



IN APPRECIATION OF DENNIS BRICKING

Management Information Exchange recognizes Dennis Bricking on his retirement as Executive Director of the Louisville Legal Aid Society in 2005. Dennis graduated from the University of Kentucky undergraduate and law school, and in 1968 went to work as a staff attorney for the Louisville Legal Aid Society. By 1971, Dennis had become Deputy Director of the program and two years later, in October 1973, its Executive Director. Confronted with a growing poverty population, shrinking federal dollars, and a hostile administration in Washington, D.C., Dennis sought to shore up the program, attract quality staff and infuse the organization with a sense of purpose.



By 1975, the Louisville Legal Aid program had some of the best staff attorneys and paralegals in the state. Working with Dennis became more than just a job; it was a quest for justice, and people were attracted to his vision. Dennis did more than manage and direct; he carried his own personal caseload and led by example.

Dennis reached out across the state and sought to create a partnership among the directors of the sister Kentucky legal services programs in order to coordinate and improve the provision of services to the poor and to discuss issues of concern to the low income community. His fury at the latest administration efforts to dismantle the programs of the War on Poverty became legendary.

Dennis also reached beyond Kentucky and became a founding member of MIE, devoting some of his indefatigable energies to national legal services issues. Guy Lescault, former director of MIE, recalls Dennis's hard work but also recalls the inherent tension between Dennis's political activism and struggles against the "status quo," and the need to be accepted by and involved in the "mainstream" in order to advance the interest of legal services and its client base. Dennis had won the Lawyer of the Year award from the Jefferson County, Kentucky, Bar Association but had not told anyone at MIE. Only when the discussion turned to the need to convince legal services staff how important it was

that they attempt to integrate themselves with their local private bar did Dennis reveal the bar recognition he had achieved.

In his private life, commitment to "The Cause" continues. Dennis has been a long-standing member of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, a Quaker-based witness for peace group. With the Fellowship, he has traveled to Cuba and Nicaragua and Palestine.

The plight of the homeless always has held a special place in Dennis's heart. He has been deeply involved with the St. John's Homeless Shelter for Men in Louisville, as well as the Louisville Tenants' Union. He has been a member of St. William's, an alternative Catholic Church, part of the Greater Louisville Peacemaking Community.

During many heated discussions with his MIE colleagues, Dennis ranted against the transgressions of the current administration or espoused a liberal Utopian vision of the future. Some reminded Dennis that he needed to temper his vision with a healthy dose of reality to no avail. Most became re-energized when around Dennis. He provided the juice to fight the evils inherent in our society. The housing, domestic or consumer case suddenly took on a whole new identity with him. It was not just unpaid rent or a debt being owed; it became "us against them" — the right to a clean and safe habitable dwelling and fair rent, or a debt without usurious charges, or the right to be treated with respect and dignity.

It is that inspiration that is so essential about Dennis. In a time where the gap between rich and poor has reached historic proportions, a time of non-existent weapons of mass destruction, a President who is indifferent to the devastation of a portion of this country and the suffering of thousands until his poll numbers drop, a national retreat from helping the poor and preserving the environment, it is easy to lose faith...yet Dennis is all about faith. He may goad you, he may infuriate you, but he fills you with a sense of belief in equal justice, belief in the inherent dignity of the poor, belief that you can make a difference.