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NAADAC and the History of Addiction Counseling: An Interview with William White

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For some years, NAADAC has been laying the foundation for the development of a book on the history of addiction counseling. That project is now underway with the assistance of William White, author of *Slaying the Dragon: The History of Addiction Treatment and Recovery in America*. We recently caught up with Bill to give us a progress report on the new book.

NAADAC: Bill, what or who is the inspiration behind the new book on the history of addiction counseling?

Bill White: This book was Mel Schulstad's vision. Mel was a co-founder and first president of NAADAC, and believed that no profession has come of age that lacks a history of its own development. Mel began promoting development of a history of addiction counseling by NAADAC as early as the late 1980s and began laying the foundation for our current project. Mel and I had conversations with Cynthia Moreno Tuohy, NAADAC's Executive Director, about this project for years, and as NAADAC celebrates its 40th anniversary, it just seemed like the time to do it. Cynthia pushed

this book to the top of the NAADAC agenda in hopes we could finish and launch the book at NAADAC's Annual Conference and 40th Anniversary Celebration in Seattle this fall.

NAADAC: What preliminary work was done over the years to prepare for this project?

Bill White: This work began with the NAADAC Foundation National Archive Advisory Council, under the leadership of Mel, co-founder Marcia Lawton, Bill Butynski, Walter Kloetzli, and others. Creation of the NAADAC Archives was an essential step in providing the archival documents that could be drawn upon to research and write the history. I had also created a section on addiction counseling within the Illinois Addiction Studies Archives in anticipation of this project and began collecting the papers of some of the addiction counseling pioneers, including all of the early NAADAC newsletters and all of the issues of *The Counselor* and *Addiction Professional* during the years these magazines served as the communication arms of NAADAC. More recently, Jay Lewis reviewed all of the issues of *The Alcoholism*

Report and created a chronology of the early professionalization of addiction counseling.

NAADAC: How are you approaching your work on this project?

Bill White: My first step was to pull together all of the key archival documents and create a chronology that will serve as the skeleton of the book. That work is all but completed, with a few rare documents remaining that we are trying to locate. The second step was to obtain the interviews completed over the years in anticipation of this project and get them transcribed. Most of that work is completed. The third step involved surveying some of the key leaders within NAADAC over these past decades about the evolution of addiction counseling and NAADAC. The final research step will be locating photographs that will help us tell this story visually. Then comes the really fun part—locking myself up, making sense of all we've collected and writing like a mad man for a few months.

NAADAC: How will this book be different than *Slaying the Dragon*?

Bill White: *Slaying the Dragon* tells the larger story of the evolution of addiction treatment in the United States. While there are sections that detail some aspects of addiction counseling, it is not a definitive history of the evolution of the addiction counselor role. I have always wanted to do a more detailed history focusing on addiction counseling and I'm delighted to now be working on this.

NAADAC: What are you most excited about with this project?

Bill White: Working on this book has given me an opportunity to hear the experiences and insights from some of the leading addiction professionals in the country. Their words are so powerful. To the greatest extent possible, we want the voices from the field to resonate within this book. I'm also excited to be able to give to the field a book that I wish someone could have placed in my hands some 45 years ago as I entered full-time work in the field. I see this book as one

of my final contributions to the field and it is such an honor for me to have been selected to lead this project.

NAADAC: Will there be an opportunity for people in the field to review drafts of the book?

Bill White: Only to a limited extent because of the timeline of finishing the book before the 2014 NAADAC Annual Conference, but we will be sending out chapters as they are completed to key informants. We do anticipate future editions of the book so we are viewing the first printing as a starting point in formalizing a history of addiction counseling. My hope is that feedback on this first edition will enrich subsequent additions. No one will be happier than me if we discover missing chapters within this history through feedback we receive from our readers.

NAADAC: Why should addiction counselors be interested in this history?

Bill White: I can promise that this is going to be a very inspirational history from the quality of the interviews to date, but there is a much deeper reason addiction counselors will want to read this book. Put simply, history can serve as the ultimate experience of supervision. Where else can you get the accumulating wisdom and advice of people who have pursued this calling across multiple eras and across diverse cultural and clinical contexts? I'm not interested in history for the sake of history. I want to mine history for the lessons she can offer us to guide professional and institutional decision-making. I think the new book will provide a helpful guide to do just that.

NAADAC: You speak with a sense of urgency about this project.

Bill White: I do feel that sense of urgency. We are losing the pioneers who laid the foundation for our field. We need to capture their wisdom and their voices for future generations. If we do not do that now, their legacies and what they can continue to offer to us through their vision and their experience will be forever lost.