

December 12, 2009

Dear Relatives and Friends of Lora Hays:

I am most sorry to be absent from this memorial for Lora, who was an extraordinary person. I am grateful to be able to share with you my affection and admiration for her.

I met Lora in early 1961, soon after I was appointed an assistant professor at NYU School of law and the Director of an unprecedented program in civil liberties named in honor of Lora's father, Arthur Garfield Hays, a founder of and longtime general counsel to the American Civil Liberties Union. The Hays Program had been launched in 1958, and I succeeded the first Directors.

The Hays Program is the first and principal program of its kind in the United States. The Directors and Fellows work together and with many civil liberties organizations, including the ACLU, on issues of freedom of expression and religion, racial justice, the rights of women and GLBT people, immigrants and poor people, and many others. I am still a Director of the Program, now joined by Professor Sylvia Law, who is a former student Fellow in the Program, and Professor Helen Hershkoff. Sylvia and Helen have greatly broadened the scope and effectiveness of the Program.

Lora quickly showed keen interest in the activities of the Hays Program, and we invited her to many events, and once in a while she would invite herself. Lora particularly enjoyed meeting the Hays Fellows, all students in their 20s, who were thoroughly devoted to civil liberties and the tradition of Arthur Garfield Hays. Some of the early Fellows are now in their 70s and retired. They all adored Lora.

Lora was not content to be merely a spectator at our events. She decided – this was not surprising to those who knew her – that the Hays Program needed a video to present itself to the outside world. She thereupon, with our cooperation, proceeded to conceive, produce, direct and edit a 12 minute video, in which the Directors and several Hays Fellows, described and sometimes demonstrated their efforts for the Program.

When the video appeared in 1991, it opened to excellent reviews, but Lora was not satisfied. She insisted on preparing a second edition in 1996, which involved even more Fellows. To this day we show the video, now digitized, to applicants for Hays Fellowships as a way of introducing them to our goals and methods.

Everyone knows what a remarkable woman Lora was, reflected in her intelligence, curiosity, energy, and all around bubblyness. I did not know Lora as well as many others, but I knew her a long time. She lived a wonderful life and she will be greatly missed.

Norman Dorsen
Stokes Professor of Law and Director of the
Arthur Garfield Hays Civil Liberties Program