

A Tribute to Andy Mulcahy on the Occasion of his 94th Birthday on August 3, 2016

In grateful recognition of the life-long work of Andrew Mulcahy, one of the founders and the spiritual leader of the Victoria, BC, humanists.

Andrew Mulcahy, born in 1922 in Victoria, BC, joined the Canadian Scottish Regiment at age 17 and with it crossed Canada and Europe, participating in the Normandy beach landing on D-Day June 6, 1944. He recalled, "Of all the battles we were in, the one on June 8 was the worst." But he added that crossing the Leopold Canal and the battle at Heseler Feld (nicknamed "Slaughter Hill") in Germany stand out in horror. Andy said, "I used to pray to live one half-hour more. I don't know why a half-hour, but maybe I felt that was the best deal any god could give me under the circumstances."

It was October 1944, the dawn after the terrible Leopold crossing, when Andy awoke "to see dead Germans nearby and to hear moans and cries." He said, "Out of the blue it occurred to me that there was no such thing as a god." The fighting ended for Andy at Heseler Feld with an MG 42 bullet; Andy left for Canada on a hospital ship the next day.



And Andy has devoted his life to secular humanism ever since. With his inherently un-failing moral sense, as inerrant as a compass needle, he has identified and been fighting effectively against the major evils of our time: religious discrimination and violence, misogyny, anti-Semitism

and all kinds of racism and for social justice, evidence-based science and the Darwinian theory of evolution by natural selection.

"Here, in Victoria, BC, the Victoria Secular Humanist Association was launched under the Incorporation/Society Act in February, 1998. [Andy became a Director and] under very difficult and sad circumstances. Andy at the HELM was the Captain of the Ship during our 'drowning' times when it was questionable as to whether we could survive, numbers dwindling drastically, Andy kept us going. Andy also organized the connections with Humanist Canada Assn. and many other significant associations. He has kept an ongoing email service for all to keep us posted and up to date. His



Andy Mulcahy and Joanne Manley were kind enough to meet with us (Richard Young and Heidi Martin) at Abkhazi Gardens during our visit to Victoria, BC in August, 2009. They were the perfect tour guides: knowledgeable, enthusiastic and patient.

Left: Andy relaxing outside the tea room.

Below: Joanne, Andy and Heidi.

[Photos: Richard Young]



writing skills are to be commended, always ‘tongue in cheek’ suggestion to many comments. Thus Andy Mulcahy is *the prize* and to him we owe him plenty for guiding us to the place we are today, still small in numbers but strong. Thanks Andy for saving our souls and never giving up.” (Marianne Brackenridge, former VSHA Secretary).

For years Andy produced (and paid for) the VSHA newsletter, refusing earlier offers of help from members or the treasury. Besides publishing a monthly secular humanist newsletter, Andy had and continues to maintain a blog for his poetry and commentary: www.SecularSamaritans.wordpress.com; his blog is called Modest Monist. One of his favorite annual projects is the Darwin Day celebration.

“Let us help and support one another, for we are on our own in this vast, uncaring universe.”

– Andy Mulcahy

Andy’s philosophy can be encapsulated by his favorite aphorisms, such as:

“Prove it or lose it.”

“Compassion is our game and responsibility is our aim” (from his *Personal Humanist Manifesto*).

“Let us help and support one another, for we are on our own in this vast, uncaring universe.”

He also had a message for recently arrived refugees: “Welcome to secular Canada, where women hold equal authority to men” (September 19, 2015).

And his favorite quote is one from Blaise Pascal: “Men never do evil so completely – and cheerfully – as when they do it from religious conviction.”

Thank you, Andy, and Happy Birthday! Many happy, healthy returns!•

– Humanist well-wishers from across Canada, and beyond.