

In Memory

William R. Fry

JANUARY 14, 1932 – APRIL 15, 2004



Bill Fry, a HALT Board Member from 1987 to 1992 and HALT's Executive Director from 1992 to 1997, died of cancer at his Madison, Virginia home on April 15, 2004. He was 72.

In 1992, when the Board asked Fry to step in as our Executive Director, it had just had several years of extraordinary challenges. Its funding, as with most contribution-based organizations, declined during the recession. In 1991, its long-time Executive Director Glenn Nishimura left to join the Peace Corps. The organization drifted without steady leadership for many months after Nishimura's departure. Then in September, 1992, the Board asked Fry to become Executive Director because it believed the organization needed someone with his commitment and aggressive law reform experience.

Fry often described himself as "a former lawyer" who gave up legal work in the late 1960s to work on reforming legal institutions.

During his five-year tenure at HALT, he was a tireless advocate of legal access issues, self-help law and the plight of independent paralegals. Independent paralegals provide direct legal services to the public on routine legal matters, and without lawyer supervision. Although their work is gaining acceptance, they still face prosecution from the organized bar.

In 1993, when prosecutions against independent paralegals were at an all time high, Fry testified before the American Bar Association's Commission on Nonlawyer Practice. He urged the committee to expand legal access and consumers' options by supporting independent paralegal work. "The real losers in the battle are consumers," Fry said "who are in desperate need of low-cost legal services, especially for simple, routine legal matters."

The Commission agreed in its final report, *Nonlawyer Activity in Law-Related Situations*, which emphatically stated that "nonlawyers have important roles to perform in providing affordable access to justice."

Before joining HALT's Board of Directors in 1987, Fry was the founder and director of two national projects for training human services and government personnel in law and advocacy: the National Public Law Training Center and Technology in the Public Interest. From 1972 to 1981 he served as Executive Director of the National Paralegal Institute, established by the U.S. Office of Economic Opportunity to provide administrative advocacy training to lawyers, paralegals and government advocates. He received his law degree from Columbia University in 1960 after completing a tour of duty with the Navy.

During retirement, Fry found enjoyment in playing the piano, riding his motorcycle, listening to classical music, taking courses at the University of Virginia, designing Web sites, and traveling around the United States with his children.

He is survived by his three children, Steven, Jonathan and Nina.