

27/1/2004 Edited **Interview by Kathleen Gallagher and Ruth Greenaway**

**Could you tell us first of all where you were born Kate?**

I was born in 1953, in Hawera, under Mt Taranaki - we lived in Okaiawa. I was the third daughter of 8 children. I was 3 when I left there and shifted to Hamilton.

**Eight children, all girls? Or girls and boys?**

5 girls in a row, two boys and then another girl. So I was very much squashed in the middle with a lot of young girls. My parents were trying for a son. It was quite clear as I grew up that the girls were good but having a boy was amazing. In terms of the background, we lived with my grandparents for a while in Tirau on a farm and then moved to Hamilton when I was 3 yrs old. I grew up in a big extended family with church background in terms of being Methodist and Anglican and knowing that my grandfather had come from a strong Methodist background in Christchurch. I didn't know much about social issues, although I went to church and taught Sunday School.

**Kate could you give me a picture of family life, of things that you did as a family, or what you enjoyed as a family?**

Well if we count the family being parents and 8 children - that was when we were in Hamilton. One of the main activities we did was to go church together as a group, and Sunday School, and we also did a lot of looking after the younger children because I was an older sibling. We did music making, certainly carol evenings and at Christmas we'd have lots of other families in the community and make music together. That's with cellos and violins and lots of different instruments. Another family of 9 children, and the 8 of us, all got together. We did a lot of stuff in the community. My father was a veterinary surgeon and my mother was a musician and a mother. Mum was in the Veterinary Wives' hospitality group and so she used to host a lot of people. So we grew up having a lot of international people staying. We knew people like Lili Kraus, the well known pianist, so we would go to concerts sometimes as a family. There wasn't a lot of money because there were 8 of us and I can remember it would always be 2 or 3 of us in bunks in the room and sometimes the new baby would be brought in to sleep in one of the bedrooms. We shifted house 10 days before the eighth child was born. Prior to that, my older two sisters had had to move into the garage to sleep, because there wasn't enough room. But, we grew up in a very busy house, a very full house, we had lots of aunts and uncles stay. Over Christmas we would have about 30 from one side of the family to come and the next day, Boxing Day we would have about 40 from the other family. Mum was very much into extended family and looking after our grandparents who visited us a lot. So there was that sense of connectedness with family.



**When you talked about the music evenings, your home was quite an open house to other people in the neighbourhood?**

Very much so - and when we moved to this bigger house to fit the 10 of us in, there was a tennis court, so that became very much a part of our lives. It was an old tennis court and Dad was very fit, and would get us out there often as teenage girls. Because I was fit in those days (I used to play hockey and tennis), he would say to me I need a fourth (player) as one of the men isn't here yet. The 'men' included the Vice Chancellor of Waikato University and one guy who played for Davis Cup tennis and some of these men were top farmers in the region. But looking back on some of the elements that helped me to develop I suppose this gave me confidence to work with men. The fact that I went out on that tennis court aged 14 or 15 and hit these balls back to the Vice Chancellor etc and was not be frightened by them. It was a real challenge and wonderful actually that Dad accepted us as 'the girls' to come and play tennis against these powerful men.

It was a good development era ... I can remember my father pushing us through boundaries and saying 'I want you all to have careers - you are going to need to earn an income when you are older'. He pushed us academically too, to follow our music as well as our sport.

**Did your parents have ideas about what they'd like to see you do, or was it open to you to choose a career path?**

I think it was open but it was a fairly sexist attitude as to what girls and boys did. I can remember my eldest sister when she started studying medicine despite actually wanting to be a vet but at that time it was not really accepted as a profession for a woman. She changed her mind after a year and went in to veterinary science. So that was sort of breaking into a new area too. I suppose because I was Head Girl and an all-rounder in many areas at school I thought that teaching would be a nice safe area for a girl. Some of the other sisters went into nursing and physiotherapy. So they were traditional in that sense, but we were encouraged to follow our path, but there were fairly conservative politics, looking back on it.

**Could you describe what you mean in terms of what you parents thinking was and why it was conservative?**

Well, I suppose Dad working within the farming community as a veterinary surgeon meant that he was working with fairly conservative thinking in rural Waikato. Mum came from a farming background and had very traditional views about what women should do. But also within the Methodist church there was no alcohol, even though Dad would have some (alcohol) and there were comments about social issues. So you grew up with the sense that the 'bomb' should have dropped on the Japanese to end the war and that these 'activists' were sort of radical and 'communist', and that we must have ANZUS and we must have nuclear ship visits and the Americans and the Brits were right and Royalty was right. So when I met the Queen and sat next to Prince Charles for lunch in 1970 when I was Head Girl, there was great celebration in the family that I'd met



royalty. This was seen as extremely important and of course years later, when I developed my own thinking, I had a different view about royalty but it had been an important part of my life experience at the time.

**But your parents did have quite openness and a value of community, by the sounds of it.**

Yes and a sense of social responsibility, but not left-wing.

**What about attitudes towards issues around poverty, giving out a helping hand to those in need?**

Yes, that would have been there, partly because of the Christian values, I think but not obviously, but they would care for people in need - definitely.

**So did they ever talk about topics of inequality and social change?**

No, not that I picked up on. That came later for me. But there was a caring concern for people in need and that was genuine. It wasn't just a patronising sort of thing that it can be in the church you sort of patronising attitude.

**What their views towards Maori people?**

Mixed. I think there was respect because my mother had grown up with quite a few Maori in her local community and Mum used to go to the pas with her father and some of the local Methodist ministers to teach Sunday school. It would have been a much more patronising attitude, but she grew up learning some of the language and having Maori working on the farm. My father had a lot of respect for Maori because his grand mother spoke fluent Maori and he spent a lot of time with her and she was also treated in a special way by Maori elders because she was a woman with special power really. They used to seek her advice as a mediator and a 'seer'.

**When did you first learn about her?**

Well my second name is Frances and I was named after her. My great grandmother was *matakite* - a seer – my father told me about her gift. She had a sister called Kate and I was named after both of them. They came from the Mohaka area. Frances had met Te Kooti and his followers when she was in her isolated whare with her five young children. She greeted them in Maori and offered fruit and vegetables. There'd been massacres not far away from where she was. So I grew up knowing some of that early history but I didn't really get into studying this until I was in my forties.

But, I also grew up with my mother's father telling me about a woman he knew in Christchurch called Kate and another called Ada who he was close to in Christchurch. It wasn't until years later that I discovered that they were Kate Sheppard and Ada Wells. Later I heard the story that when his mother died when he was eight, Kate Sheppard - who was part of the Women's Christian Temperance Union in Christchurch and part of the Methodist Church - took my grandfather under her wing and she used to have him come to her house. He used to bike from Leeston into Christchurch and spend time with her. On his deathbed he confessed to my mother that Kate Sheppard had given him a big bag of lollies to take back to his siblings (he was the youngest of the twelve surviving children) and he biked all the way from back into Leeston ... and of course he ate all the lollies. He'd carried that guilt with him and he never knew how famous Kate would become. The irony is that I met Margaret Lovell-Smith in my first year at Helen Connon Hall in Christchurch and she asked me

to launch her book on Canterbury women including her Lovell-Smith aunts and her step great grandmother Kate Sheppard. I was able to talk about our common history of growing up as children from Methodist backgrounds- and the strong anti-drink, moral attitudes. Margie and I have been firm friends since we were eighteen but didn't know this other connection until later.

**So it wasn't until you were much older that you learned more about the Suffrage Movement? What age would you have been when you learned about that?**

Probably mid-thirties when I was starting to teach about peace studies. I wouldn't have called myself a feminist growing up - absolutely not - girls had their place in our family!

**So what were some other expectations that you thought you were going to fulfil at a young age?**

Be a mother, stay at home and mind the children, maybe do some work part time but not where it impinged on the children, and go to church, and not rock the boat... So I wasn't a very good daughter long term I suppose in terms of how some parents would perceive how their children should be.

**How different were you from your other siblings?**

Quite different from most of them longer term ....

**So was this an issue for your family?**

It became an issue once I was involved in the Peace Squadron and publicly making statements about peace issues at a time when it was not the thing to do.

**When you began to realise that you wanted to change in your life and ideas around feminism and speaking out and being more publicly involved on issues - did you ever talk about those things with your sisters?**

Yes some of my sisters. Some of them prayed for me to be saved because I was called a 'communist' because of the position I took on opposing US policies especially on warship visits. There are two sisters who are extremely supportive and understand where I'm coming from but for many years it was very lonely.

**Did any other of your siblings follow the path of becoming a teacher?**

No.

**What was it about teaching that attracted you?**

I think because I'd done Sunday School teaching I enjoyed sharing information and I'd done a degree in music and teaching was a good place to impart knowledge. But I've always enjoyed working with young people and especially young women and my first job was at Epsom Girls Grammar so that gave me a very good opportunity to mix with young women that I felt comfortable with.

**What age were you when you started teaching at Epsom Girls Grammar?**

Twenty-two.

**As a music teacher?**

Primarily, but I also taught some maths and liberal studies. That's where I was able to bring some of the peace issues into the school. I also ran an environment group and was part of the Christian, Maori and music groups.

**So what were your interests at that time?**

I came down to Canterbury University to do a music degree and the Vietnam War was on and I used to look at the people protesting on the streets and thought that's terrible - they shouldn't be doing that - I was quite alienated by that behaviour. I didn't get involved as a student.

**What did you feel towards them?**

I didn't really want to know. I didn't know about the issue and didn't want to get involved. That's the background I'd had. I wanted to do my degree. I was going to St Barnabas Anglican Church.

**Did you ever come across other young people who were protesting?**

Yes, but I didn't get close to them because I was very conservative at that time and certainly in the music department it wasn't a radical place to be. So it really wasn't until John and I got married at the beginning of '74 and went to St John's Theological College and I started Teachers' College and we met George and Jocelyn Armstrong at St Johns that I became radicalised about social issues.

**Would you like to just tell us how you met John Boanas?**

Yes, first week at university in a maths class - that goes a long way back. I would have been just eighteen.

**And was Christianity an important part of the connection that you made?**

Yes, one of the first things we did was go to church.

**At that time was it an important thing?**

I believed that people could be guided in their lives into what partner they should have, what work they should do, and I'd had that instilled in me as a child that I needed to trust that. I'd had some deep experiences as a young girl actually feeling that I was connected to a God - whether that fitted in the Anglican Church- it did at that point, but it has changed since. I can remember at the age of twelve playing the piano and having this vision of speaking at the United Nations and speaking in pulpits. So who would know that training to be a music teacher could have led onto what I eventually came to?

**So what did you think of that at the time?**

It must have just gone in the memory bank but it's something I've thought back on and wondered whether that's something intuitive that I've followed. I don't know because music training wouldn't have trained me to do the work I eventually did.

**Let's talk about when John was at St John's College and you were teaching at the time that he was studying.**

I was a music teacher and one of the first pieces that I had to teach for School Certificate music was 'Threnody to the Victims of Hiroshima' (by Penderecki). I remember trying to think creatively about how I could get the students interested in this piece of music because it sounded so terrible and they'd cover their ears and say

“O, this sounds dreadful - I can't cope with it - I don't know what it means” - and I too didn't know who the victims were. I was twenty-three years old and I'd never known about it even though I'd studied history at school at Hamilton Girls' High.

**Did the music sound quite heavy and quite dark in its feeling?**

It was intense, it was horrible to listen to, it was screeching, and you could feel the pain. So these fourteen and fifteen year olds were saying to me 'we don't know who they are', 'tell us about them'. So I went and found out - I got John Hersey's book 'Hiroshima' out of the library. It was being studied by the English classes so I asked the students to read it and then I phoned the Foundation for Peace Studies and got the tapes, slides and paintings by survivors and started to read about Hiroshima. This was in 1974-5 and I was just blown away by what I was reading. At the same time we had the US warship visits starting to happen in 1975 and we were close to George and his wife Jocelyn Armstrong (who I was teaching with at Epsom Girls Grammar). George was raising issues at St John's about social issues to do with the Tour (Springbok), nuclear testing, and nuclear ship visits. He'd been studying at Princeton University where he'd found out about the Quakers who had taken small boats out to try and stop warships coming into the harbour and he loved the vision of that that sort of public liturgy idea.

Because we were living at St Johns I was going to the church services with George and Jocelyn, and John was getting involved and becoming quite radicalised and changing his thinking so we would talk about it. John became the secretary of the first Peace Squadron with George in 1975 and a lot of that campaign was run from our house and George's house. They were setting up a movement and getting people out on boats and working with the local Greenpeace and CND and planning a public liturgy on the water. I really liked that - it was for the general public - it's taking this sort of spirituality that I had experienced out to the ordinary citizen but in a direct way of saying 'these ships are threatening life on earth', we have to do something public about it to raise awareness. Why not start with having a communion on Bastion Point - which is what we did in 1975. Well a lot of these ministers and families went down and had a blessing - a Maori blessing of small boats which were going out to do a practice. John was on the boats. I was there in support, but it was a very important experience to be part of that and watch how our movement could grow. That took the public imagination. That was very challenging to the status quo and actually radicalised us in the process, because it was George's passion, the mixture of his passion and his reasoning and knowing about the issues that inspired me. That he was prepared to not just be an academic and a researcher on certain issues but he was an activist and he put those thoughts and ideas into action so that they would have political effect.

