

## INTERNATIONAL INTERESTS

# Special Relationship between Notary Societies in America and British Columbia

**Milt Valera, President of the National Notary Association, in Conversation with Val Wilson**

**The Scrivener:** *You are President of the National Notary Association [NNA]. I understand you have served the Association for 35 years.*

**Milt:** Yes, that's true. I have devoted a near lifetime to the Association with pride, satisfaction, and a lot of joy.

**The Scrivener:** *Please tell us about your organization. When was it established?*

**Milt:** The National Notary Association is the largest organization for Notaries Public in the United States. Established in 1957, today it is recognized as an advocate of both sound notarial practices and the office of the American Notary itself.

Since day one, the NNA has attracted members who want not only a grounding in the basics of notarization, but also regular updates on new state laws and regulations affecting their duties. The Association has grown to over 200,000 members; it continues to reach out to the 4.5 million Notaries throughout the United States to provide them with educational skills and professional tools to better serve their communities.

---

***The National Notary Association is the largest organization for Notaries Public in the United States.***

---

**The Scrivener:** *What is the mission of the NNA?*

**Milt:** Our mission is to educate and serve Notaries by imparting knowledge, understanding, and unity, while instilling only the highest ethical standards of conduct and sound notarial practices. Among the Association's goals are to forge a role for the Notary in the 21st century and instill an increased awareness of the Notary's value in this new, high-tech world of ours.

**The Scrivener:** *How is the NNA positioned in the United States?*

**Milt:** Motivated by these guiding principles and with a commitment to professionalize the field, the NNA has become *the* preeminent organization for the American Notary and the leading authority on the US notarial office. As a progressive organization, the NNA has been, and remains, at the forefront of technological advancement to effect notarial change and impart sound practices.

**The Scrivener:** *What training is available to professionals wishing to qualify as NNA members and Notaries?*

**Milt:** The NNA's mission becomes tangible every day through its many, diverse programs designed to enhance Notaries' productivity and efficiency, boost their careers, and assist them in serving society responsibly and ethically. Each year, the Association trains tens of thousands of Notaries through its seminar, home study, video, and online programs. The Association also offers such programs



*Wayne Braid, Deborah Thaw, Leta Best, and Milt Valera*

as an online course to teach Notaries fraud-prevention skills as well as on-site training workshops to respond to the needs of business organizations.

**The Scrivener:** *Fail-safe security is vital to legal professionals. How is the NNA utilizing technology to ensure security for its members?*

**Milt:** In an effort to continue to professionalize the Notary office into the electronic age, the NNA recently unveiled Enjoa—the new Electronic Notary Journal of Official Acts—a secure and technologically advanced record-keeping system. A powerful fraud-deterrent system, Enjoa electronically captures and time-stamps a document-signer’s signature, thumbprint, and photograph. Each journal entry is secured, requiring the Notary’s thumbprint scan and a password to access the unit.

Enjoa allows a new ease and speed in recording, retrieving, copying, sending, and archiving official notarial records. It also responds to the needs of financial institutions to comply with new US regulations by offering more secure and accessible electronic record-keeping than the traditional paper journal.

**The Scrivener:** *What other benefits does the NNA offer its membership ?*

**Milt:** In addition to providing Notaries with cutting-edge equipment and supplies, the NNA also seeks to enhance its members’ career opportunities. For example, the Association offers a new Notary Signing Agent Section that provides numerous career options for Notaries with special expertise in notarizing real estate loan documents.

The NNA offers training that includes the essential steps to perform a loan signing, including how to identify each document in the loan package and ensure that each document is properly executed. More than 15,000 Notary Signing Agent members make up the section and are offered online advertising, access to thousands of hiring companies, unlimited use of a unique

telephone hotline, and numerous online information resources.

The NNA’s commitment to excellence extends far beyond training, education, and providing high quality supplies, insurance, and services to Notaries. It also includes inspiring them to appreciate their important role as deterrents to fraud and to strive for professionalism. To this end, the Association recognizes a “Notary of the Year”—an outstanding Notary who, by demonstrating a commitment to excellence, sets an admirable standard and example of ethical and professional conduct.

