

Andrew Gibson, OLS # 918
1919 - 2015



Andy Gibson was born in Toronto on December 22, 1919 to a proud family of Scottish immigrants. Although his father served with the Canadian army in France in World War I it was the stories of the great British naval victories which dominated the reading of the young man. So in 1937 he went off to Great Britain to begin his first introduction to life at sea.

As an apprentice in the British Merchant Service he was given his food (often poor and inadequate) and bunk aboard ship but had to make do without any pay at all. However he was able to travel to many exotic countries as far away as French Indo-China.

World War II broke out in 1939 and this led Andy's ships into dangerous convoy operations and even a part in the invasions of North Africa and Sicily. Fortunately Andy has chronicled his life and adventures at sea in a book he called "Head of Oak", the title, a humorous version of the famous song of the sea, "Heart of Oak", which praises British ships and sailors ". This book, of course, deals with the dangers and disasters of war, but is enlivened by Andy's frank accounts of all his foibles, mistakes and ridiculous adventures in port.

But war brought also a chance for him to marry the girl that he had always in mind when at sea. He and Betty McEwan were married in November 1943 in Montreal where Betty was a nurse at one of the large hospitals. As far as his naval career was concerned, by the end of the war he had risen from an apprentice to become a Master in the Canadian Merchant Service which allowed him to captain a ship.

But Andy had had enough of the sea. A fishing lodge, which still exists today, in Northern Ontario was built and operated by him with the assistance of his wife, his sister and brother-in-law.

After articling with Speight, Van Nostrand he received his surveying licence on August 15, 1956. He worked in Toronto with Walter Lorenz and was an early proponent of the electronic measuring devices.

In 1962 he moved to California and worked in the surveying field. His interest in astronomy led him to be invited to guest teach many high school astronomy classes in that state.

Returning to Ontario to become recertified he set up a practice in Arnprior in the early 1970's and was joined by Les Sury in the late 1970's to become Gibson and Sury Limited. In 1981 the firm bought the practice of E.W. Petzold in Renfrew to be joined by Tim Rowe becoming Gibson, Sury & Rowe.

Andy was an outstanding editor of the O.L.S. quarterly from 1972-1984. In that time he changed it from the broadsheet format to the magazine style that we know today. He was awarded an O.L.S. Fellowship in 1993 to recognize substantial contributions to the status of the surveying profession in Ontario.

He retired in 1984 and moved to Salt Spring Island where he and his beloved wife Betty lived an idyllic life until her death in 2012 after fifty-eight years of marriage. Betty was a member of the Salt Spring Raging Grannies so that it was only natural that Andy should be a lyricist for their songs. He was also a founding member of the O.G.I.F.A. (Ometepe Coffee). Remembering all the terrible losses and sacrifices of the war he was active in trying to get proper recognition of the services to Canada by the Merchant Marine in that conflict.

Andy passed away peacefully on March 22, 2015 at Lady Minto Hospital , Salt Spring Island, at the age of 95. World traveler, amateur musician and astronomer - Andy was a community activist, a history buff and, above all, a lover of language and all things Shakespeare.

Submitted by Tim Rowe, Murray Kitts, and Les Sury