

Arthur Wilmot Uloth

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A Tribute to Arthur Wilmot Uloth

Arthur once commented that he always knew who he was; on the surface, a simple enough statement, but if we look deeper, one that exemplifies his values, his confidence, and the strength to put his convictions into practice. “Some people still need to find themselves” he would say. Arthur devoted his long, loving, revolutionary life to creating the means for others to do exactly this.

At the heart of both anarchist praxis and humanist philosophy lies the belief that we each have the right and the responsibility to make the most of the one life we have, to effect positive change, while helping others to do the same. As an atheist, Arthur knew the true value of a life can be measured by how it is lived, and that we each have a beginning and we each have an end; what really matters is how we spend the time in between.

Arthur was born in King’s Lynn, Norfolk on 19th December 1931. He enjoyed a very happy childhood there until, when he was eight years old, his parents; both doctors; sent him to boarding schools in Kent, Sussex, and then Wales. His dad had re-enlisted in the army, with the onset of the Second World War. Arthur endured five years at the schools; with their archaic standards; and took regular beatings at the “hell-hole in Wales” as he described it.

In these formative years he justifiably developed a loathing for authority figures. We can imagine Arthur’s relief when his parents moved to London, and he could once again live with them, although sadly, within the year, his mother died.

Arthur attended Westminster School, as a day boy; his mistrust of authority remained, so he did not enjoy his time at the school. He became interested in communism, and at the age of sixteen he became an anarchist after reading Peter Kropotkin's autobiographical book "Memoirs of a Revolutionist".

Having read Kropotkin, Arthur soon found George Woodcock's book "Anarchy or Chaos" in a second-hand bookshop. It was published by Freedom Press, and before long Arthur had discovered Freedom, the anarchist bookshop in London. He started subscribing to their newspaper and soon he was working for Freedom Press, often editing the paper, and writing articles for publication, well into the 1970s. Today some of his writing appears online, and the collection is ever-growing as people upload more of his essays; something he recently seemed quite surprised to learn.

By the age of nineteen Arthur had participated in his first anarchist meeting, and he remained an anarchist and a pacifist for the rest of his life. In the fifties, along with others from the Freedom Press Group and the London Anarchist Group, he founded the Malatesta Club; a radical social space, which offered entertainment, meetings, lectures and discussions on all aspects of anarchism. He joined the Progressive League; a humanist organisation of socially conscious thinkers and activists. Arthur was a member of CND and Committee of 100, and he attended many of the Aldermaston Marches in Berkshire, demonstrating against nuclear weapons.

With his aversion to hierarchy, Arthur never felt any desire to fit in when it came to his early office-based jobs; instead he took employment in many practical and varied roles, including painting and decorating, and working in laboratories.

He began exchanging letters with Alma, who had grown up in Czechoslovakia. In the Prague Spring of 1968 her brother had moved to Cambridge, for work, and Alma travelled to the UK to visit him. Having seen first-hand the atrocious consequences of war, under Nazi occupation, one of the many things Alma loved about Arthur was his pacifism. Both avid readers, each enjoying different types of books, they shared a lifelong passion for reading, and a lifelong love for each other.

Alma and Arthur married in 1972, and four years later their daughter Joan was born. Arthur left work, to care for Joan, while Alma continued working. Joan has fond memories of a happy childhood, and being captivated by the fantastical bedtime stories that her dad would concoct, casting some of her toys in the leading roles.

Arthur enjoyed being outdoors, surrounded by nature, and he especially enjoyed riverside walks. He was much respected and well loved, with a good circle of close friends. Perhaps Alma found some of his anarchist friends a little eccentric, but they loved and valued Arthur, just as he did them. Joan recalls the postcards they received each Christmas from one of her dad's friends, the artist Arthur Moyses. These cards depicted detailed, self-penned illustrations, with thought-provoking text, and were drawn in his intricate, subversive style.

Whenever Arthur was at home, or in libraries, he was constantly immersed in books; a passion that started with the escapism offered by reading while he was at boarding school. He preferred to read non-fiction, but he read some fiction too; he was especially moved by Richard Jefferies' dystopian novel "After London".

Arthur delighted in writing, and he began keeping a diary in the early seventies, which he maintained for the rest of his life. He taught English as a foreign language, and also gained his degree after studying as a mature student with the Open University.

When asked recently about his achievements in life, Arthur replied that the greatest of all was his marriage, which reaches its golden anniversary landmark this year. He neither expected nor wished to live such a long life, but now, ninety years on, we can look back on a life well lived; the life of a great man, with a great mind, who knew who he was; a positive force to many people, and in many ways. He remains immensely inspirational to Joan, especially in the art she creates. Those improvised magical bedtime tales still shine through in her brightly coloured landscapes. As we say goodbye to Arthur, we can find comfort in the thought that no life is ever completely lost; we each live on through the influence we have had on others.

Arthur Wilmot Uloth; comrade, husband, father, friend; you remain a beacon of inspiration for all of us who believe in, and strive for, freedom and peace, unity and autonomy. From your example, the way you chose to live, we can find strength and hope in our own lives.