**Can we just take a step back when you would start to have initial discussions with George and Jocelyn and anybody else who was around at that time what was in it for you? How big a learning curve do you feel that this was for you to learn about how you can actually take a stance and actually oppose something as a group of people just coming together how new for you was this?**

Very new, I'd never done it and it was quite scary because I was teaching at Epsom Girls Grammar - one of the prestigious girls schools in Auckland and I was the safe little music teacher and all of a sudden all these boundaries were being extended in

my thinking. I was being challenged by what I was reading to teach my students in my own field and then feeling a sense of responsibility that I had to do something about this. At the same time you had the political debate going on with Muldoon saying he was going to bring warships back into the country and welcome them. George and the others were bringing a group of people together, especially in Auckland, and saying we've got to confront this and then John's job was to talk to people in Wellington and Christchurch and try and get peace squadrons going there. So John would go away to do this and come back and talk about it. I was thinking this is pretty radical - this is all beginning to happen in our house and George's house. We had the skippers' meetings in our house with Pat Hanly and all these guys with boats and I can still remember them in this long corridor painting banners. We had a small house - there were about seven of us living in a community at St Johns. But our job as the women was making tea for these fifty or sixty men while the men were planning these radical actions to go out and stop these warships coming in. The TV cameras were rolling and the spooks were keeping an eye on our house and I was not sure where I fitted into this. I'd be the one that would take the call at three in the morning when we got abusive phone calls from the American men in particular threatening to kill us.

### **From the crew of the ship?**

From people in the community who knew about the Peace Squadron - and that radicalised me. I was experiencing it first hand how you could have a group of people prepared to go out and do non-violent direct action. People like Maire Leadbeater and others in CND were organising street marches as sort of a women's role. There weren't many women who owned boats for starters and were skippers, but women were crewing on the boats. Then you had this longer term public education by groups which had the resources about Hiroshima and Nagasaki. You had material that could be used in the wider communities such as films, books, photos, and I suppose when I questioned where I fitted in that it was, like well, I can't organise the boats, it's not what I feel comfortable with, not with my background - I could do the long term education because I was in a school teaching position and my own profession as a teacher was asking me really to question this whole thing as part of my teaching for School Certificate. It must have been fate that I was given that stuff to teach because I was radicalised by all of those things coming together and then deciding to go from St Johns to study peace studies after John had become the first part-time secretary of the Peace Foundation. So that's over a two and a half to three year period - but environmental issues were important as well.

### **Side two tape one**

**While this was all happening there was this huge Maori renaissance from the late sixties which was happening in all sorts of different spheres. There was also the Vietnam War protests which you experienced and rejected and ran away from and here you are in Auckland thrown in the middle of it - did you just see this part of it as your theological advancement over time being part of your natural journey or did you see yourself fighting it?**

It happened gradually and that's the beauty of it. I think that change can happen gradually and as you educate yourself and learn about the issues you develop and change and your circumstances change.

**So your time making teas for the Peace Squadron was an affirming time to gain confidence in just being around it rather than just feeling submissive there was a time the women's liberation was sort of going a bit crazy?**

I would have been very threatened by women's liberation, from my family background. I still needed my bra and to dress conservatively. I was in the church and so here were these challenges out there in the community and I was having to confront them at every level really. One of those was questioning my role as a woman in terms of - where did I feel comfortable? It was in the classroom at a girls' school - it felt a good place and a safe place to be and I didn't want to take any media profile with the Peace Squadron. The men could do that - it was sort of a man's thing at that point. It was dramatic, it was out on the water but I was watching it happen. It was in our house. I was clipping the newspapers all the time. That was my role being the sort of secretary and the tea maker but I was young and I think the parallel issues for me at the time were nuclear energy and nuclear weapons.

There was a debate about whether we would get nuclear power plants in New Zealand and so I went to courses in the evening on environmental issues and Jeanette Fitzsimons was my teacher. I think my first vote was for the Values Party in Remuera. Despite my conservative background I voted for a woman standing against a really well known Tory in Remuera because I really admired the peace values of the Values Party and what they were saying about the environment. So I started a little environment group at Epsom Girls' Grammar and got the students collecting bottles and paper. That was way out in front in those days - that was 1975 and I invited people like 'the male experts' Drs George Armstrong and John Hinchcliff and other men from the community to come and talk to our students in the school hall. Jocelyn Armstrong and I were teaching at the school while our husbands were out on the water, and the media was carrying all this publicly. Well, what was our position? What radicalised me was when the headmistress called me in and said "when is your husband going to get a proper job, and not be doing these sorts of things like the Peace Squadron and Peace Foundation?" Those things started me questioning because I supported him but I was getting questioned and challenged about my job and my relationship with him. So when he left St Johns, after a difficult time on the whole question of radical non-violent direct action and became the first secretary of the Peace Foundation, I then looked at the Peace Foundation school resources about peace and conflict resolution. So I began using their resources. But what really radicalised me was when we'd gone from Peace Squadron actions to Bradford (in the UK) and John had a World Council of Churches scholarship to study peace studies at Bradford University. We were talking with some of the international students and they didn't know anything about our region so we offered to give a lecture to the students about the Peace Squadron and nuclear testing in the Pacific. They had no idea that France and Britain and the US had tested in our region. We were teaching the lecturers about our area of the world and that was really good because it made me own where I came from and to want to do more about it.

I wrote an essay on peace education and how we could get it into schools. This was my first paper for a Diploma in Peace Studies which I'd enrolled for, along with John. When I handed it into this male academic he sent it back and failed it. He said 'you can't achieve that - this is pie in the sky'. So, I thought okay I'm going to give up on this academic stuff for Peace Studies but I'm going to go back and prove that we can do it and I did. We came back and it was a really important challenge for me.

**Can I ask you about the other women that you came into contact with - you talked about Jocelyn, but other women and in terms of their connections or their talk of women's liberation? I'm interested to know whether that became a part of your thinking at that time or were you only affected by what other women were getting involved with later on?**

I think the awakening for me on feminist issues came later but that experience at St Johns was fundamental to that because of the way the men in the church treated the women. I didn't realise I was being radicalised at that time but I was. It was people like Jocelyn Armstrong, Jeanette Fitzsimons, Elaine Shaw from Greenpeace - there weren't many Maori women that I met at that point - that came later - it was the early eighties that I felt challenged on a lot of those issues and did my own reading.

**When you were researching your information on Nagasaki and Hiroshima you would have already had some knowledge in terms of history world wide history or wars and things like that?**

Well Second World War maybe. I studied history at school but not about Hiroshima and Nagasaki - I had no idea that a nuclear bomb had been dropped. I was so shocked when I, at the age of twenty-three, showed the students the photographs and films and read John Hersey's book. I was gob smacked by it and so I started showing films in liberal studies I thought if I don't know it means most of the students don't know.

**So can you just show for us, little by little how that information came to you and you actually really fully understood what the devastation that a nuclear bomb could have?**

Again it was gradual but, first we're going back nearly thirty years now but what really touched me most was the stories of the hibakusha - the victims from Hiroshima and Nagasaki. And then Hersey's book put things into a context of what had happened in Japan from an American point of view. So I wasn't interested really in the technical stuff cause I always saw that as male stuff and that's why I asked George and John Hinchcliff to come in and talk and show films because I shied away from all that. It made me angry, and it disempowered me. I really wanted to explore the hibakusha stories because of what they opened up for people. Having gone to Bradford after being in Auckland and studying peace studies I became an avid reader of things to do with wars.

**And what did the stories open up for you?**

Just the sense of absolute paralysis of where the world system was at - asking how can the power brokers get the world to this point where they can blow the place up many times over for every citizen in the world? I realised there was going to be no future

unless we acted, so I was being pushed through boundaries - a sense of urgency - something had to be done both at an environmental level and a human level. We were about to implode – and the men had the power. Where do the women come into this? How can the women affect this? Yet we have every right as citizens to have some say in what happens. How am I going to research this? How am I going to learn about this? So I realised - I'm going to have to read books and search out other groups around the world that are doing similar work on this, but primarily I must educate myself and others about the urgency of it.

I began to get angrier and angrier for a period of time when I was a young mother - this sense of who held the power. I suppose that's when my awakening about feminism and the patriarchy began - particularly in relation to the militarization of the planet and the power of the military industrial complex and who made the decisions. I asked 'hang on, there are no women at that table making any decisions and we should be there even though we've got the babies', in fact, that makes us even more qualified - that's where we should be. It was that sense of passion and anger at the same time and as the mother of three little kids I felt propelled out the door to go to the schools, even though I was parenting, and take the information I had from the Peace Foundation to twenty schools - to have the Hiroshima Nagasaki exhibition go to the universities. I'm talking about 1979-80 in Christchurch - and to start to speak out even on radio. I did my first interview probably in 1980 when we were starting up the Peace Collective. I knew I needed male support for what I was doing because I was very nervous about this work and speaking out publicly. So I found men that I could work with in partnership and one was Terry Wall who was a Methodist minister at the time. He knew more of the technical stuff and he could answer questions like that whereas I'd go where I felt safe which was the schools and the wider community to set up groups...

**Would you describe the early building up of knowledge and wanting to do something about it was a reaction to what was happening or at the same time looking at the possibilities for the alternative? Do you think you started from that anger and reaction to what was happening in the world?**

They happened at the same time I think. It was a gradual process because, as a woman in particular I was interested in 'what is peace?' That's where the Peace Foundation was useful because it looked at some of the wider issues about peace. It didn't look at colonialism and environment and a lot of other issues but it was asking 'what is peace?' It's what their lectures were about, so I was beginning to make the linkages, but it wasn't happening in terms of my personal life really until I came back from Bradford, where I'd done some study for a while. I was pregnant with my first child, and asked 'what the hell am I doing bringing a child into this world for?'

I was well trained to be a mother having looked after younger siblings in my family. I thought that if I'm going to be a mother then cleaning their teeth and teaching my kids violin and piano and making sure the house is clean is all important - but if I'm not doing something about the planet and my child's future, then I'm not actually doing my parenting role properly. Part of my parenting was to get out there and form groups - especially of other women who had young children. Groups called Women for Peace and then link out not just nationally but internationally and that's where our little women's peace group as early as 1980 started to hear about Greenham Common

women. Well Greenham totally inspired me - to watch what was happening and to see the build-up internationally and to see women coming into prominence like German MP Petra Kelly and the women in Britain and Australia eg Jo Vallentine and Hilda Lini in the Pacific. You know I started to contact women leaders like Dr Helen Caldicott and others who were prepared to put themselves on the line and speak out.

Around 1980 we were starting to set up a national organisation again, because CND wasn't active here at the time. I remember going to a meeting in Wellington in 1980 – the one before Peace Movement Aotearoa began and a group of six or eight Maori women came down from Auckland - they were part of the Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific movement and the Maori Liberation Movement - and challenged us. I was pushed out of my comfort zone - it was great looking back - it was frightening but it was exciting ....

**How was it frightening for you?**

Oh eight women in a very Pakeha gathering when you'd never been on a marae. They were speaking with passion and power and challenging us about the colonisation of this country asking – 'do you know your history?' - 'how can you be working for peace out there if you're not working about peace here?'. They were scary because they were right, and it meant you had to go home and look at your own ancestry, and look at what responsibility you had as a Pakeha on this land. There were lots of tears. There was a lot of anger - a lot of men reacted to what they were saying. What they said touched me very, very deeply and had a profound effect on me, in terms of then starting to find out who I was, where I belonged in this country, and what my ancestors had done in this country. It forced me to take some responsibility and link up with Maori here and also start to look at the whole issue of racism and colonisation and poverty and development and how all these issues relate to the military. I can remember a comment something like 'well you're just worried about your white arses if a bomb goes off' and they were right. It was Hilda Halkyard Harawira that gave that challenge. We've been friends since and we've worked together on some things - both having babies at the same time. I had one at that time and she had three and those connections built up over time.

**It seems really quite interesting that most of your awakening and activities happened in Christchurch/ Otago. Do you think you would have been so active if you'd remained in Auckland?**

It's hard to tell because the awakening did start there definitely with Peace Squadron, the environmental groups and school teaching - and there was a radical group up there. I think I would have stayed within that radical group with the women in Greenpeace etc doing stuff about testing and health issues in the region. However, Christchurch became very important.

**You came here after Bradford?**

I came here after Bradford University in 1979 and I was six months pregnant. That changed things for me - giving birth to a child put things in perspective.

**Would you have thought there were some leaders here like Elsie Locke? When did you make contact with her or was it by accident or going to meetings?**

It wasn't Elsie to start with - it was actually Muriel Morrison from the Quakers, and it was Peter Jones who was a non-violent direct action facilitator and Rachel Bloomfield who ran a training weekend six weeks before I had Jess (baby) over Easter in 1979. I was absolutely huge, sitting there thinking what am I going to do about this. They said get into groups, get organised. In fact they were training us for action as much for the Springbok Tour as for other peace issues. We had a whole weekend on analysis of the issues and non-violent direct action training. While Peter was here we contacted some friends (before Larry Ross and Harold Evans joined the group) including Mia Tay. She knew the old CND and local Quakers. That little group became the Peace Collective and it met in our home primarily because I was pregnant and breast feeding so I could participate.



