Th e photo above was taken recently of Norman Farberow, his wife Pearl and me after he drove from an afternoon at the opera to meet me for dinner. I had several hours layover between flights at the L.A. airports, and visiting with Norm and Pearl was a great treat. Norm turned 90 on February 12, but apart from the extensive knowledge and wisdom that creeps into his conversation, one gets the impression of chatting with a very enthusiastic young suicidologist. Although he can joke “Oh to be 65 again,” Norm and Pearl have a very full social life, exercise regularly and are involved in a variety of activities. Norm is a member of the Survivors Advisory Group at the Los Angeles Suicide Prevention Center, which is now part of the Didi Hirsch Community Mental Health Center. He actively reviews research articles for several journals; he is involved in staff training at the center and keeps regular contact with many suicidologists around the world. At the end of each staff training, he and the Center’s “old timers” Mickey Heilig and Bob Litman meet with the newly trained staff to give them some perspective on the history of the Centre and allow them to profit from the experiences from some of the people who founded the Centre over 50 years ago.

Norm is impressed when he looks back at the last half century, by what he feels are remarkable changes in the acceptance of suicide in public discourse. In the early days, suicide was a taboo topic and sometimes he had to use other words to talk about it. Now, although there are still subtle feelings referring to the old taboos, there is much more tolerance and openness to discuss suicide and suicide prevention. Norm says that he has also observed a major shift in suicidology and IASP. Originally IASP consisted solely of people from Western Europe, Canada and the United States. Now people are involved in suicide prevention around the world. He owes an important part of the development of awareness worldwide of suicide prevention as a public health problem to IASP activities.

He is immensely proud of being involved in IASP from the very beginning. When I asked him about the challenges for the future of suicide prevention, he was quick to emphasize that we are neglecting a vital aspect of: research on the needs of survivors and how to better provide relief for the pain they suffer. Norm continues to follow the research literature and laments the fact that there is almost no empirical data on what is most helpful and how to adapt survivor programmes for differences in culture, gender and age. He is interested in learning more about how one changes the cultural attitudes that have been embedded in societies for ages, specifically negative attitudes about suicide prevention and reluctance to seek help.

Norm has had a lifelong goal of having all countries develop strategies for suicide prevention and for suicide survivors. He feels we need better education on suicide prevention and suicide survivors for professional associations and the general public. He is still involved with many suicidologists around the world. The L.A. Suicide Prevention Centre has always been a focal site for training internationally. For example, the Centre has conducted seminars for chaplains in the South Korean Army who have come the past several years to learn how to better prevent suicide in the military.

Until recently Norm and Pearl attended every IASP meetings since the very first. He said: “I think of IASP and I remember the joy and pleasure of meeting and re-establishing great friendships at the bi-annual meetings. Everywhere in the world there was someone I could visit as a friend and learn first hand about suicide prevention in their country.” He asks that I include in this article his appreciation for the convivial aspects of the meetings, and to indicate to his many old friends that he often thinks about them fondly, although he can no longer attend IASP meetings.

Brian L. Mishara, Ph.D.
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Past president and honorary member of IASP, Professor Nils Retterstol passed peacefully away in his home on the 9th of February, aged 83 years. Professor Retterstol held several of the most influential positions in Norwegian psychiatry at the universities of Oslo and Bergen and at major psychiatric hospitals. He played a major role reforming psychiatric healthcare from the early 1960s onwards; his focus always set at helping those in greatest need of mental health care.

He worked systematically to destigmatize mental disorder and suicide in the public opinion through pioneering TV programmes and other mass media contributions. He was widely reputed nationally and internationally for his many scientific contributions in suicide research and he was highly active in several international organisations.

Professor Retterstol supported IASP for many years in different roles and he was president of the organisation from 1989 to 1991. He received many awards and honours, among them a special award from IASP in 1999 and he was also made honorary member of IASP. After his retirement in 1994, Professor Retterstol remained a highly productive lecturer and author – he completed his 50th book only days before he passed away. He will be deeply missed by many colleagues and friends in the international field of suicide research and prevention, by the national network of suicidology in Norway where he played such a profound role and by his dear family. The funeral took place at Nordstrand in Oslo on February the 19th.

Lars Mehlum
The IASP Postvention Task Force 2nd newsletter

is available online at the IASP website - go to the Task Forces, Postvention – tab.
The newsletter editors welcome contributions for the next newsletter. Please send to “Sean McCarthy” sean.mccarthy08@gmail.com or “Michelle Linn-Gust” michelle@chellehead.com

The De Risio Award 2008

The World Psychiatric Association (WPA) Section on Suicidology has established a Permanent Award in memory of Prof. Sergio De Risio. This award will be attributed to the best presentation/paper in the field of suicidology performed by young researchers (below 35 years of age) and accepted for a WPA official meeting or Congress.

The next WPA World Congress of Psychiatry will be held in Prague, in September 2008 (www.wpa-prague2008.cz).

For further information about this Award please contact the General Secretary of the WPA Section of Suicidology, Professor Marco Sarchiapone
Email: marco.sarchiapone@gmail.com

Second International Conference on Understanding Youth Suicide: A Meeting of Differing Perspectives

March 25-27, 2008, Ma’ale HaChamisha Conference Center Judean Hills, Israel

Theme: Understanding Youth Suicide: A Meeting of Differing Perspectives
Secretariat: ISAS International Seminars, P.O.Box 34001, Jerusalem 91340, Israel
Tel: ++972-2-6520574, Fax: ++972-2-6520558
conventions@isas.co.il
Homepage: www.isas.co.il/suicide2008

For submission of abstracts, registration details and programme overview see the website http://csrp.hku.hk/iasp2008.

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The 41st American Association of Suicidology (AAS) Conference 16 - 19 April 2008
Boston Park Plaza, Boston
www.suicidology.org/displaycommon.cfm?an=19%20

2008 Conference Jointly presented by the Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention and Association Québécoise de prévention du suicide

Quebec City, October 2008
For more information, please check: www.aqps.info

3rd Asia Pacific Regional Conference of Suicide Prevention
Suicide research and prevention in times of rapid change in the Asia Pacific Region: Opportunities and challenges
31 October –3 November 2008, Hong Kong

For submission of abstracts, registration details and programme overview see the website http://csrp.hku.hk/iasp2008.

The conference is organized by the International Association for Suicide Prevention and the HKJC Centre for Suicide Research and Prevention, Faculty of Social Sciences, the University of Hong Kong.

Important Dates
Deadline for Abstract/ Poster Submission April 30, 2008
Notification of Results June 30, 2008
Deadline for Early Bird Registration July 15, 2008
Deadline for Normal Registration Sep 30, 2008