

Haluska, Jan Charles (1941–2015)

DENNIS PETTIBONE

Dennis Pettibone, Ph.D. (University of California, Riverside), is professor emeritus of history at Southern Adventist University. He and his first wife, Carol Jean Nelson Pettibone (now deceased) have two grown daughters. He is now married to the former Rebecca Aufderhar. His published writings include *A Century of Challenge: the Story of Southern College* and the second half of *His Story in Our Time*.

Jan Charles Haluska, award-winning English professor, was born in San Francisco on December 17, 1941. His parents, Charles and Lois Haluska,¹ were Christian Scientists.² Jan had no siblings.³ He graduated from San Rafael Military Academy⁴ but twice failed in his attempt to get a college education.

⁵ Enrolling in the United States Army, he served three years in Germany.⁶

Pacific Union College

Fascinated by aviation, he started taking flying lessons. His flight teacher suggested that he should enroll in a college aviation program, but she knew of only two such programs in California: one at San Jose State and the other at Pacific Union College. Haluska applied to PUC and honestly answered the question as to whether he drank alcoholic beverages, so he was surprised when he was accepted. Needing two religion courses in order to graduate, he asked his classmates what he should do. They told him he should take a course from Dr. Leslie Hardinge.⁷

On the first day of class, Dr. Hardinge used the term *grace*, a concept that Haluska had never encountered in his Christian Science faith. After class he asked the professor to explain what the term meant. This was the beginning of a regular habit: asking Dr. Hardinge to further explain concepts used in class. Eventually the professor suggested that Haluska might meet with him during the period in which the other students would be



Jan Haluska

Photo courtesy of Southern Adventist University Publications.

attending chapel, asking him any questions that he might have about Hardinge's beliefs.⁸

At one point Hardinge made a statement using a biblical text to challenge one of the beliefs of Christian Scientists. The next time that Haluska attended his Christian Science church, he asked for an explanation of that text and wasn't satisfied with the answer given. He quit attending Christian Science services.⁹

One evening he entered a discussion with a fellow aviation student in which he defended drinking alcoholic beverages. He felt satisfied that he had won the debate, but that night he started thinking that a good debater should be able to take either side of a question and argue it successfully, so he began to think of points that his friend could have made about such issues as the harm that alcohol does to society. This led to his conviction that he should not drink anymore. The next morning he went down to his friend's room to tell him of his decision. He said to his friend, "You look terrible. You don't look like you slept all night." The friend said he had not slept all night; he had been praying that Jan would change his mind, and clearly his prayer had been answered.¹⁰

After studying with Jan about a year and a half, Dr. Hardinge told him it was time for him to make a decision. Jan replied that he wanted to be baptized.¹¹

Career Change

Nearing graduation, Haluska began to realize that opportunities in aviation for him would be limited because so many airmen were returning from Vietnam with thousands of air miles under their belts, far more than how Haluska had been able to log. While considering what should be his next career move, Jan had a student come to his room and ask him to explain the poem *Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*. Jan found this to be an easy task, but wondered why the student had asked an aviation major for help. Then another student came and asked him for assistance in writing a paper. Then a third student came to him and requested that Jan tutor him in English for the rest of the year. Haluska began to wonder if God was trying to tell them something.¹²

He consulted with one of his professors, who suggested that he apply for a master's program in English even though he was not adequately prepared. The professor did some exploration, and Andrews University indicated a willingness to accept him into the program on a probationary basis.¹³

He met his future wife, Marcia Opstad,¹⁴ during Christmas break after his first quarter at Andrews.¹⁵ They were married in 1973.¹⁶

After receiving his master's degree,¹⁷ he became an instructor in English and flight at Georgia-Cumberland Academy, a position he held for seven years.¹⁸ While perusing a doctorate at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, he began teaching at Southern College of Seventh-day Adventists (now Southern Adventist University), teaching there until his retirement on June 1, 2014. While at Southern, he received several awards for the quality of his teaching, including the Zapara Award (received three times), the President's Award for Teaching

Excellence, and the Distinguished Service Medallion.¹⁹

In addition, Georgia-Cumberland Academy's class of 1978 voted in 2013 to honor Haluska with their Life Legacy Award. Several of the student testimonials supporting this award spoke of his "connection with God." One student wrote, "He has always let his love for the Lord shine in his classes and in his daily life." Another said, "He showed me how to choose Jesus as my friend!"²⁰

Integrating Faith and Learning

Haluska was committed to the integration of faith and learning. This was especially evident in his Ancient Classics course, which incorporated such Greek classics as the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, as well as the book of Job. Throughout the course he constantly contrasted the pagan and biblical views of life. Robby Raney, a 2016 Southern graduate, remembered, "Dr. Haluska taught me that you can use something like Beowulf to teach the gospel to someone who will never crack a Bible."²¹ Another former student, Teresa Ferreira, now the superintendent of education for the Maritime Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, wrote concerning this class that she was "impressed by the contrast of the Greek philosophy of *carpe diem* found in Homer's *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* with the triumph of life and hope found in the ancient biblical book of Job. It was revolutionary teaching filtered through a comparative lense that exclaimed, 'Choose life, choose hope, choose Christianity.'"²²

However, at least once this strategy backfired. One classic text that he at times included was the *Bhagavad Gita*, but he decided that this was a mistake and deleted that document from his syllabus after one student told him it had been a spiritual blessing to her. He didn't want his course to initiate students into the wrong kind of spirituality.²³

When students and colleagues would discuss with him problems and conflicts they were facing, Haluska wouldn't just say, "I'll pray for you." Instead, he would instantly drop whatever he was doing, and --right when he was, whether in the hall or at his desk--he would lift up his voice and start praying out loud, asking the Lord for help with this issue.²⁴

Haluska was convinced that there was never a situation where it was acceptable for a Christian to tell a lie. He expressed this conviction in one²⁵ of the several articles²⁶ he wrote for Adventist publication.