Terry Wall, John Boanas, Te Ruru, Kate Dewes, David Buller, Mia Tay, Anne Finlay, Harold Evans, August 1979

**It seems to have really taken off when you arrived here in Christchurch. When you were in Bradford and you spoke about what was happening here in the Pacific and Australasia then you came back here and you learned more about what it actually meant to be a Pakeha living in New Zealand, looking at issues for Maori alternatives - real peace action, women's movement gathering greater strength....Did you also feel that from having been overseas talking about New Zealand that inspired you to come back and fully immerse yourself in this too? Has part of your motivation been recognising what it means to be a New Zealander and live in this part of the world? Because I just sense a great momentum happening at that time of all things coming to the surface, and then the non-violent direct action being a way of putting things into practice with all these consciousness raising tasks. Did you question what it meant to be a New Zealander? What we have to do here in this country, was that what was happening for you at the time?**

I want to go back to seeing the international reaction to the Peace Squadron in Auckland and realising that a small country speaking out and a small group of people could actually affect change, and seeing what happened when the Rainbow Warrior - the small Greenpeace boats, the Vega and the others, went up to oppose French testing, and when New Zealand sent a New Zealand frigate up to Moruroa and their reaction to a small state and what they were doing. When I went to Bradford I challenged them to look at what was happening in our region was a form of colonisation by people who were my ancestors. So, you had this sense of standing in

England on ground that you knew your ancestors had come from, awakening to the need to alert British people to what they had done including the effects of testing and their military policies in our region, and saying 'I'm taking some responsibility for this', educating you about what we're doing. But when you'd gone to the other side of the world and you realised how many million live in England you ask what can one or two people do? The answer is, not much. So you come back thinking there's three million here and we can have a say. We know our MPs, we can actually educate, we can take direct action and have an effect because we'd seen it with George etc.

I began to read about our own history in terms of people like Elsie Locke and others - a lot of that wasn't written up and easily accessible at the time so you had to go and search out your elders. When we came back from Bradford University one of John's essays was on the history of Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament in Christchurch, so he interviewed Elsie and other elders and taped them. Guess who had the job of typing up the essay? Yes, me. So, I learned a lot about what Elsie had done through John's research. I'd given up the course - I'd been effectively failed on a Peace studies course and thought I'd just be a mother and wife and type the essays. It gave me time to read. I read books about war while I was breastfeeding - twenty minutes each side - it didn't do much for my milk production but I read a lot of books and set up the peace office in our house immediately - we had a room full of Peace Foundation resources.

**So your children were indoctrinated very early on?**

Even in utero! They were my drive and inspiration, they gave me my energy.

**So really from that early stage you realised that within New Zealand it was quite a unique situation being a small population that you really could come together as groups and change could happen quite rapidly?**

Absolutely. We had a democracy even though it was hard to call a democracy under Muldoon, but we'd experienced that. We'd seen the reaction to both opposing warships and French testing with a more liberal government. Prior to that you'd seen how governments could take action because of citizen opposition and we had a strong history and if we got enough groups of people active we could do things. I remember George in 1979 - 80 began this idea of Home Base Pacific Pilgrimage which was really to get nuclear free zones declared in homes and communities and city councils and boats and farms and offices and bikes. It was right across the community but you had to have a ceremony - this liturgy in your own home. So every little group that got started in Christchurch, not least our own, would make a declaration in their own homes and put up a sticker and so gradually Fendalton began mushrooming with anti-nuclear stickers on peoples letter boxes. We developed an idea of how this could grow. We sourced a map of the council area of all the local streets and took it to malls and universities and asked people to fill in their home in as a nuclear free zone. It was a great challenge living in this conservative



electorate as the National Party was still pro bringing the nuclear warships in.

The idea took off at a great speed primarily because of Larry Ross's work in terms of focusing on declaring Councils nuclear free. Once you started to get homes and other areas openly declared nuclear free Councils were more open to becoming nuclear free. It was an exciting time and it was okay to get out with your kids in buggies and knock on the doors. You felt you were on some sort of mission to save the planet.

**By then there were plenty of people as well?**

It started slowly with the Peace Collective here. In early 1979 Harold Evans phoned to ask if he could be part of the group. We had to check out his credentials as a local retired magistrate and whether he would fit into our group and be radical enough for us. It was wonderful to have him and then Larry Ross joined later. But it was a very important little group and it attracted a lot of us who had young children. Some of us wanted a women only group so we formed a Women for Peace group that met at home as well. Sometimes we'd have three meetings in a week at home.

**Tape two, side one**

**Kate one aspect that I'm really interested in which relates back to your faith and your spirituality, and that is when you were involved with the Peace Squadron and you described George Armstrong describing it as public liturgy. Is that something that really was of that moment, or did it follow on for you in other peace work or other protests that you became involved with? The idea of linking spirituality and faith and communion with this protest and action for change? Did you use any terms along those lines in the future beyond your time with the Peace Squadron?**

Well the Peace Squadron carried on in Christchurch when I was here. In March 1984 we had a protest against the USS Whipple visit and the Pacific PeaceMaker came through Lyttelton. It was a small boat with a young family on board which went up to link between the Pacific and Bangor where the Trident was based in the United States. That was a further development of George's dream of the public liturgy - this boat was a very public image of linking here to there. That's when Terry Wall joined the boat as part of linking with the church and radicalising the church on these issues. So it did continue down here in different forms, not necessarily using the term 'public liturgy' but it would have been enacted that way. A group of us in the Peace Collective did street theatre around the whole nuclear issue and that attracted media. But it wasn't necessarily talking about Faith or the Church, but in many ways what was beginning to happen for me was that the church was out there on the streets and needed to be.

And the issues are so important, that if we're talking about protecting the planet and the sanctity of life at every level then it doesn't necessarily need to be couched in any church terms, but it is basically linked into the same grid, if you know what I mean. So all the actions that we did we would bring in the Catholic Church, the Anglican church, the Methodists, the Quakers, the Bahai, you know a lot of different faiths, but not necessarily talk about the church. But I think what we've learnt from the protest movement and from the non-violent direct action and even the involvement of the

church is that a lot of these issues weren't necessarily going to be raised within the church until you had public debate about it, out on the streets and on the water.

And the beauty of what George did, and the Rainbow Warrior and Greenpeace, and others was that that got the public debating the issue about life, and the threat to life, the environment and the need to protect the planet and in a wider way that reached everybody in the secular and wider community. The churches did come on board and they became a key group. There were huge debates in the churches, it was exciting watching it grow. Church groups such as the Methodist, Anglican, Presbyterian and Catholic peace groups all worked together, you had ecumenism happening, on wider issues. We really collaborated. It was amazing what we did in the early 80's here. There was the Peace Collective, and from that 40 peace groups developed within eighteen months. It was just neighbourhood peace groups, it was this non-hierarchical way of working, it was generic, it was grassroots, it was linking with the wider community but we didn't link very well with Maori. It was growing and reaching people and empowering them and it had a public profile and we were linking nationally and internationally.

There was this sense of this big wave of people awakening. We felt responsible, we were advocating at every level, sending films out around the country. There was a sense that if you could educate our politicians, our leaders, get lots of nuclear free zones declared, you could get this country declared nuclear free - and it would reach out to the Pacific.

I used to have a vision of a rainbow going from this country out and that it would spread. Whatever we did here would have an effect, and I've always held onto that vision. Funnily, enough, the local women made me a rainbow to carry to the UN in 1988 and it sort of symbolized a lot of what we did in this area, that's 'we' collectively, a lot of us. Maori, Pakeha, all over the country, it was an exciting time to be part of a movement, watching it grow and having a sense of achievement.



**It was around about that time, that you started your involvement teaching Peace Studies at Canterbury University, could you tell us about that?**

That came later in 1986, but prior to that we'd been having Hiroshima, Nagasaki exhibitions out at the University and at Lincoln and at Polytech, and there were requests to speak there too. 1986 was the UN International Year of Peace and that's why that year was important for getting our little course going at Canterbury.

**One of the things is your connections at that international level, and that began with conferences, and being at Bradford, but it was also about going to the women and disarmament conference.**

Some of my first international contacts in the peace movement came when we were at St Johns with people like Hilda Lini who was from Vanuatu and whose older brother

Walter had gone through St Johns and became the first Prime Minister in 1974 when Vanuatu became independent. She came out as a young 22 yr old and stayed with us and 20 years later of course we worked incredibly closely together on the World Court Project when she was Minister for Health in Vanuatu. Then there was the 1976 (International Convention for Peace Action) conference with John Hinchcliff who organised it. I took a bus load of girls from Epsom Girls Grammar and other Auckland schools down to Wellington. It was one of the few times that we developed links nationally with the rest of the groups, so that was important. But we had international speakers come like Bob Aldridge, who had been an engineer making nuclear weapons and had changed sides and he was in the USA, and Mairead Corrigan (Maguire) who had just won the Nobel Peace Prize for the work that they had done with Peace women in Ireland.

Also I had joined up with WILPF which is the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, in 1975 in Auckland. There were very few young women involved but a lot of those women in Auckland were involved with the Peace Foundation as well. So when I was in Bradford there was a peace conference that the WILPF women told me about that was being held in Vienna called the "Women and World Disarmament Conference". They paid me \$50 towards getting from Bradford across to Vienna. I was at that point earning about 20 pounds a week and I had been on the dole for a while because I had no job in England and decided it was very important to go. I met these wonderful women who were working internationally on women and disarmament issues. That was as early as 1977/78. I wrote about it and Kath Knight (a Quaker and a member of WILPF), got it published in the Women's Weekly. The article was about teaching peace education in NZ schools and linked with my experiences of having been in Bradford. In those days that was quite something to be published in the Women's Weekly. I was by far the youngest woman at that conference. I realised then how important it is to nurture young ones to go to these meetings. I kept in touch with a lot of those women and I met them years later at key times when they were able to help nurture me in different roles. They were also keen to hear about NZ, that's the other thing about owning our story.

**Were you a speaker at that conference?**

No, but there were about 40 or 50 women at the round table and they did ask me to speak about NZ, so it was very good for me to have to do that, quite scary but good. Looking back it was good training for what I had to do longer term.

**How would you describe your confidence developing? I mean various ways at many levels, how it changes...how you were feeling?**

It's interesting when I go back to that attitude of being a girl in a big family - that it wasn't really our place to speak up, and then to teach at a high school that was very conservative, and yet I was raising issues that were a bit radical in a fairly conservative environment, and learning to trust my intuition. I realised that I was going to have to put myself on the line at some point. I was fortunate to have gurus like George and Jocelyn who would say "It's alright, there is life after this" and encouraged you. But I wasn't in an equal relationship with my partner in terms of really respecting my role to speak out, so I was very submissive in that sense, and sort of very much still the teacher and the little girl from Hamilton Girls High School.

The experience of going to Bradford was very important because we had to own our stories and that conference was very important to start speaking out. When I was about to have Jess (first baby) I went to the Quakers. You're supposed to quake when you spoke at Quakers. But I used to quake so much people used to comment about how nervous I was – how I would go red, I would shake and stutter. It wasn't until 1988 when I was chosen to go as the only woman on the government delegation to the UN Special Session on Disarmament. John Morrison, married to Muriel who had been a Vice President of the Peace Foundation, really nurtured me. John was a social worker and he had noticed how nervous I was when speaking in groups such as the Peace Forum and other groups. He offered to give me training in how to feel confident. He took me back to an experience when I was a little girl to remember what it felt like to feel totally confident about my ability. He encouraged me to trust my intuition and feel that feeling and hold it on my arm. He said, when you are at the UN go back and hold onto that feeling of being a confident little girl. And I've used that frequently. It goes back to that thing of not being frightened to ask for help.

And so, when we had those little groups here one of the people in our group was Brian Pauling who taught media studies at the Polytech. He offered to train some of us over a weekend to speak out publicly. So, we interviewed each other on tape recorders and TV cameras and pretended we were doing a proper interview. He was the first one to interview me on radio with Terry Wall. He said it was okay to bring someone along with you and he taught us some skills about not being frightened about the media and some coping skills about how to deal with the media. And all those things I have developed the sense of self confidence. However, I have learned to trust my intuition, even it is not what my parents would agree with, or what society would agree with, even if it means that I lose my job - and that's scary stuff- but it's also now the path I'm on.

**Was there a time in the early days when something felt big but then you really trusted your intuition and then you were okay? Could you give us an example?**

An example was when I knew something had to happen in this country. And it was pushing to have Dr Helen Caldicott come here. I had read her book "I have three children of my own" and I wrote to her in the States and said that is such a moving story, would you consider coming to NZ? She said "I'm coming to Australia at so and so time and I would consider coming across the Tasman and come to NZ". I wrote to the Peace Foundation asking for them to sponsor her but letters came back from my elders, who I really respected, saying 'no it would be a waste of money, she would only speak to women and doctors and she wouldn't have any real effect'. I still have these letters and I wrote back just knowing that we had to bring her and saying if we mobilise the women and the doctors in this country, we've got it, the time is right for this to happen.

I really put myself on the line on this one. I was in Australia in 1981 and I'd just discovered I was pregnant with Annie (number 2). I caught the train down from Brisbane to Sydney to meet the women who had been organising Helen's visit and told them that we would find the money, it's got to happen, we must have a woman speaker and to give us a year. We always had male academics as speakers. Helen was the right one because she brought both the reason and the passion. And it was

exactly a year after I had Annie on 9 March '82 that Lucy was born - the day Helen Caldicott came to Christchurch. It was difficult to get the local group inspired about Helen and the effect that she was going to have. I went into labour two weeks early, the night before she arrived so I could not pick her up from the airport. I rang the guy from TVNZ begging him to interview Helen at the airport - this was in between contractions - and he said she'll only be worth it for 40 seconds, it's not worth it. I said look you're missing out on something, she's really important. I got into hospital and the doctor said, will you just get on with having this baby, because I wanted to go home and keep organising for dinner with Helen and all the local peace groups. My husband John was overseas at the time and Annie of course was only a baby. Helen came into the hospital that night to meet me and see the baby. And she put her feet up on the bed with her high heels on - and her lipstick and curls - and she said 'now come to my public meeting tonight' "but Helen", I said "I've just had a baby and I've got another two at home - just give us a break!" 'No come on,' she said, 'your baby's fine, my husband's a paediatrician, and he's just checked your baby.' The baby was two weeks early - she was only 6 pounds and Helen insisted I should come but I stood up to her. She said 'okay I want you to put your high heels on and your suit and when I leave you're the sort of person who can do it, and I want you to go and talk to the politicians, and the doctors and lawyers, get them off their chuffs - you've got to tell them how to do it, take them out for dinner.'

