



3 Who Made Their Mark on CMA

By Mark Cutshall

Meet three leaders: a missions executive, an accountant and a fundraiser. Each has helped turn a page in CMA's unfolding history. While they're reticent to say how CMA has changed them, their singular contributions speak for themselves.

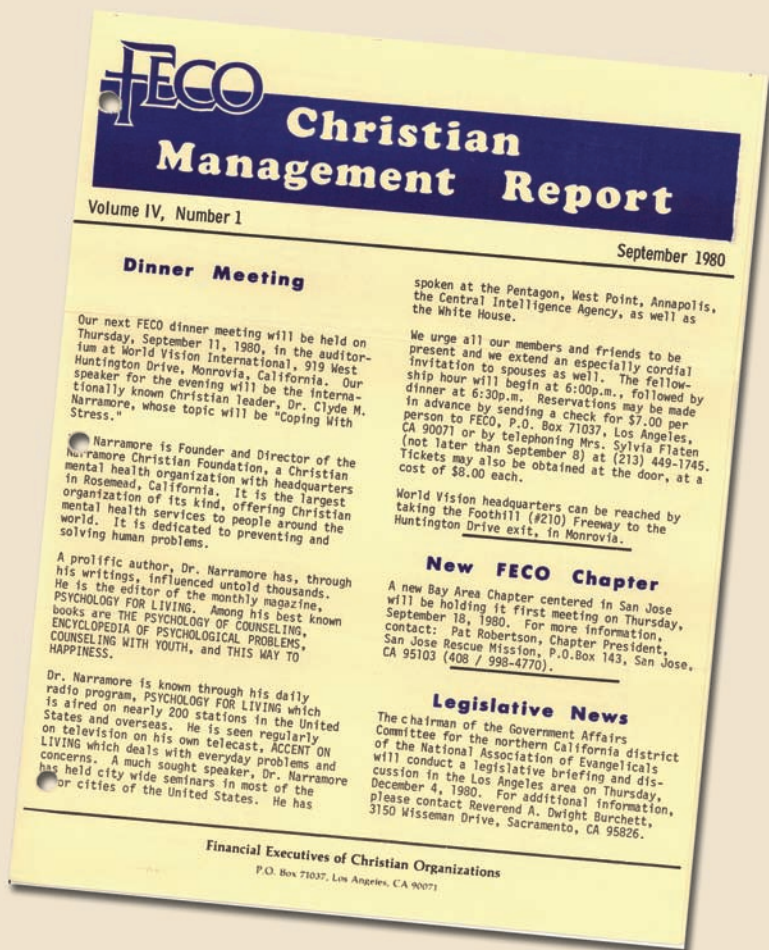
In the late 1960s, a simple lunch invitation actually fed the idea that eventually became Christian Management Association.

Bob Reynolds was the director for Far East Broadcasting in Manila, The Philippines, when he met Alan Bergstedt, who headed up the finance department for Wycliffe Bible

Translators. "One day, I took Alan to lunch at a restaurant in the city. Around the table were several business managers of Christian ministries. We met weekly to swap information and ideas that had helped us in our work. If you had a customs problem, or a matter to resolve with the government, you could ask someone around the table, and get the help you needed."

The food and friendships agreed with Bergstedt. "When I returned to the U.S. as Chief Financial Advisor/Officer for World Vision, I asked Bob if he knew of a





similar group meeting in Los Angeles. When he said 'No,' I was prompted to help start a gathering of ministry leaders."

Bob Reynolds made sure he was part of that initial group of 20 people who gathered in Los Angeles to share management ideas and concerns. "What impressed me most," he says, "is that larger organizations like World Vision openly shared their expertise with smaller ministries. Nothing like this was happening, that I knew about."

Bill Altman was there, too, that day in 1976, as Christian Financial Executives Association was born. The association's corporate name was changed in 1978 to Financial Executives of Christian Organizations, then to Christian Ministries Management Association in 1983, and finally to Christian Management Association in 1991.



A CPA with Ernst and Whinney (now Ernst and Young), Altman wanted to see the new networking effort.

"After we put out the invitations, we really didn't know how many would come to the first meeting," he recalls. "I guaranteed to make up the difference if we didn't reach 20, which is exactly how many showed up."

Though Altman didn't need his checkbook that day, he has participated regularly ever since. He's the only person who has attended all 29 annual conferences. CMA Palm Springs 2007 will be number 30. "And I don't even like to go to conferences," he admits. Still Altman lauds the quality of the event, especially plenary speakers like Dennis Bakke, Ravi Zacharias and Jerry White.

Sylvia Nash, CMA's first executive director (from 1981-1994) says the association's biggest imprint on her career came in the form of mentors.



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“Gifford Claiborne, a fundraising guru, taught me how to grow the association’s membership. He used the same principles he had developed to transform rescue missions across the country,” says Nash, who worked in Fuller Theological Seminary’s development office prior to CMA.

“One principle was frequency of renewal notices,” she says. “At professional conferences, I’d been taught to send out no more than four notices. Gifford taught us to send as many as eight. He believed you keep mailing out notices until it’s no longer profitable. He was right. When we sent out the fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth notices, we’d get more membership renewals.”

Another mentor to Nash, now a management consultant with Lillestrand & Associates, was a mailing list expert named James Johnson. “He would fly to our offices from his home in Dallas on his own dime and donate his time,” says Nash.

James watchword to Nash: You always test small. “CMA didn’t have big budgets,” recalls Nash. “We had tiny budgets, therefore we could only afford to make tiny mistakes. By ‘testing small,’ we could find out what worked and what didn’t, still be accurate in our analysis, and not waste ministry money in the process.”

Nash knew other numbers, too. “By studying attendee patterns, I learned to

estimate conference meals almost to the exact plate. When I told the hotel I wanted 300 breakfasts, and not 1,600 meals for everyone who had registered, they thought I was crazy.” When 300 or so sat down to eat, the catering manager ate her own words.

Nash says CMA gave her deep appreciation for “the immense giving nature of people who lent their time, talent and energy to make sure others were learning. Pastor Jack Hayford epitomizes this attitude when he says, ‘Whatever God has given me, I’ll give back to you.’”

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