He was chairman of Southern's English department from 2007 to 2014. During that time, when interviewing prospective English teachers, he would ask the candidates how they would incorporate the Three Angels' Messages into their classes.²⁷

When delivering the Consecration address for one of Southern's graduation weekends, Haluska asked the audience how many of them had ever experienced an undeniable miracle--not just something like, "The Lord guided the surgeon's hand during my operation," but something that clearly involved supernatural intervention. One observer estimated that he saw a thousand upraised hands.²⁸

When he retired, the university presented him with a book of testimonials from colleagues, former colleagues, and former students. Dave Smith, who at the time was the pastor of the Collegedale Seventh-day Adventist Church and was later president of the university, summed up what many of these testimonials said by speaking of his "remarkable gift for teaching," his "unquestioned integrity, his loyalty to God, and his commitment to serve his students, the campus, his community, and his church," and "his love for God, mastery of Scripture, and sharp insights into life."²⁹

Journey's End

Considering his teaching as a form of ministry, he continued to work as long as he was physically able to do so, even past the normal retirement age, despite the fact that he was suffering from prostate cancer. Realizing that death was imminent, he expressed to a colleague his only concern: apprehension for the day when his wife would come home from teaching elementary school and the house would be empty.³⁰

He passed away on September 25, 2015, at the age of 73. He left behind his wife of 43 years, his sons (Aaron and David), two daughters-in-law, and two grandsons. A memorial service was held October 3, 2015,³¹ in the Collegedale Seventh-day Adventist Church where he had served for many years as a deacon.³²

SOURCES

Baerg, Angela. "Building a Strong Foundation." *Southern Tidings*, May 2021.

Ferreria, Teresa. "Jewels of Adventist Education." *Canadian Union Messenger*, January 2021.

Georgia-Cumberland Academy. Life *Legacy Award 2013: Jan Haluska*. Document in private collection of Marcia Haluska.

Haluska, Jan Charles. "Conversion and Renewal: Good News for Adventist Higher Education." *ARH*, Oct. 29, 1989.

Haluska, Jan Charles. "Unbelievable." *ARH*, March 29, 1990.

Haluska, Jan Charles. "Finding a Common Touch with a Christian Scientist." *Ministry*, Oct. 10, 1984.

Southern Adventist University. *Dr. Jan Haluska: Colleague, Mentor, Teacher, Friend* A custom-made hardbound book presented to Dr. Haluska upon his retirement and now in the possession of Marcia Haluska.

<https://www.audioverse.org/english/sermons/presenters/858/jan-haluska.html>

<https://www.timesfreepress.com/obits/2015/oct/01/janhaluska/69529/https://www.audioverse.org/english/sermons/presenters/858/jan-haluska.html>

<https://www.heritagechattanooga.com/tributes/Jan-Haluska>

NOTES

1. <https://www.timesfreepress.com/obits/2015/oct/01/jan-haluska/69529/>, accessed May 6, 2021.
2. Marcia Haluska, interview by the author, May 9, 2021.
3. <https://www.timesfreepress.com/obits/2015/oct/01/jan-haluska/69529/>, accessed May 6, 2021.
4. <https://www.heritagechattanooga.com/tributes/Jan-Haluska>, accessed May 14, 2001.
5. <https://www.audioverse.org/english/sermons/presenters/858/jan-haluska.html>, accessed April 29, 2021. Nevertheless, he did get an associate degree in business from Marin College in California Southern Adventist University, *Dr. Jan Haluska: Colleague, Mentor, Teacher, Friend*,[3].
6. Ibid.
7. Marcia Haluska, interview by the author, May 9, 2021.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. <https://www.timesfreepress.com/obits/2015/oct/01/jan-haluska/69529/>, accessed May 6, 2021.
15. Marcia Haluska, interview by the author, May 9, 2021.
16. Ibid., May 17, 2021.
17. Ibid.
18. <https://www.audioverse.org/english/sermons/presenters/858/jan-haluska.html>, accessed April 29, 2021.
19. Ibid.

20. Georgia-Cumberland Academy, *Life Legacy Award 2013: Jan Haluska*.
21. Quoted in Angela Baerg, "Building a Strong Foundation," *Southern Tidings*, May 2021, 4.
22. Teresa Ferreira, "Jewels of Adventist Education," *Canadian Union Messenger*, January 2021, 29.
23. Author's recollection of conversations with and remarks by Jan Haluska; Marcia Haluska, interview, May 9, 2021.
24. Author's recollection.
25. Jan Charles Haluska, "In Christ There are no Moral Dilemmas," *ARH*, July 1996' 16-19.
26. Jan Charles Haluska, "Conversion and Renewal: Good News for Adventist Higher Education," *ARH*, Oct. 29, 1989, 14-15; Jan Charles Haluska, "Unbelievable," *ARH*, March 29, 1990, 24; Jan Charles Haluska, "Finding a Common Touch with a Christian Scientist," *Ministry*, Oct. 10, 1984, 10-11.
27. Author's recollection of conversations with Jan Haluska.
28. Author's recollection.
29. Southern Adventist University, *Dr. Jan Haluska: Colleague, Mentor, Teacher, Friend*, [4-5].
30. Author's recollection.
31. <https://www.timesfreepress.com/obits/2015/oct/01/jan-haluska/69529/>, accessed May 6, 2021.
32. Author's recollection.

encyclopedia.adventist.org is an official website of the [Seventh-day Adventist World Church](#)

© 2020 General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists 12501 Old Columbia Pike Silver Spring , MD 20904 USA 301-680-6000