She went right around the country speaking to other women. She had a huge impact on me, not least because I thought having three babies was enough to do, and she said 'no it's not enough you've got to get out there and do it'. I think she was the inspiration in many ways that you could put on your pearls (borrow them) and your 'uniform' and go to a National party meeting (which I did within 6 months) and ask questions from the floor, wearing the 'uniform' of those that you're trying to change. I borrowed lipstick and pearls from my Mother in-law and a grey suit and went. We tactically moved ourselves around the meeting to a point where we could ask questions of the deputy Prime Minister at a local National party meeting, about nuclear warships coming into our harbour and about how it felt for us as parents of children. It was brilliant. I would never have thought to work like that until she came. Why I'm telling you the rest of the story is that while I was in hospital, the second day after the baby, Helen had 400 hundred turn up here, the media had got onto it and Ian Fraser rang me at the hospital, saying where's Helen now? "We want to put her on an hour long programme". By the time she'd arrived in Auckland two thousand came to the town hall. Now, that was an example of trusting my intuition that this woman had to come. And she came absolutely at the right time. That was April '83.

**Can you give us some examples of what men and women were saying...?**

Oh a lot women were deeply moved by her, especially those of us who had a child. She talked about "a baby is a baby, is a baby" and about this whole conflict of how can a parent worry about your kid's music lessons when you're not worried about the world, and



this is how many bombs there are. She'd give the facts and just rattle them off like that. She inspired people really, but she threatened women because she wore a 'uniform' which was seen as being part of the establishment. And yet, she used that knowingly, to not have to take on other issues with other people, but that got her access into some of the politicians here and to the foreign affairs committee and the doctors.

But when the doctors brought her back a year later, she offended many of the men in the movement because she had written a book called "Missile envy". She talked about phallic symbols and the whole link with militarism and penis envy and it was pretty radical for a woman doctor making those linkages. I found it absolutely amazing talking about it on national television. The men couldn't cope with it and not all of the women either. It was really threatening stuff to do with the patriarchy, so there were negative and positive reactions about it. But I don't believe we'd have our anti-nuclear policy without her coming at the time she came. We'd prepared the ground, it was very fertile and she mobilised people all around the country and little groups took off - especially women.

**Would you say there has been any other international speaker who was on a par with her, in terms of generating this much local interest around the country?**

No. It was a special time. There were others who came who had a different impact, like Richard Falk who talked about the legal work with the Courts and the nuclear policy and that sparked the World Court Project. But in terms of people who could draw a crowd - Petra Kelly came not long after Helen - and she mobilised people as well, she was the German Green MP and she was very radical on peace and nuclear issues and was in the Bundestag and was in a relationship with a former General. I don't believe any were as inspiring as Helen.

Helen was an Australian living in America and she knew how to play a crowd. She was very bright and had charisma. Petra had that too, but Petra spoke far too fast. I attended her public meeting - there was a lot of angst and anxiety in her presentation and it was pretty heavy and negative. Whereas Helen would give negative information but she would say organise yourselves and inspire you to do it - especially middle class women, which was a key component, and younger people.

**At that time 1981, the anti-apartheid movement and the whole country had moved, which hadn't moved since say 1951 with the watersider's lock out. With the Labour Government getting back in 1984 and the changes that happened then ...were there any other NZ orators that were inspirational?**

Owen Wilkes was very good. I wouldn't necessarily call him an orator but he did speak a lot around the country to the movement. Not a lot of them travelled at the time, there were Greenpeace people getting media coverage, and Elsie wasn't doing a lot media wise, she was doing local stuff and writing letters, but not a lot of publicly speaking out. George was important and would sometimes travel around the country to groups and you were getting more and more Maori speakers, but again Titewhai Harawira had quite an effect and there was - I'm talking about early 80's - you'd had the Nuclear Free Pacific movement and more linkages with Pacific Island states and with Maori linking with Pacific peoples, so people like Titewhai and others had gone

to regional conferences and had come back and spoken about that and challenged a lot of us, again it was mainly Auckland and Wellington, it wasn't necessarily down here.

But she had a huge impact at that time on the issues and "Pacific Women Speak Out" - the first book came out around that time. So you were getting the stories of the women coming out into the wider community. But no, there weren't many. There were American men in particular who came who were anti-missile or anti nuclear or who had worked on missiles, there weren't many British people. Bruce Kent came later. In terms of inspirational speakers - not a huge number. There was a lot of ongoing educational process at every level, including politicians.

**Being a part of a group like the Peace Collective, did you approach media, and was that an important thing for you? In what ways would you get information out there?**

It became important. Because I had seen what had happened with the Peace Squadron and the amazing media coverage from that, we realised that we had to be creative in the way that we presented our stories, and that's where street theatre was important - that's also where having music and art work was important because it would often get media coverage because it was different and also not just marches, you had to find other ways of doing things.....

**Side two, Tape two.**

**We were talking about media, could you explain for us about how it was as a mother bringing up children and trying to get the media attention around the campaigns and the work you were doing at the time?**

We had to look at how we could get our message out in a positive way and do it creatively and that was where having women-only actions out at Harewood, in support of the women at Greenham, was very important. We made sure we had huge numbers of women. We had photographs of our children, we decorated the fence out at the US air base and we had a letter writing campaign with lots of women around the totem pole, and the peace post office box. Women were writing letters to leaders all around the world and this attracted a lot of interest from the media because we did a peace chain which went from Harewood and the totem pole, right into the airport post office box. So the letters were being passed down the line. This was about 1984 - around the time of the election and the debate was on about whether we should bring nuclear ships and aircraft into the country. And it was also a way of giving solidarity to the women in Greenham at the base at that time.



So we used street theatre, humour and all these different activities, and involved the children - some of us had 2 or 3 youngsters at that time - so we could be included. There is a photograph of me holding Annie's hand, speaking in the square while Mayor Hamish Hay was speaking next to me at a big public meeting. I made a point of taking my children to those things because that was who I was and that was what my job was. Actually it was parenting and letting them be a part of it. They also became a part of the

media strategy, not consciously but that they also would respond if they were asked by the media, of what they thought of certain things. Yes, they have spoken from when they were quite young actually.

**They've also written letters?**

Yes they have. There's a lovely story of when I was asked to be the only woman on the NZ UN delegation to the Special Session on Disarmament for a month, my youngest was just coming up 5yrs. I've never left them for that length of time and explained to them that I was going on disarmament work and that I was going to the United Nations and trying to stop the bombs. And Lucy said "Well I'm going to write a letter to the Minister of Foreign Affairs - he's really the Minister of the bomb." I had posted her letter to the Minister about getting rid of the nuclear weapons. It was about two months later that I walked into the Minister's office, and saw it on the wall of his Ministerial office in Parliament, this scrappy piece of paper with pink writing and pictures. Russell Marshall had written a formal letter to Lucy thanking her for her letter and saying "I really like working with your Mum and if enough people join your Mum and me, we'll get rid of these bombs for you kids". And I thought that was rather special to do that.

Annie did a similar thing during the frigate campaign and wrote letters to David Lange. When I finally met David he said, "that child must have had someone to write the letters for her, I can't believe a 6 yr old wrote those letters", but she did. They were quite empowered from that time and she'd also done a picture of David Lange - a brilliant one and sent it to him and he put that on his wall as well. But I had to learn coping mechanisms. You were asking about the media and how you cope with media with young children around. I used to get phone calls about certain things like the frigates - there were interviews on television or live Radio NZ and after a while I realised I could say, 'I'll ring you back. I have children that need to be looked after. Excuse me while I take them next door". I found ways of organising it so that I wouldn't be interrupted during a live interview. It was ok for me to set the limits and boundaries about how I wanted the interview to take place. I asked them what angle they wanted me to take, if it was pre-recorded, and if it was I was less nervous because I knew that if I made a mistake it was okay. But live interviews of course were very difficult.

**Were there times when you really wanted to get the television or the Press interested but they weren't and you came up against disappointment?**

Well it happened on the first day of the Helen Caldicott visit. I took some of Helen's advice at the time which was to go and get to know some of the media people and to not over load them with material but to actually develop a personal relationship with them so they trusted you and you weren't bombarding them with bombastic press releases. I learnt that the personal approach really was the most effective.

**What difference has that made, compared to say other groups who say don't know people in the media? How much easier has that made it?**

I don't know, over a period of time it's happened gradually and it's not really measurable because different media people move on and you need to keep developing

that and I think there has been some sympathy amongst journalists about the issue at certain times. You also have to be pro-active as an activist to make sure they have your up to date details and that you have the authority to be a spokesperson. Sometimes media will ask for names of other people in the community so that's been an opportunity to give names of youth and Maori because they tended to go to academic males within the University.

**You mentioned street theatre and dancing - how much media coverage did this get, was it TV or the newspaper or was it everything?**

In the early 1980s we had quite a lot of newspaper and some radio coverage. So again if we were creative we'd get a photograph which says more than the written word frequently. I think there was some interest in the early 80's that a woman, and a young mother, was doing the work, so you'd get the odd article in *Women's Weekly* for example. I was a bit negative about being interviewed for the *Women's Weekly* because it had an agenda which I didn't approve of and yet, when my interview was in it, about my work on the frigates and having gone to the UN Special Session on Disarmament it was amazing how many women and men said to me I saw your article in the *Women's Weekly*. They admitted that they had read it in the doctor's surgery or at the supermarket checkout. I realised that all media is worth pursuing if it means that the message can get out - so, don't to be bound by your own prejudice towards certain media.

**What was the *Women's Weekly* agenda?**

I wasn't sure, it was talking about politician's lives, it was more hype about women actresses, the stories about how women should be and I was surprised that they were interested in this sort of issue. Sometimes with media coverage there have been negatives having a public profile in relation to my children. When my kids were quite young if I had any media profile I would sometimes get sexually abusive phone calls as a response or even silent phone calls. I was sick of the sexually abusive ones, especially when I had a photo in the newspaper and the person could see what I looked like and it was a way of intimidating me really. So when I returned from the UN special session on disarmament and I put my 5 yr old Lucy on my knee I thought was "great, I won't get sexually abusive phone calls now". I didn't, but three old men abused me for having left my daughters to go to the UN to do this work. I found this very unsettling really because you can't win - these are the costs for having a profile on the issue and then you really have to have dialogue with whoever responds in whatever way to what you're doing. Frequently I have been called a communist, even at public meetings named as that.

**Were there any incidents that happened, that might have even stopped you in your tracks and prevented you from going forward?**

In the early days because of those phone calls, I had to reconsider, and then later in my life, there were examples when we had break-ins into our house because of our work. But there actually was one which I think I'm going to give a positive spin to and it was in 1986, when I was attending peace education workshops with Russell Marshall as Minister of Education, who was trying to set up peace education. I was known at Teacher's College and University for trying to get peace education started.

There was some fairly right wing opposition to the anti-nuclear policy and especially to peace education. It was seen as the Trojan horse of the Labour Party- as a way of educating our younger people. There was a person at Teacher's College who reacted very strongly to me both in the paper and in a mail drop which was sent to people all around in Christchurch about peace education and I was named as this communist. But one night my father phoned me – he had never really understood or supported my work and it was a very emotional phone call. He had just been to a Concerned Parents Association meeting in Hamilton with over 2000 people at the local race course and there were lots of farmers there and he had gone with a well known lecturer from Waikato University as part of the group. There was a meeting with one of the retired generals there who was giving David Lange a hard time and he was going around talking to these groups about the need to get back into a re-activated ANZUS and get rid of our anti-nuclear policy. I didn't know but this lecturer from Teacher's College was there as an add-on talking about peace education being this communist propaganda. He ( the lecturer) stood up and according to my father he named me, and at that time I was Boanas not Dewes. My father could have ignored that I was one of his daughters, but he got so angry with this inference that I was this communist pedalling this terrible information to all our children, so he stood up and defended me publicly which was quite something for my Father. He said "I know my daughter is like a pig dog at a gate, but she was head girl at Hamilton Girls High School and she's not here to answer the accusations to her so I want you to rescind that". Dad told me that he had 'owned' me as one of his daughters. And the woman in front of him had turned around and said "You mean they produce communists at Hamilton Girls High!" It was like he knew he was going to alienate friends, he lost the friend who came with him. That was the turning point in my relationship with my father. Sometimes these are the effects that these things have.

At times it has been quite a lonely path - in a sense that people pre-judge you too in terms of - once you do international things as well - that it's elitist and you're mixing with diplomats and politicians and maybe selling out and that you're having overseas trips. There aren't many who understand why you need to do what you're doing, and although I try to share round the invitations that come, in fact, that can't always be done because of the knowledge and the experience and the mana that you begin to carry once you get to a certain point. I think it had an impact on my first marriage break-up because of the level of work I was doing and the intrusiveness into the family. The work was always done from home and people were visiting and staying and lots of meetings were held from home because I had three young children. There weren't many people, even in the neighbourhood who, while they might have supported the Riccarton peace group and who had been involved in some of the activities, none would have made it their life career and understood why you did that. It's this thing of 'why don't you go out and get a real job' that was often asked of me.