**The Scrivener:** *The professional benefits and incentives of NNA membership are most impressive. I understand the NNA is also a major publisher.*

---

***The NNA helps legislators and administrators to understand the complex issues facing Notaries today;***

---

**Milt:** We publish more Notary books and materials than anyone in the world! Regarded as the US authority on Notary laws, customs, and practices, the NNA is America’s largest Notary publisher. Last year, the Association released the landmark *Model Notary Act*, the product of an expert drafting panel comprised of state officials, attorneys, business executives, and law professors.

Over the years this comprehensive statute prototype, designed to modernize the Notary office, has been adopted, at least in part, by most US States and territories.

In addition, the NNA’s influential *Notary Public Code of Professional Responsibility* has become the guiding ethical code for the 4.5 million Notaries of the United States. The *Code* addresses

the common problems, issues, and questions encountered by modern Notaries, while providing standards by which Notaries can achieve heightened professionalism, confidence, and respect.

**The Scrivener:** *What professional alliances has the NNA created within the community?*

**Milt:** The NNA continues to strengthen existing relationships and form new alliances with community leaders on a regular basis. NNA staff are often called on as authoritative sources by state lawmakers and administrative officials, by print and broadcast reporters, and by attorneys seeking expert witnesses.

The NNA helps legislators and administrators to understand the complex issues facing Notaries today; it frequently issues position statements that outline good notarial practices and procedures.

We work closely with the American Bar Association, the Property Records Industry Association, the technology community, and others to help shape the future for Notaries and to effect positive change. Looking ahead—and recognizing the ever-changing and increasingly important role of Notaries in preventing fraud and identity theft—the Association also tracks and takes positions on major legislation affecting Notaries in every state.

**The Scrivener:** *Do you invite Notaries from other countries to attend your annual conferences?*

**Milt:** The NNA holds an Annual Conference, our largest educational event of the year. Dating back to our first meeting, the NNA has always highlighted the work of foreign Notaries, including Notaries from British Columbia, at a special International Round Table.

We have always been very privileged to host distinguished representatives from The Society of Notaries Public of BC, including Dr. Hoeter, Stan Nicols, and of course Wayne Braid at our annual Conference. We look forward to many more visits and positive exchanges in the future.

**The Scrivener:** *Please tell us about the relationship between the NNA and The Society of Notaries Public of BC?*

**Milt:** All of us at the National Notary Association have a very special place in our hearts for you as a Society—as Notaries, as individuals, and as dear neighbours.

We have always considered you as friends and colleagues over the years, but it wasn't until that fateful day in September 2001 that we realized the strong bond we shared went beyond friendship and collegiality.

You see, your Society was the first to respond with generous support for our Foundation in our plea for help for the victims in the September 11 tragedy. Your cheque and beautiful letter from Wayne were the beginnings of our coming closer together. The dozens of touching, heartfelt letters from Society members certainly served as a clear punctuation of our building relationship.

Your letters were incredible! They were warm. They were uplifting. They were just what we needed at a very difficult time. On behalf of the members and staff of the National Notary Association and all of the Notaries in America, may I offer a very sincere and very special thank you. May our relationship gather only increasing strength, warmer friendship, and deeper affection.

**The Scrivener:** *That is so gratifying to hear, Milt. The relationship between our organizations serves as a model for the benefit of mutual support and cooperation.*

*You and NNA Executive Director Deborah Thaw travelled to our Society's 2003 Fall Conference, to speak to our members and participate in the special events of that Whistler weekend. Does the NNA maintain relationships with other notarial societies?*

**Milt:** In response to the increasing economic interchange between nations, the NNA promotes dialogue between

Notaries from civil law and common law countries. In 1998 the Association signed an Agreement of Collaboration with the International Union of Latin Notariats, formalizing the NNA's commitment to the interchange of ideas and information between American and foreign Notaries.

The NNA remains active in the international community by continuing to participate in the meetings of the International Union of Latin Notariats.

**The Scrivener:** *What do you see for the future of the NNA?*

**Milt:** As the NNA approaches 50 years of service—only four years away—it continues to strive to inspire confidence and unity among Notaries through education and professional support.

I am grateful to be able to share with you a glimpse of what promises to be an exciting future for Notaries and the organizations that support them, such as The Society of Notaries Public of British Columbia. ▲