

A Leave-taking from Ernest George Poser (1921 - 2012)

by Glenn Hardie, with input from Kathy Leavens

It is with sadness that we announce the recent death of Ernest Poser, PhD, from pancreatic cancer. By profession, Ernest was a clinical psychologist and university professor; by inclination, he was a humanist. The following notes outline just some of his contributions specifically to humanism, which provides fellowship for freethinkers who share ethical values but who do not hold religious beliefs.

Now, it is not easy to say *just a few words* about anything to which Ernest turned his attention. In the early 1960s, Ernest and his wife Jutta were among a group of individuals who, along with Dr Mishra, initiated a humanist group in Montreal. Shortly after its inauguration, the members, with Jutta's specific input, established the first Sunday school in Canada for the children of atheists, in concert with Dr. Henry Morgentaler and others.

Upon arrival in Vancouver in the early 1980s, the Posers became involved with the then recently-formed British Columbia Humanist Association, first as regular members, and later with Ernest serving on the Board of Directors. Through some anomaly in voting one year, it was discovered that no one had been named as President. Ernest, in his characteristic way, immediately stepped forward to say that he would take on that role provided he has some help from another member. So for the first and only time in its annals, BCHA had not one but two presidents, serving at the same time. It was, significantly, a year of growth for the group.

About 1995, Ernest, along with other BCHA members, established the first humanist club at the University of B.C., which ran for about five years. However, like many clubs on college campuses, the active student members moved on and, regrettably, nobody took up the cause after them. Furthermore, the Posers

were a highly sociable couple, and often invited members of BCHA to their home for light refreshments and heavy conversations on topics relative to humanist objectives, such as morality, abortion, justice, literacy, and other subject matter.

Another of Ernest's humanist interests in retirement was connected to an institution titled the World Views Collaborative. Ernest was deeply concerned about how seven billion with different belief systems were going to get along in this world. His vision was to create a coalition of like-minded individuals representing a broad spectrum of world views in the Vancouver area that would identify common concerns and take meaningful action. This led to the creation of the World Views Collaborative in June 2004. The WVC meets five or six times per year to discuss a wide range of topics including the environment, education, violence and racism. One of its main areas of focus has been promoting a course on Comparative World Views for public schools in B.C.

Ernest is remembered as a cheerful, positive, kindly and dignified sort of person, a true gentleman in the best sense of that word. We thank Jutta for letting him share so much of his time with like-minded colleagues and friends to further the humanist agenda in Canada. A Celebration of Life service was held at Cecil Green Park at the University of B.C. on July 22, 2012 to review and reflect upon the life and times of this remarkable human being. He is survived by his wife and three adult children.

Glenn Hardie is a fellow humanist from BC, and author. Humanist Perspectives published a book by him a few years ago Reason With Compassion. Kathy Leavens is the Vice-President of the BC Humanist Association (BCHA).