**I've been wondering about that thing of "go out and get a real job" - have you managed to cope as a peace activist, and how has balance been as a working person, a mother and a peace activist?**

It's not always been easy because there has not ever really been funding for our work until very recently. So I had to make decisions about being asked to speak at the opening of the World Court Project as a speaker ( in Geneva in 1992) instead of Petra Kelly and deciding whether I could use some of the little bit of money that I had to

support the children or sell something so I could go. While there was funding for the men to be flown in to speak as lawyers and doctors there wasn't any for a NZ activist. And at that time I was a solo mother, it was difficult for women friends prepared to come in and look after the children, but again they are the solid friends who did come as their contribution to what I was doing. So that was a bit of a juggle financially because for many years there was no income for that and I had to make choices about finding little bits of part time work to cover the costs of the work, or to take a little bit from the Peace Foundation from Auckland.

The temptation was to go and get a proper job so that I could certainly support myself but also it was difficult for the kids at times to understand why I had to go and do what I had to do. I sound emotional at this point, because it wasn't until they were in their 20s that they could begin to really understand it. The exciting side of it for me was when the kids could be part of the good news coming into the family, like when we heard on the radio, that the comprehensive test ban treaty had been signed. I can remember Jess grabbing me and dancing around the table and saying "Mum now I know why you do this work and all of you have stopped all those tests!" Yes, that was a highlight.

The other one was when we had the house full of people on the night that the World Court opinion came through. We had the media here and Harold Evans and lots and lots of people here in the house and waiting for the fax to come through the machine from the World Court where we could read the outcome of ten years of my work. The girls just hugged me and cried into my neck. But more recently my second daughter was doing Sociology at University and one of the books she had to read was a summary booklet called "Aotearoa/NZ at the World Court" and she was trying to hide and pretend that I wasn't her mother, because I had a different name from her and the tutor held up the book and said we're looking at organisations that have effective in the movement and this little book is written by Kate Dewes and Rob Green. My daughter finally had to admit that we were her parents and it changed the dynamic for her. When the exams came up at the end of the year she said "Mum I'm going to do the question on the World Court Project and social organisations, can I read your PhD?" She finally understood who Richard Falk was, why Harold used to come to the house all the time and why I had to go to the World Court. Those things are the gems that keep me going.

**You were married to an activist, but then you took over the position of the main activist. What happened to your partner John, at that stage, was he still involved in activism, or was he quietly pulling away from it?**

I don't want to go into too much personal detail about this but I will put it into context when I first met John. He was studying to become an Anglican minister. He was very involved in the Peace Squadron. He received a World Council of Churches Scholarship to go to Bradford to study Peace studies, and I joined him and supported him. He was the first part-time secretary of the Peace Foundation and without him I don't think I would have taken this path. But when he came back from Britain I was the one who took up a lot of that work, although I had been doing it in Auckland, but I had a proper job in those days. When I came back I was pregnant. John had other calls on his time. He was finishing a degree in Peace studies and he was doing research but he was very involved in the establishment of the Peace Collective and we

worked together on that and we were at meetings together for a long time. But as his interests changed and he went into more of a business mode he wasn't able to do more activist work that I did, but he supported me. He did support having the meetings at home, but we began to take different paths and he pulled away from it because of the intensity of me doing it, and other reasons. He did support me financially initially and he provided a second hand office equipment. So I'm forever grateful for that.

**Can I ask you when did you first, actually realise, "I am an activist" and think of yourself as an activist?**

It's a funny word that one; because I probably wouldn't have given myself a tag at any point, I was just a person who did things. So from the Auckland experience it just happened gradually, collecting signatures and I wouldn't have seen myself as an activist. And even when the kids were little, I always saw my peace work as part of my parenting. When we were peace education work in schools I was a teacher and an educator. I've always felt that term 'activist' has had a very negative connotation in terms of how you're portrayed in the media. An example was when I was awarded the Officer of the NZ Order of Merit in January 2001 I was portrayed on the front page of the paper with all the men who got their awards as the activist, not the campaigner, and the doctorate wasn't mentioned. When I challenged the Press and asked why they had portrayed me as an activist, not an academic or campaigner. The writer replied "I wrote the story and I originally had Dr Dewes and I had a different word, I used campaigner for you" and then he said 'it was actually a woman editor who cut that out'. So the outcome was a huge article on my work referring to Dr Dewes throughout - it was ridiculous because it didn't really portray who I was. Fundamentally I am an active person, and I don't mind the activist tag if I use it myself, I just don't like the way people are portrayed in a derogatory way by the use of it.

**I'm still interested in the issue of childcare because both you and Jocelyn Armstrong and other women offered men a challenge at a conference and you handed out a men-only questionnaire. Would you like to tell us that story?**

That was one of those radicalising experiences where there was to be a UN University regional conference in Auckland in 1986, and I only heard about it because a friend of mine Peter Jones, had been invited as a speaker. He was promoting women's representation and he said to the organisers "I'm not coming unless you ask one of the key activists in NZ at the time", which was me. The Japanese organisers were shocked to be challenged about the lack of women's representation, because it was an academic conference. As a result I received this invitation and I was freaked out because the only other NZ woman there was Helen Clark and in those days of course I didn't really know her.

It was on marae in Auckland and I knew I couldn't write a paper, because I wasn't an academic and I didn't want to do a paper that was just by me. So a collective of 6 women came together including Jocelyn. We wrote it collectively because I knew there is no way I could stand up and challenge all these academic males from around the region unless I had the women behind me. It was a wonderful paper and it was published in "Race, Gender and Class". We did hand out a questionnaire out for the men to reply to. I don't know how I did this now when I look back, they must have

thought I was absolutely so rude - I would never do it now, but I did it then. In it, it said things like, "When did you last iron your wife's clothes so she can go to a conference? When did you last mind the children, so your partner could go to a meeting? When did you last do baking for a Peace meeting?" "Well, it caused consternation everywhere, not least amongst the NZ males who were there. It was horrific, and I think I had a migraine for the whole day that I had to present this. But the women sent a telegram right at the last minute and it arrived at the hotel where we were and it said "We're with you in spirit, go for it girl". I held onto that piece of paper so tightly that it actually fell apart at the end of the weekend - I wasn't alone and that I had to do this. Now I'm going to give you the end of that saga....

### **Tape three, side one.**

Following the conference in Auckland in 1986 I had written to the Japanese director of the United Nations University challenging him on how many women they invite to these sorts of conferences, and what criteria did they use to invite women and there should be a lot more gender equity in these issues etc. I got a wonderful letter in reply saying that "I've tried to take into your concerns into account" and he was very respectful in the way he treated me. Well, this year (2004) I was one of only four women at a UN University conference in Osaka and I saw this man nearly 20 years on. He recognised me and greeted me and said "I have to tell you that letter you wrote to me, changed my life -I went from that into working on women and violence issues amongst Japanese and Korean women and you challenged me to ask the question every time, where is women's representation?" I was so pleased, he had real emotion in his face, it was wonderful and I said "That's really wonderful because as you can see there are only 4 women at this conference and about 55 men and no Japanese women speakers and I would like to raise this issue because I am speaking about gender issues and I need a Japanese male with standing to speak before me." He said "I'll do it." And he did. That was another highlight for me to see how when you take these risks and you take up these challenges, you don't know where the seeds are going to fall. I thought the least likely would be amongst Japanese men. But this man asked for Japanese women to be included in future conferences

### **That questionnaire... what was the response from New Zealand men?**

Very embarrassed, some of the men gave me a really wide berth including my Quaker colleagues from down here. I was an embarrassment, I was emotional, I was a young, radical, mother, an activist. Not an academic. And I was raising issues about Maori and on the marae they were even more embarrassed because there was Hilda Halkyard Harawira right down the other end and me down this end, sharing with each other on a marae situation which was totally appropriate for women and Maori and the power was completely turned around. We weren't with the men in suits in a hotel and the whole process and the wairua and energy changed. I felt that some shifts happened in people's heads and hearts but it's not quantifiable.

**Because earlier than that had you struggled yourself to get along to conferences and meetings that you had wanted to, because you needed to put your family first?**

Absolutely it was very hard work, there was no funding for anyone to go to meetings, and I had to ask John to mind the children because there were no other family members here to mind them. Childcare wasn't paid for as part of the peace side of things and there was always an assumption in the movement as well that "Oh you don't ask someone like Kate to go because she's got children". It wasn't 'why don't we ask any of the other women if they are available, if they are competent, if they would like to be involved, how do we find ways of 1) creating childcare for meetings and 2) looking after the kids so the women can go and do things and be represented'. I look back at that as being quite a pioneering thing that we did -including setting up childcare facilities for our Peace Forum, which was the meeting that we had once a month on a Saturday morning. I would take my girls along and take books and writing stuff and we'd find a separate room for them but for the other peace people to see that as an important part of the process, as peace making was extremely difficult, it was like you as parents have total responsibility for that, if you bring them it's your fault sort of thing. And it wasn't how can we be inclusive?

**So even within the peace groups those were issues that you had to work through?**

Certainly amongst the Peace Forum which was the bigger group. The Peace Collective tended to meet at my place because I was breast feeding one after the other and the other women who had children would feel ok about bringing their kids to meetings. So when we had peace meetings here lots of the kids would come and we'd just put them on beds around the place and have the meetings and nobody minded if you breast fed. In the early days that was quite difficult. I had to be extremely discrete with certain people while taking part in the meeting. But some of the men actually found that offensive. Things have moved on thank goodness.

**I know that the girls were always involved and you mention Annie learning about your peace history recently, how have the dynamics changed with the maturing of the young girls and their involvement? Are they getting more involved in activism?**

I think all of them have chosen their own way in which they wanted to be involved, and it's different for each of them. Annie's now doing Peace, development, gender and Maori studies and wants possibly do post grad and peace and conflict and development issues, so that's her way of getting involved. Lucy has been involved much more as a singer. So she would sing on Hiroshima day and different Peace concerts and at the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Christchurch being nuclear free, she and Elsie's granddaughter sang together. So she saw that as her contribution. She's also been wonderful with doing mail outs she often would say "that's a job I love doing and can I stick things and address things' so that's been wonderful. And Jess in a different way again has been a speaker at meetings. Ana Gray, Maurice Gray's daughter, and Jess, set up a little school peace group when they were at intermediate and wrote a letter to Mr Bolger. In November



1991 they waited out at the airport and did television interviews with me. Bolger had just made a statement that he was going to let British warships in to the harbours here again, under neither 'confirm or deny' and there was a huge uproar so we all went out to the airport and we had a record 'Send the boats away' to give to him and the kids had blown up one of these earth balls to give to Bolger and of course the media loved it, these two young women stood there speaking as a pair. And they spoke publicly in the Square when French testing was happening, publicly. Jess is now living in Melbourne and she's been meeting with Aboriginals and other indigenous peoples and they've had conferences about uranium mining in Australia and she's written articles such as one on depleted uranium and just had it published there. So who knows, they'll take their own path and do what they do, but they are much more understanding now of why their mother was obsessed and had to do something. They are grateful though that I have done something for the future of the planet and for their security and they can see that now.

**When you say just about obsessed, were there times when you felt that you just needed to...were there times when you didn't want to keep going?**

Absolutely, three babies for a start. I'll tell you the turning point for that one was when Lucy was 6 months old. My peace friend Toni Dillon was killed biking home from a peace meeting. The last time I had talked with her was at the Hiroshima lantern ceremony in August. She often came to two or three peace meetings a week in our house and she left behind 6 children. I took Lucy to the funeral and sobbed when I heard her kids talk about their mother and thought "If she can do this with 6 children, and be working and be killed biking home from a meeting and she's only 46... I can do it with three." And I made a commitment that day that I couldn't give up. And that weekend I took Lucy to Riverside community to attend a Peace Movement Aotearoa Workshop and breastfed her there because I knew I couldn't stop. It was bigger than all of us and our needs here and if we can't do it in this country with the resources that we have and with what we've got, then who can do it? I also used to look at my three and say that I am so blessed with three healthy children who are not deformed because of the effects of Pacific nuclear testing. It's a luxury for me to have them, and so I can put whatever resources and energy I can into making the world safer for all children.

**What connections did you make with women in the Pacific?**

The first one was Hilda Lini from Vanuatu. Then there was a stream of women who came through and often stayed with us, from Tahiti, Fiji, a school teacher from Belau whose father was shot and he killed when Belau was becoming nuclear free. Her father was in the office instead of her brother who was the lawyer taking on the case when Bernie Keldermans came here. There were other Pacific women who told us about giving birth to jelly fish babies and often Greenpeace would work with us and bring these women to get their stories into the media. This is partly why we helped get the 'Pacific Women Speak Out' book to as many people as possible because they were so challenging that people here didn't know about.

**Can you tell us a little bit about how that book came together?**

Well the first book that published in 1987 by a women's collective in London, is called 'Pacific Women Speak Out'. That had stories from Pacific women including Aboriginal and Maori women mainly on the nuclear issues. That went out of print and we couldn't get any more. I used to get hundreds of them sent from London and distribute them to as many diplomats as possible. I think it was early 1990's that we decided that it was important to update it. Zohl de Ishtar who had been one of the women involved in the earlier production had been around the Pacific doing research for her book 'Daughters of the Pacific'. She had interviewed a whole lot of women from the Pacific and was keen to get some of these stories into another book. And so the WILPF women here worked with Zohl and asked about 10 or 11 women if they'd be prepared to have their stories put together in a compilation and that included stories from Bougainville and East Timor, Papua New Guinea, and West Papua. It was very important to collate those and get them updated and we received some funding from women internationally to make that happen.

### **How far afield has that book gone in the world?**

All over, 5000 copies, we've got about 400 left. It's been launched in the UN and the Hague Appeal for Peace conference with 10,000 people at it. It's been translated into Japanese and into German and there's the possibility of it being translated into Korean and Urdu. I left copies of it in India because the Indian women were very interested in it. There have been reviews done of it in a lot of places and we get requests from all over the world for '[Pacific Women Speak Out for Independence and Denuclearisation](#)'. Frequently we give them away because it's terribly important for certain people to read them.

