

A Tribute To Charles Socarides

By A. Dean Byrd, Ph.D., MBA, MPH

"Homosexuals need and deserve our tolerance, our understanding and our compassion."

-- Charles Socarides

One of the founders of the National Association of Research and Therapy of Homosexuality, Charles W. Socarides, M. D., died of cardiac arrest on December 25, 2005.



*Charles W. Socarides
M.D.*

Dr. Socarides was instrumental in bringing together the seminal group which formed the foundation of NARTH in New York City nearly 15 years ago. The small group of less than 20 mental health professionals from different parts of the country met to respond to the growing number of those men and women who were unhappy with their homosexual adaptation, whose deepest beliefs told them that they were created for sexual complementarity and who sought professional help in reconciling their unwanted sexual attractions with their authentic selves. From this small group spearheaded by Dr. Socarides, NARTH has grown to a vibrant organization of more than 1500 today.

Dr. Socarides was as psychiatrist, psychoanalyst, and in the tradition of Sigmund Freud, a social critic as well. He was concerned about an American society that was all too quick to accept the innate, immutable theory of homosexuality. Indeed, his years of research and clinical practice revealed that unwanted homosexual attractions were more fluid than fixed.

With more than 50 years of clinical practice and with the publication of more than 80 books and professional papers devoted to the treatment of unwanted homosexuality, Dr. Socarides was a formidable discussant, a brilliant thinker and a passionate teacher.

A graduate of Harvard University and New York Medical College, Dr. Socarides was a Clinical Professor at Albert Einstein College of Medicine until his retirement in 1996. He continued to maintain a clinical practice working with men and women who were troubled by their unwanted homosexuality.

Dr. Socarides was accorded many accolades during his long tenure including the Distinguished Professor Award from the Association of Psychoanalytic Psychologists, British Health Service. He lectured on his research findings in London at the Anna Freud Child Development Clinic, the Portman Clinic, the Tavistock Clinic and at the British Psychoanalytic Society.

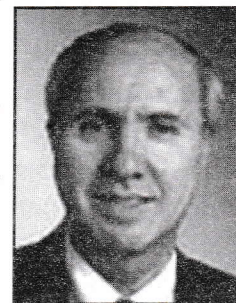
Charles was an esteemed colleague and personal friend. He was a champion of patient autonomy and an advocate for patient self-determination.

Perhaps there is no better word to describe Charles Socarides than "tenacious." He took many unpopular positions but was secure in his opinions and forceful in the presentation of his views.

The love of his life, his beloved Claire, was his greatest supporter and he, hers. Whenever he talked of her, it was always with much adoration and joy.

Dr. Charles W. Socarides was one of those rare professionals whose compassion for those who suffer was immeasurable. Indeed, he dedicated one of his many books, *A Freedom Too Far*, to his patients "whose courage and endurance for self-knowledge" was accorded his utmost respect and admiration.

Charles Socarides' presence will be greatly missed and the world lessened by his absence. However, his influence will be felt as NARTH members and supporters seek to serve those to whom he dedicated his time and talents.



*A. Dean Byrd
Ph.D.*

NARTH's web site features several articles by Dr. Socarides or about him. The NARTH Bookstore sells *Homosexuality: A Freedom Too Far* for \$25.