

A Tribute to Harold M. Voth

by A. Dean Byrd, Ph.D.

One of the founders of NARTH, Harold M. Voth, M.D. died on January 20, 2003 after a courageous battle with cancer.

Dr. Voth was a member of the Governing Board of NARTH and also a Menninger Foundation Faculty member for 26 years, where he participated in groundbreaking research in personality organization and family dynamics. He was a highly regarded professor in the Menninger School of Psychiatry and received the Teacher of the Year Award in 1970.

Dr. Voth also had a distinguished career in the United States Navy and Naval Reserve where he achieved the rank of Rear Admiral and was the Medical Officer to the Commander-in-Chief of the Atlantic Fleet. For his work in the development and implementation of the Naval and Marine Corps anti-drug program, Dr. Voth received the Legion of Merit, the highest peacetime medal.

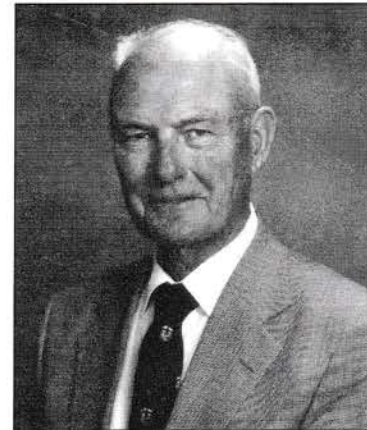
Harold was a wonderful colleague, esteemed mentor and personal friend. My association with him spanned more than a decade, while my familiarity with his work extended for more than three decades. Though he was a formidable discussant, a brilliant thinker and a passionate teacher, Harold's love of family was center stage in his life. Stories about his children and grandchildren always found their way in his presentations which were often accompanied by a sense of humor.

He was a strong advocate of patient self-determination. Regarding the right to seek therapy to change one's sexual adaptation, Harold could be heard to say with an attitude of indignation, "Just listen to the patient!" He considered the right to treatment to be self-evident and inalienable.

There are no words that describe Dr. Harold Voth better than tenacity and integrity. He was a champion of the underdog and the downtrodden. He took many public positions on controversial issues and was secure in his opinion and forceful in his presentation. He had impeccable integrity—he was a trustworthy friend.

During his illness, Harold had a dignified presence even on the phone. In one of my conversations with him in early January, while noting that the "curtain was about to close," he seemed preoccupied with the love of family and friends. "I have had a good life," was his closing comment. In my mind's eye, I reflected how my own life had been enriched by our friendship.

Perhaps there's no better tribute to Dr. Harold M. Voth than that penned by Alfred Lord Tennyson, as follows.



Harold M. Voth, M.D.

Crossing the Bar

Sunset and evening star,
And one clear call for me!
And may there be no moaning of the bar,
When I put out to sea.

But such a tide as moving seems asleep,
Too full for sound and foam,
When that which drew from out the boundless deep
Turns again home.

Twilight and evening bell,
And after that the dark!
And may there be no sadness of farewell,
When I embark;

For though from out our bourne of Time and Place
The flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have cross't the bar.

Dr. Harold M. Voth was one of a rare breed of men whose convictions were reflected in his everyday life and in his relationships with others. His contributions to NARTH will continue through those who knew him, who admired him, and who loved him. ■