### **When did Maurice Gray get involved and how was your relationship?**

I met Hilda Halkyard Harawira in 1980 and came back here and tried to make some links with local Maori, but I wasn't all that successful until George Armstrong came down and he introduced me to Maurice as he'd trained at St John's Theological College. His kids were similar ages to mine and we worked well together. He asked me to help by typing letters for him. So that friendship developed from '85 onwards probably. He was here the night that Richard Falk came to dinner and the famous kitchen table story, where the World Court Project was supposed to start. He was here right from those early days. He blessed the work that we did and he frequently gave us whakatauki or waiata or karakia to share for our work overseas. He actually appointed me as co-facilitator with him with issues to do with foreign affairs and defence for the Runaka here. So over many years we've conferred over whether it was right for me to go and do certain things, and to have that blessing. He involved me in his course out at Lincoln and in different places. He also was part of the University of Canterbury Peace Studies team and so when we took students out onto the marae Maurice would be the teacher and would be the one that stayed on the marae with us.



**Could you just tell us the number of groups that you've been a part of so we can get a picture, and then recall some of the unique things about the different groups or experiences you've had?**

The first one would probably be the Foundation for Peace Studies, and Greenpeace and WILPF when I was in Auckland. Then once I travelled internationally and joined up with the women and disarmament group I became a member of some of the international groups. When we came to Christchurch in 1979 we started up the Christchurch Peace Collective, the Women for Peace, and later the Riccarton Peace Group and then the Students and Teachers Educating for Peace. These all used to meet frequently at our home. We also formed the Christchurch Peace Forum. I was a member of CND and when we set up Peace Movement Aotearoa I was often on their working group. We set up the WILPF branch here in the mid 90's but I was already a national member and I would go to some of the executive meetings. I joined up with International Peace Bureau in about 1991 when the World Court Project really took off and eventually became a vice president. That's a Nobel Peace prize winning organisation based in Geneva. I have been a supporting member of the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War - but that's more at the international level because of the work we were doing. Rob and I held positions on the Middle Powers Initiative which grew out of the World Court Project. We were on the international steering committee of that as well as the international steering committee of the World Court Project. I've been a member of many other little groups for peace but they are the most significant.

**Could you talk about WILPF and what it felt like to be a part of that group?**

When I first joined in about 1975 in Auckland I was by far the youngest member in NZ and a lot of the older women did not like the way I wanted to work because I worked differently instead of the traditional way of running meetings. I think they were a bit frustrated by some of the issues that I used to raise. But from my point of view that was very good learning experience to be with my elders and to learn how they worked and what their values were. So it was very important for ongoing guidance even when I was living down here and there wasn't a local group. Over the years they have been very involved in developing books like "Learning peaceful relationships" or "Cooperative games" and getting those out to schools and into the wider community. They haven't had a wider profile recently, well certainly since '75 and '85 it was mainly groups of older women in Auckland and Wellington. There were very few Maori. It wasn't until we had a regional conference of the international WILPF in Australia that some of the women like Nganeko Minhinnick, Pauline Tangiora and Kiri Potaka-Dewes went to that conference. There was a challenge from Maori women that Pakeha women were not including Maori women in the network and from there Pauline became national President and had a huge impact on building up support amongst Maori but also encouraging younger women to become involved again. I think my reaction to WILPF in the old days was that I would help set up a women for peace network



Rahera Shortland, Kiwi Timutimu, Pauline Tangiora, Kate Dewes at Peace Ed conference.

where younger women felt more comfortable about the way we ran things and we didn't have to work in a hierarchy of people that didn't really understand how young people work.

As an older woman now I encourage our younger women to find their own ways of working so they can be part of the WILPF groups that are being set up. But I don't think there's ever been enough emphasis for young women to take leadership roles in WILPF. That's partly why we started the WILPF down here because it means that students could be part of that. WILPF is a very good group, it links internationally, and it's one of the oldest women's organisations. It's good for us to network nationally and to keep putting out a little newsletter and to just keep raising the issues. Hiroshima Day and "Pacific Women Speak Out" have been some of our projects.

**You mentioned that you were the youngest and had different ideas about how things could be done. What was challenging about how they were run and what has happened now, how do you see they've changed?**

Well in the past the model that was used was the male way of doing things, it was still accepting a hierarchical system, minutes and all that sort of stuff. And because of my work in peace education and process I thought it was much more important to have a facilitator and share the jobs and writing down the reports at meetings and being inclusive for people so we could have a little bit of time to share a little bit of their personal life when they came in and making a cup of tea and having space for that should be important. It shouldn't just be about a formal process. I didn't think it was encouraging younger ones to be part of that. And also I felt, as I did with the Peace Foundation to start with, it was still within middle class NZ and it was very careful about its the public persona, it wasn't respecting the more radical, dramatic, non-violent action which I was involved in at that time - the protests on the street. They would just go quietly to lobby government, it was too safe for me in those days. But look at me now, I look terribly 'safe'. I was much more radical in those days about pushing the boundaries. Especially raising feminist issues and issues of what it's like to be a young mother.

**Was it similar being a part of CND which was would have also had older people?**

CND was more radical in terms of organising protest marches and petitions and was prepared to be quite challenging publicly. The Peace Foundation had this dilemma to start with because originally it was to mainly lobby government but to do it very discreetly, uphold the UN and to set up a chair of Peace Studies at an academic institution. So it was being run by people who had that mind-set and you were not to link with the rest of the movement around NZ and you certainly were not to be involved in organising Peace Squadron demonstrations. So can you imagine the dilemma for John, as the first secretary of the Peace Foundation, working there part time when he was also secretary of the Peace Squadron and making press statements and being in the media. There was conflict. When I came down here and started the the Peace Foundation office, I had many arguments with Auckland because I thought it was very important that Foundation went to the PMA meetings, that we were part of a network, that we built up lots of other groups, so that it wasn't just The Peace Foundation that sounded very elitist. I also actually argued that we shouldn't have a priority on elitist institutions like Universities and setting up peace studies - that we

should be going into the schools and getting the information out into schools. Quite funny when you look back now and that's what the Auckland office has taken on and I've been the one trying to get peace studies into the Universities, but not as a chair.

**How did it happen that you set up a branch of the Peace Foundation (PF) here?**

When I moved here in 1979, Muriel Morrison was already a Vice President of the Foundation and she had material here. She'd help organise anything if there was to be a public meeting because it didn't happen very much in those days, even before '79. And she was a Quaker. There wasn't actually a PF branch, she would do everything from home. When we arrived I offered to work as a volunteer to go out to schools and have the Hiroshima/Nagasaki exhibition go to universities and Polytechs. We set up what was the Christchurch Peace Collective first, and that did a lot of that work but it was also under the rubric of the Foundation. It was difficult - it was dilemma because I was far more radical wanting to be out on the streets and educating at every level and not being too safe, so I was always pushing the boundaries. So even my suggestion that we bring Helen Caldicott here was seen as too out on a limb. I guess I've been a thorn in the side of a lot of groups for a long time.

**Side Two Tape Three.**

**Kate could you just tell us about your work with the Peace Collective and the build up to the nuclear free zone campaign.**

The Peace Collective started in about May 1979, with a group of about 8. And then Harold Evans joined as a retired magistrate and Larry Ross came about 6 months later. It was a small group of church people, mothers, John as a business person, Mia Tay as a Quaker. We did Hiroshima day activities, we supported putting lanterns on the river which had been done here since 1976 and then we decided we were going to focus on peace education in schools and educating the public about nuclear issues. So we organised for the Hiroshima/Nagasaki exhibition to go to schools with speakers in that first year. We also put a big ad in the newspaper about Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the effects of a nuclear bomb going off. We had to fundraise quite a lot of money for that and Harold Evans also had Mountbatten's speech printed in the newspaper. So that got quite a lot of outreach at the time.

Then George Armstrong and Andy Beyer started the nuclear free campaign in 1980 with stickers, and getting homes and schools and bicycles and offices and marae and farms and schools and Universities and even City Councils nuclear free. They linked it with Home Base and Pacific Pilgrimage. So we built up support for the Pacific Pilgrimage of boats from our region up to where the Trident submarine base was at Bangor. So we encouraged people in the community to declare their homes nuclear free with a special ceremony. That was a lot of what we did in 1981, when Larry set up his Nuclear Free Zone Committee, when we set up Peace Movement NZ. Our group organised that out at Living Springs. We got a lot of people from around NZ and we also contributed to [Peace News](#) which was the precursor to Peace Link. This was the movement's newsletter that came out after the Peace Movement NZ had started in 1981.

So Larry was part of the group (Peace Collective). We were all part of groups and we went out into the wider community and got other groups going, so within the Methodist Church, the Anglican Church, the St Ninians Church group, the South Christchurch group - all over Christchurch. Then there were little groups in Rangiora, Lyttelton, Diamond Harbour and Akaroa and it just mushroomed over that time. Then we organised people to come as guest speakers to talk about nuclear issues and we did publications and showed films publicly. We started the Teachers for Peace group. They weren't all part of the Peace Collective. We fed off each other's energy. The Women for Peace group also started writing to the Greenham women and doing our own analysis of women's issues and wrote to the paper under the name of "Women for Peace". So that was all the early '80s. And by March '82 we had Christchurch as the first nuclear free city in NZ. The little Sumner and Lyttelton peace groups got going and Lyttelton became nuclear free in March 1982. In March 1984, just before the election a USS warship came into the harbour so we had to organise Peace Squadron protests as well.

So in terms of developing public opinion, not in our own region but nationally, having some input into the debate about whether we should be nuclear free, a lot of what we also did was to get Members of Parliament involved. So when we had rallies in the Square and street theatre and on Hiroshima Day we would ask the bishops of the churches to speak. Our local MP David Caygill spoke often in the Square and we invited MPs to meetings at the house. I remember Ann Hercus as the Lyttelton MP speaking on the



back of a truck when we had the USS Whipple protests. There were lots of people who went out in small boats and we built on various models of protest.

This was also happening in the environmental and anti-tour movement - a lot of us were in the same groups. And the teacher's network was also developing peace education in schools and referring back to our teachers for peace group. We networked at the Teachers College, gifting resources to their library and held meetings with teachers about how to get peace education material developed, how to get courses going in peer mediation. Hagley High School was one of the first to do that. We also met the Russell Marshall, the Minister of Education who was interested in keeping in contact.

**Christchurch had an Epicentre - the Environment and Peace Information Centre. Did you have much involvement with the people there?**

I certainly went in when I could - we had a lot of peace resources there. Mia Tay was very involved in that. It had grown out of the Peace Office that Mia had run here from 1976. The Peace Collective took over doing Peace Office publications which we promoted at the Epicentre in the centre of town in the Arts Centre to take the pressure off our homes. The environmental movement was growing at such a speed that we

saw is a good opportunity to join together. It was a good focal point and it was good for meetings and having big displays. It was a really busy time, it was wonderful - really the height of the movement. And then 1986 of course was the UN International Year of Peace and we had a local committee working on that. I think Neil Cherry, Kevin Clements and myself were part of a national committee, and so you had a little bit of funding from government for the first time ever to seed little projects locally as well as nationally on the peace issue. We used to meet at the Epicentre as well for those. Peacelink was coming out of Christchurch at that time and a lot of the work was done in at the Epicentre too.

**When you were talking about people creating their homes as nuclear free zones, you mentioned something about, that there was a ceremony, can you explain what that was.**

Yes. It was quite a spiritual ceremony about respecting the sanctity of life and the importance of taking responsibility and making a statement, and it was a symbolic



thing to do as a community. We declared our home nuclear free with our group with candles and gave stickers to everyone to go and put on their letter boxes. It was George's idea of a public liturgy. What happened here was that it just mushroomed and it grew at its own pace, it had a flexibility about it, it was totally non-hierarchical. It was a network which is much more the feminist model of how things should be. We had to consult with other local groups which meant that you'd 40 or 50 of us together on a weekend or Saturday morning every month to talk about ideas and how we could work together and to keep the groups going. We did that for probably 10 years, linking with each other and sharing ideas.

So it happened throughout the country with films being sent up and down the country and being shown to little groups. We had national media coverage when we showed Peter Watkins' film 'The War Game' in the old Corso building in 1980. There was interest because it had been banned in England. Other groups heard about the films and then ordered them eg Nelson, West Coast, Ashburton, Timaru and other peace groups.

**Did people discuss what the impact would be for NZ politically and internationally? Did people envisage what the impact really was going to be?**

None of us had a really good idea, but we knew it was going to be big. Some of us were pretty idealistic about it thinking we'd get our nuclear free policy and it would spread to the Philippines, Japan and Denmark, and then Australia would follow suit. Well of course that didn't happen. There was huge pressure on us, and on the government. There was a right wing reaction to what was happening and some of us were dismissed as 'communist'.

**So it really was first and foremost needing NZ to be nuclear free, but was the peace movement also talking about what happens after?**

There were talks about it at Peace Movement Aotearoa and locally about how we would keep going. We had the political parties adopting the policies in '84, because it wasn't just the Labour Party, the Peace Party – (the Bob Jones Party) went for it because he said we should be trading with Russia. It was great, he brought some right wingers in. You didn't have the Greens at that point but you had a sense that it was being debated at a political level early 1984. Even in Fendalton where I lived which was the National Party held seat we were getting polls in just before the election showing that at least 55% wanted to be nuclear free and 45% were prepared to get out of ANZUS if that's what it meant. Our little Riccarton Peace Group door knocked nearly everyone in the electorate and got them to put stickers on their gate. It's not too threatening if they see lots of stickers going up along the street. It becomes a bit of a fad and some whole streets were done. Little groups said we'd take on our little area and it was good because people knew each other and then they could dialogue and it was safe. It wasn't haranguing people too much. You'd take it to the supermarkets with your kids in push chairs and you've have a big map and everybody would want to fill in their house on the map. It sort of had that infectious feeling about it. You'd take it to the University and once you had the University declared nuclear free and some of the churches declared nuclear free, the map was actually filling up. It was that whole thing of empowerment at the grassroots level, that your own little community could do something.

