self help groups in Mexico: Their relationships with professionals", "Alcoholics Anonymous as a mutual-help development: A study in eight societies", and "One year outcomes and alcohol related health care costs offset of Alcoholics Anonymous participation".

I didn't take notes of this session and do not recall any concerns with what happened or what Garth said. We did make new relationships with a researcher and a social worker who are interested in NA. We did not hand out NA material. I'm sure that Garth can relay more information than I have on this topic.

### Networking for NA

In between our presentations and exhibition booth, all of us got together to plan which presentations we would attend each day. We did this so as not to duplicate efforts and make sure we got the widest exposure possible. We were all dressed smartly. I wore a two piece suit most of the time.

When I attended the presentations, I would listen to the speakers to know if NA could be of service to them. If so, I would introduce myself at the end of the meeting, giving them a business card and requesting a card from them. All the cards collected were given to Carl P and Donna M. My understanding is that a thank you note will be sent to those persons we met. Also they will be included on our mailing list for the next issue of the "NA Update for Professionals".

At first I was very nervous about "networking". It was different because I was there as a member of NA, talking about NA. I was not used to engaging into conversation with professionals about NA outside the area of our booth display. After the first day I was much more comfortable at it and was very interested in the persons I was meeting. I realized how important it was for having business cards at hand at all times. I made a contact on the way to the airport! A law enforcement official from London, England expressed interest in our fellowship.

I also got a valuable education about the world of the professional. I asked persons what type of work did they do, why were they there? What did they like about the conference? What opinions did they have of NA? I met professionals from almost every continent and profession. I learned about "Harm Minimization". I discovered that many professionals believe that addiction is a disease. Importantly, I discovered the real lack of scientific data available to these professionals, especially about 12 step organizations.

### Conclusion

I feel that this was a worthwhile event for NA to attend. Our participation will be rewarding in the years ahead because of the contacts we made and the information we shared.

For a long time, I have been out of the loop when it comes to the concerns of professionals, government and non-governmental officials, in the field of addiction. I've been able to "insulate" myself by making public information presentations that are "one-way". I ignored most of their concerns by saying "NA has no opinion on that ...." and then giving them information they weren't asking for! I now realize that a relationship is needed with these professionals. And to have a relationship, you need to have dialogue.

This event is another step in a continuing dialogue with the very persons who can most affect the lives of addicts through out the world. As I sat there during the opening ceremonies, I was reminded of the magnitude of our efforts: to reach the still suffering addict, world wide. We accomplished that and I am grateful to be of service to the NA fellowship.

May the Blessings Be, Erik R.