Tribute: Tom Fahey

February 1, 2003 By Shawn Decker

HEMO HERO

1953-2002

The first time Fran Fahey saw her future husband, he was playing the role of the noble John Proctor in a college production of *The Crucible*. Fortunately, Tom Fahey did not limit his heroism to the small stage. In the late ’80s, when half the hemophilia community had been infected with HIV, Fahey cofounded the Committee of Ten Thousand (COTT). The group, started in earnest for community support, quickly became activist, litigious -- and the blood industry’s worst nightmare. The shoddy handling of the contaminated-blood-product crisis was finally illuminated for all to see, and Fahey was the guy holding the flashlight.

Pursuing his master’s degree in counseling with a focus on alcohol and drug abuse, Fahey would say, “It was the only thing I had experience with, coming out of college!” That same sharp humor compelled him years later to wear a shirt that read, “A Multi-Million Dollar Pharmaceutical Company Gave Me HIV...And All I Got Was This Lousy T-Shirt!”

Fahey championed the underdog -- he might have formed COTT even if he hadn’t had HIV and hepatitis C. Had he not been born with hemophilia, he would likely have tried out for his beloved, but flawed Boston Red Sox.

Tom Fahey died while awaiting a liver transplant, September 26, 2002. He will be missed, yet the impact of his life’s work remains.

To donate to COTT (800.582.3803) in Tom’s memory, write: c/o John Rider, 500 Belmont St., Suite 300, Brockton, MA 02301.

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