Dr Neil Cherry and I went to the Riccarton Borough council four times before we could get them to declare nuclear free. We were both rung up and told we were communists. In the end Neil went to each one of the councillors as an academic and as a church man and talked with them and that had some impact. So you know it wasn't all done easily, it was a lot of hard slog. When you looked at it demographically it was the young people and women who were predominantly behind it. I remember door knocking when a couple came to the door and talking about it. The woman said she wanted to declare the house nuclear free and the husband would say well I don't. So after discussing it they agreed that she would put it up in the kitchen. Another man wanted to do it and the woman didn't and in the end put the sticker on the garage. But those were the sorts of debates that went on - it was a bit like the Springbok Tour, it was emotional, yet people wanted to be part of it - it got them thinking. And the sticker was just that symbolic action of saying, I'm making a statement. A few of them got ripped off the letterboxes but some of them stayed and some are still there after it nearly 20 years. They had good adhesives.

**So you were saying that part of what the Peace Collective did was to go into schools. How did you view Peace education in schools?**

Primarily it was anti-nuclear material and some of the very early Peace Foundation material developed by WILPF such as the book "Learning Peaceful relationships". It was about getting that to teachers so that they could talk to students about how to create peaceful relationships. So it wasn't just looking at the problem of nuclear weapons and all the negatives it was saying how can we build a peaceful society. So there'd be stories about conflicts and there'd be the odd story about non violent action but not much. It wasn't too threatening to start with and I think that's why Russell

Marshall was prepared to take it on as Education Minister as early as 1985. And he held this consultation around the country and in fact brought people from the Ministry together and there was a leaflet that we put together in 1986, the UN International Year of Peace, on peace education in schools and ‘what is Peace education?’ and that went to every school in the country - that was quite significant.

I was appointed to the first Public Advisory Committee on Disarmament and Arms Control which was part of the nuclear free act. That committee set up two studies,



PACDAC 1988: Neil Cherry, Dame Laurie Salas, Kate Dewes  
Rod Alley, Fran Wilde Robin Briant, Frank O’Flynn

one on the state of tertiary Peace studies and one on peace education in schools and explored what could be done and gave recommendations to government. So even though not a lot of that was implemented at the time, it was an important way of educating teachers about peace education. “Cool Schools” and conflict resolution in groups started to develop around the country, with a network of some of us who were trained teachers working together and sharing information.

There was a Teacher’s Training College lecturer at Auckland who published peace education books for schools. It was important to have books written by NZ teachers for a NZ audience as opposed to ideas from outside which weren’t necessarily culturally appropriate. What we argued was that peace education should be right across the board; it should be a way of thinking about peace and not just a separate subject because it can’t be fitted into a separate subject. For example what is there in science that might be related to peace education. What books could you study in English that might have a Peace theme such as those by Raymond Briggs or Dr Seuss books on war and peace? There’d be films that could be shown or John Hersey’s book on Hiroshima and they could explore what music could be taught including peace and protest songs. What do you do in social studies that could have material put into? That did develop, especially amongst teachers who had a commitment to the issue and wanted to start talking to students.

Let’s talk about what happened when the UK film “The War Game” was shown. It had been made by Peter Watkins in the late sixties and banned in Britain for twenty years. I remember seeing it as a 17 yr old while at Hamilton Girls High School - it was on at the local theatre. It was life changing for me and Marilyn Waring, who also saw it in Hamilton.

When we showed it to students in the early ‘80s it was very threatening in some schools, and we also had an exhibition of photos from Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Some students and parents found it very disempowering and depressing. As a mother I now understand that a lot more. I wouldn’t want my kids seeing a lot of that stuff either. So it was done on a basis of being offered to the teachers so that if they felt there were any students who chose to come and see it, it could be shown. But otherwise we would have set ourselves up to be shot down by the opposition because we were trying to get stuff into schools that was too horrific for young people. What I learned over the years was the importance of teaching about hope, and what’s achievable, and

asking students what their dreams and visions are for our world, and how they can create that world? In the early 80s there were so many nuclear weapons, that there were enough to kill everybody at least 24 times over. And it was at the peak of the arms race in terms of nuclear, let alone conventional. So we had to reflect on how we educated – it had to be a peaceful way of doing it

**How do you convey that to young people, in terms of holding onto your hopes and dreams when you're looking at things that need to be changed?**

Earlier on I read books like Joanna Macy's "Despair in the time of the nuclear age". She would go through empowerment exercises and explain how you mustn't just focus on the despair side of it, you need to acknowledge the despair and the grief about the planet and let yourself come to terms with that, but you must then move on to what you're going to do about it, how you are going to take responsibility for what's happening collectively, because you can't do it on your own. And so that's what we did. We set up groups, and found people that we felt comfortable working with, and that might be school kids as well, and then you could take action where you were so you felt that something was happening. So now especially with students at the University who are doing our Peace Studies course they will be overwhelmed by what they are learning about globalisation, the environment let alone nuclear or conventional weapons. So, I give two or three lectures on what we have achieved, what ordinary citizens have been able to do by working with government. In our country, what we've been able to do around the world and, how we can work together as an international community, especially now we've got email; to actually have an impact, on educating other people. So hope is absolutely fundamental.

**Is there a connection that people make between what you do at a political level in terms of lobbying and all the activism that goes alongside that and how you create peace in the way that you live your life?**

It was very easy early on to say "Oh, the problems are all out there with those terrible nuclear weapons and we've got to manically try to save the world and get rid of those nuclear weapons," instead of saying "hang on, peace is made in the minds of people, how do you create peace in someone's mind?" Woops one of those 'someone's' is me - oh how am I living? Am I living peacefully, are my relationships peaceful, probably not. If you do look at it too closely, you might have to stop doing this really urgent task of saving the planet and actually find a more peaceful process for yourself and your family. Now that's pretty challenging especially when you think that this is urgent. That was a dilemma for me when the kids were little, because I had so little time for me and I was driven by the urgency of it - that probably made me a fairly unpeaceful person.

**But that's actually quite interesting, that was quite a radical time in the world, it didn't just happen in this room, there were a lot of people who were radicalised and were involved in activism and you were part of that and I don't think many people got away without being scared by it.**

That's true.

**How has the healing been for you and for you to stay in the industry, if I can use that term, I mean there are, it's a full time job. It is paid employment.**

Now.

**You are doing it voluntarily but not entirely, but it's changed from the 70s, the 80s and the 90s. So how have you healed some of the raw episodes that happened in those early days?**

I think what's happened is that as you go through each challenge you learn to listen to that challenge and decide how much of the negativity you are going to let yourself absorb and carry with you as the old chip on the shoulder. How much of it you feel you are doing because of a greater vision, or a sense of mission in life. If you are doing that with an intention that is trying to be pure, so it's not just for ego needs, or not just for a job, that if you are able to link into this mission idea that's what's helped me deal with some of that. I feel I am giving a gift to humanity and if it is a gift of my time and energy, then those who make a judgement of a gift, it is their problem. People don't know the background to this gift and they make judgements and that can be hurtful, but if you're in for the greater good of humanity, then you can get over those hurts as you develop and go on. It's an ongoing process of facing them and healing and growing. Wouldn't it be boring to go through life without challenges - it wouldn't push you through the barrier to go and do the other things you need to do, or to reflect about the way you're working, it's like conflict can be very positive?

If it's transformed, anger can be positive too, as an agent for moving you through things and getting you active often. But it's whether you work from a place of intense anger about what is happening to the planet, and your energy becomes quite negative in the way you're dealing with it, or you say "I'm going to use this positively to motivate me to do something". I think my anger about the world situation in the early 80s forced me to read about processes, the nuclear issue, how it had got there, how decisions were made, and to ask where were the women? Would it make a difference if 50% of the decision makers were women? How do we get women into that? How do we get into decision making places? We could snipe at politicians the whole time or we could say, we're going to go and have a dialogue. You know we could be judgmental about the way we work, or we can say, if we're into a peaceful process how do we go and listen to others and have dialogue that is meaningful so that some change can take place? It's been a real challenge for me learning how to listen, have dialogue, and be compassionate.

#### **Tape Four, Side One.**

**Kate, when anything feels so urgent and these days it appears that you're often operating on the international side of things and at the political side of things and there was a sense of urgency in the 80's when there was this campaign for nuclear free NZ and the build-up of arms and when we were talking about having a balance in your life, I'm wondering how then do you find times to actually celebrate for yourself, your family and with others what is a peaceful life and the peace that you know in life that you have?**

It is a juggle, especially with living and working at home. There's learning to grab those moments, when you're just on your own, or grabbing time with just my husband Rob (Green) or when the kids are home. You take the moment when it comes. Because of being able to work from home I've had the flexibility of stopping when someone walks in and needs direct communication then. So if a daughter is upset and wants to talk to Mum, I can just take those times then and work later at night or whatever. Finding time for celebrating is also important and I think that's where the women's groups I've been a part of for the last 12 years have been important where we talk about spirituality and we nurture each other. There's another woman that I go to that helps with healing and Reiki and just talking through some issues. Not a lot and I don't do it often enough. When I had my dog that was an extremely important time, just to take her for a walk and commune with nature and just be in that bush across the road, it's a place to re-energise. But I suppose there haven't been many quiet times, and that's partly because I haven't learnt to say no, I'm learning to a little more. But it's helped now the children are older and more independent.

**What are the things that you enjoy in life?**

Music is one, and I'm not making music like I used to and I listen while I'm working. It keeps me calm. I'd like to go back to playing more music with others. I enjoy playing table tennis with Rob. That's fun and we enjoy movies but we have to be careful that we choose ones that are not work related. I enjoy being with friends, but the circle of friends is quite small in many ways, with ones that we feel really comfortable with, certainly as a couple, I have women friends that I've developed over the years, and I enjoy having time with them. Family is important, not just my immediate family but my extended family.

**Have you made any friends meeting many people in other countries?**

We have made lots of friends all over the world, and people who have travelled through and stayed here. They might have come for a day and stayed for a week or so and they've become lifelong friends.

**And when you have travelled have you had the chance to appreciate that country or has it just all been work?**

I won't usually stop and do sightseeing because of the sense of urgency and the lack of funding and needing to get back to the kids. I can remember a work meeting in Brussels and Rob and I were just starting to get together and I was just about to get back to NZ and I wouldn't see him for 5 or 6 months and he said, "Stuff the meeting tomorrow morning you're coming with me to see the really lovely buildings in town, you've never probably been here and you'll probably never come back". And it was good, he does that to me sometimes, he says let's go and explore a little bit of this part of NZ, because he hasn't seen it, or his homeland of Britain if we're there. But it might only be a weekend or we travel on the way to do something else. We both have to watch that we don't become workaholics so that it damages health or well being because of the demands that keep coming.

**You started to mention your relationship with Rob (Green). Could you tell us about how and where you met?**

That links back to the history of the World Court Project which was about 1991. I had to go to London to help set up the international group and Rob became the chair of the World Court Project (UK). Cut a long story short, I met him briefly at the launch of the WCP in 1992, in Geneva, and I can remember this commander coming up to me with this beard and looking very formal and shaking hands and saying to “My name is Commander Robert Green, Royal Navy, retired” and I thought, “Oh God help me, he’s a Commander”. Breathed deeply for a while and waited until he unwound a little and started to tell me a little bit more about what he was doing as chair of the WCP and I thought he was quite an interesting sort of a guy, but I wasn’t interested because he was so ex-military and so British. But when we began to talk at the meetings we were at, I realised that he was quite spiritual and worked in a similar way to me in terms of feeling he was on a mission. I knew he had gone through a fairly traumatic experience of being a commander in the British Navy, and then confronting his aunt’s murder which was possibly a State crime in Britain, and then having to go through a divorce because of the relationship coming apart due to their very different attitudes to the whole nuclear issue and to solving a crime. I realised that we’d probably both been through fairly painful backgrounds ourselves. While his shift had been much bigger than mine, there was common ground and I respected and valued the fact that he was able to move from a very military background to becoming a roof thatcher, then an activist on nuclear power and nuclear weapons, and to speak a truth with honesty and integrity and that’s rare to find. It’s also rare to find a man who respected a woman activist in a way he does.

So our relationship developed over a long period of time, but primarily because when I came back to NZ having helped launched the WCP, in Geneva, my former husband divorced me so I was on my own. Also Owen Wilkes had said that US nuclear powered ships were completely safe and they should come back to our ports. It was the time of the review of the nuclear propulsion clause in the nuclear free act under the National Government. In Geneva, Rob had talked to me about accidents in nuclear powered submarines and warships in Britain. I thought that if we couldn’t get a US naval person to come out to NZ he would be a good substitute because British warships come here. I phoned him on the spur of the moment and asked if he was available to come to NZ for a three week tour to travel around the country both to launch the WCP and to meet the people involved in the Somers’ enquiry into nuclear powered ships. He would have access to politicians and credibility that we wouldn’t have. He agreed to come if I found that money and he was hosted with peace people. Within a week I raised \$5000 and organised for him to travel right around the country including Dunedin and Nelson and to meet politicians and the people on the enquiry. I had to be his minder so I began to know him a little. We didn’t become a couple until later when we were on the international steering of the WCP. There were 6 of us on that, so we had to meet at international meetings and work together on that for nearly 6 years. He is a very interesting man and we have very complementary roles. We are affirming of each other and respectful of each other’s differences. We actually honour our backgrounds as being our strengths even though they are very different?

**You talked about how the two of you found in common that you felt guided in your work.**

Ever since I was quite young I've had an intuitive sense that I had to do something that was different and it wasn't just school teaching, or music making. So I've learned to trust my intuition. I believe that the work I'm doing is part of a much bigger plan and it can't be done without support at a spiritual level. Because doors don't open when you push them hard, the timing has to be right. And the synchronicity of what we did on the WCP confirmed that. So I suppose now I tend to work a lot more on just trusting that sense of something being right and a knowing what I have to do.

You couldn't find this career path in any book or at any guidance counsellor. So the gifts have far outweighed the negatives of my life in terms of the people that I've met and the honour and responsibility of being given the work. Also I have three wonderful children and my partner, and close friends who nurture and support us. Those are things that I'm extremely grateful for. I have had to learn to trust that money will come for whatever you have to do because I know I have to be in a certain place at a certain time. I've seen too much of it happen in my life now. I just won't question it; it's the way I have to live, that flowing and trusting.

**How is it when you hear the stories of women in the Pacific, horrendous experiences that other people have gone through. What have you witnessed, the fantastic side, the wonderful joyous side of all of this?**

Oh I've seen our country become nuclear free which I think was fantastic when you look at the impact that we've had. I've seen the South Pacific become nuclear free; I've seen the nuclear testing stop in our region. I've seen indigenous peoples being included in a way that wasn't happening 10 or 20 years ago. And had the privilege of standing beside Maori elders at international events where I know that they bring not just themselves, but their people. And to see things change, certainly at the UN, where because of especially some of the women being there, the men respond differently to situations because the women can eyeball them, in a way that is just something about being women; there is not other agenda. We're speaking often from the point of view of caring for the planet, caring for the next generation. Some of these women speak as grandmothers and it's like the men have said to us at times when we have challenged on several things "It was because you said it as a mother and a grand mother that we knew that you weren't there from a political point of view, you were speaking from your heart, you were speaking because you care about humanity, you gave us the strength to move out of our nation state boundaries and to work together for the greater good of the earth." It was people like Pauline Tangiora and Hilda Lini doing those sorts of challenges and some male diplomats said to me later "That's what kept me strong because I knew what you were there for, you've got no jobs and you've come all this way and you've put everything on the line because you care", and "we need that honesty and integrity at the meetings at the UN because we get cynical. We need your passion, we need your anger, we need your humour, and we need your hugs." That's been a really amazing thing for me to learn. We need to facilitate those happenings in the UN, at the World Court, at every level actually, in parliament, where we're not in a combative role, where we're free to speak our truth and people hear that. That's what changes people, it's not necessarily all the papers, it's actually the heart speaking. Those have been the wonderful things I've seen.

**When it comes to talking to women in politics or in places with political power, how do they view what you are saying?**

Each woman is different and I can't talk about them together because some of them will play the male game better than the men once they are in a position of power. I'm learning to think more strategically about certain meetings so that I won't go in as the only woman into a meeting even when it's with another woman in power. It's finding ways where you can meet decision makers in a non – threatening way, where you can share at a heart level, where it's not going to embarrass them either, where they're in a position, maybe there are a lot of male colleagues, and it's learning to pick your moments about when you do talk about these things. I've learnt that when I've had to go and talk with officials, men and women, it's been really important to have a partnership between men and women.

That's where Rob and I make quite an important team. I can give you an experience of that when I went to lobby at the UN in Geneva in 1991 to try and get governments to come on board to support the WCP. The head of the International Peace Bureau came with me to about five different meetings out of the eight I did with the government missions including Ambassadors, and it was really interesting. I thought the Pakistani ambassador wouldn't want to shake my hand or look at me, he'd want me to be submissive and do the writing (note-taking). When we walked in he shook my hand and for the whole meeting he spoke to me, and the man took the notes. When we went to the Nigerian Ambassador, he couldn't even look at me, he spoke to the man the whole time and I took the notes. I think I've learned to become much more strategic and open to changing process and not be too high and mighty about women's roles in this, and our special role, and to say 'look if the person you're trying to have dialogue with feels more comfortable speaking to a man, then that's okay, and it's okay to be in the support role.' It's okay for the men to do it the other way and to actually model some of the changes that we want to have and to also train up more men, in a different way of working and that means that you've got to work equally in a partnership. I never dreamed that I would be in this sort of position long term where I would be in the UN, going to conferences where I would be speaking with leaders of countries and speaking my truth. It's knowing how much to challenge, to understand where the line is between offending somebody and being sensitive to a different culture. It's holistic and having the courage really to say some of the things that need to be said, but in way that it's actually not going to cause too much offence.

**How does some of that experience, of being at the UN, that you've had and others will have had, filter down to those working in NGOs?**

Well I think that's where say the WCP was such an important project because what it did was get lots and lots of NGOs from all around the world to go both to the UN in New York and to the UN's legal arm in the Hague, to bring their declarations of public conscience, to learn how to lobby, to learn how to be respectful in terms of process and learn how to have dialogue and then empower a lot of other people from their countries to start getting into that process of having dialogue with decision makers. And I think there is a responsibility for some of us who have done that work to encourage others in our own networks to also have that experience. It may be being an intern at say WILPF in Geneva, or the Lawyers Committee on Nuclear Policy in New York, and Alyn Ware, who is a part of the Peace Foundation has done a huge

amount of work in training people in some of these lobbying skills. I know that my best training came from being with my Maori elder who puts you in your place very quickly with a look if you're not doing the right thing. And she challenges, but she also knows the importance of us working as Maori and Pakeha as a team. So I'm very grateful to Auntie Pauline Tangiora for continuing to teach us.

**This is a continuation of an interview with Kate Dewes at her home Riccarton Christchurch on the 13<sup>th</sup> of May, 2004; the interviewers today are Ruth Greenaway and Kathleen Gallagher. We were looking at the beginnings of the World Court Project (WCP). So please take us through step by step and we'll ask questions around things as we go, but maybe if we could start with the vision and what was the starting place.**

I think the starting place was looking at the legal question to do with nuclear weapons in NZ and its anti-nuclear policy. With the adoption of our policy we had effectively outlawed nuclear weapons for ourselves and that they were illegal. So that was the basis of it for me personally.

Harold Evans was part of our Peace Collective Group and in 1986, the Peace Foundation hosted a visit by Richard Falk who was a top international lawyer from New York and he came to Christchurch first. He gave lectures at the University and everywhere and in the newspaper and asked the question, "Why doesn't NZ take this debacle with the United States about nuclear ship visits to the World Court?" and have it tested as a contentions case. He was interviewed by the Press in our sitting room and there was a big article about it. He also left us literature about the question of the illegality of nuclear weapons in terms of international law. Harold met him, not just at a meal at our place, but also at the University at the lectures that we'd organised there. He was so impressed by him that he flew to Auckland to hear him again. That really was the seed for Harold as a retired magistrate and someone who knew about international law with his experience during the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal. He then went to Australia to meet Professor Christopher Weeramantry who eventually became the Vice President of the World Court and a member of the Lawyers Committee on Nuclear Policy in New York. He encouraged Harold to look at this question of using the advisory opinion option. Harold then corresponded with (David) Lange and the Defence Minister Frank O'Flynn, and asked them if they would consider this question of taking the US to the World Court. Of course we'd had our fingers burnt by taking France to the World Court in 1973. With the Americans, it just wouldn't have happened and I think NZ did the right thing at that time in not taking that route. It wouldn't have happened during the cold war and the Americans wouldn't have turned up and we would have got into even more trouble. Harold persisted and he started writing Open Letters. He wrote to 72 embassies in Canberra and Wellington and to the Prime Ministers of Australia and NZ. He did it in a very professional way, handed it out to a lot of people in the community and tried to get public support for that. Harold used to visit us here to consult us about his idea which was very much his baby. The aim of the open letter was to ask NZ and Australia and all these other countries to ask for an advisory opinion from the World Court on the question of the legal status of nuclear weapons.

**Side Two Tape Four.**

We had regular meetings with Harold at that time. At the end of 1987 I was appointed to the first Public Advisory Committee on Disarmament and Arms Control. We regularly met with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and former Defence Minister Frank O'Flynn who was on the committee. Harold used that committee to have dialogue with government through members such as myself and Dr Neil Cherry, Dame Laurie Salas, and Dr Robin Briant who were keen to promote the WCP idea.

In May 1988 I was appointed as the only woman on the government delegation to a

UN Special Session on Nuclear Disarmament. This was a first, to have two NGO reps going to the UN for the whole month. I was a young mother with three kids - my youngest was only just five. I was well briefed about the WCP and it was my first foray into the international scene. I was able to organise meetings with some of the delegates from sympathetic governments, like Sweden, Mexico, Costa Rica, and India.

L to R: Llyn Richards, Dr Ken Graham, Kate Dewes, Brett Lineham, Nigel Fyfe, Ambassador David McDowell, Wade Huntley.



As a full member of the NZ delegation I was able to meet with high level people to start talking about it. I was chosen to give the NGO statement on behalf of the NZ NGOs to the UN Special Session and I took the opportunity to mention it. I tried to get the Minister to raise this in NZ's speech, which he did. I challenged him privately to raise the issue when he visited Zimbabwe after the UN conference. He admitted to me that he was getting terrible pressure from the United States and in fact the whole western group was giving our diplomats a hard time. But he would say to me "you're very useful" he said, "When I'm under pressure from all these different States, I say "look at her, she will go back and talk to the public of NZ, she keeps us accountable." It was as though we were a problem for them but we were also a solution for them.

When I saw first-hand the dynamics of the games going on I thought we would never be able to get this thing through. It was so depressing seeing how the UN worked. But what it meant was it gave me the opportunity to meet the International Peace Bureau and the Lawyers Committee on Nuclear Policy representatives. I met with some of the politicians from European countries that I then kept contact with. So that was a really important experience because I saw how we could use that system and work with diplomats. I realised that you couldn't just write letters as Harold was doing - you had to have personal contact with these people and build up relationships so that you were plausible, and they knew you'd done your research. I knew as a mother of three small children I was not going to be listened to compared with a lawyer or a doctor, so we had to look at how we could make it work with people like me being the networkers with the movement internationally, but bringing in those colleagues who had positions of respect and power and who would be able to make it happen at that level, at the very respectable level within the UN.

**So, how were you known there, as who doing what?**

I was seen really as this trouble maker NGO on a government delegation. At that time there were very few non-governmental people on delegations. It was probably one of the first within the whole UN - there were very few countries who had someone as a full member and I was the only woman out of 9 of us on that delegation.

**Were you seen as a Peace activist?**

Yes, I wasn't an academic, I was very much an activist. I was a music teacher, and a mother. The Ambassador changed his attitude to me when he knew that I was a mother. I was missing my kids terribly; they were coming up 5, 6 and 8 I think. I had a photo of them and I was showing a photo of them to other diplomats at one morning meeting. The ambassador saw it and asking if the kids were my nieces. When he learned they were my kids his attitude changed and he became really supportive of raising the issue of the representation of women and disarmament in the UN. Years later when he'd come to have a walk with me in the local bush, I asked him why he had changed. He admitted that "when I knew that you were a mother, I knew that you were there for the right reasons"

**Rather than just being a radical person there to stir things up?**

Hmm. I'd borrowed my friends clothes, I'd asked if they had any nice skirts, shirts or jackets and I'd borrowed a tube of lipstick because I didn't have any of those things at that point. I had to suddenly go from being the activist in a pair of jeans and a t-shirt at home to changing the way I dressed because I couldn't get into the UN. I had three sets of clothes, while I was there, but I had to look professional to fit in. So that was a real transition for me.

**You said that some of this work at that level was about putting on a uniform, and being seen as coming from the right place, looking the part or something. Can you talk a little bit about that?**

Yes, because I think it is important, in terms of what I had to learn to do. Helen Caldicott challenged me to put a 'uniform' on and go and talk to the doctors, lawyers and politicians and invite them to our home. I realised that to be effective I needed to look respectable so I didn't have to have a fight at another level. There is actually a code of dress and conduct for the UN and you're not allowed in unless you behave like that. So Helen coming and challenging me like that in 1983, was really good preparation to have to think differently about how we were perceived, because I only had about three weeks notice that I was going on the government delegation to the UN. Suddenly I had to find appropriate clothes. But when you got in there and you saw how all the other NGOs were having to put on a jacket or a suit or at least look neat and tidy, you realised that actually it was OK.

**And do you think that is something that has continued for you in terms of your meetings with people at that level, politicians, and diplomats, that also your work has become more professional now in the way that you're working in this area, is there a change there?**

I just feel that I've grown from that situation and both Maori elders Pauline Tangiora and Maurice Gray have taught me how to work. They showed me about the

importance of wearing formal clothes for formal occasions - Maori do it all the time. I suppose giving respect to the situation and what you're asking to be done is part of it, it's not necessarily selling out and putting on a uniform, but it's saying I want to be taken seriously. I need to look professional with professional arguments and I have to be able to deal especially with diplomats, and there is a code of conduct in terms of how you behave. At that time NGOs were seen as a threat. So how do you build up trust with these people at that level where you can have those deep and meaningful discussions about issues that I thought were threatening the whole planet and probably the most urgent issues at the time? I had to also be equally rational with being passionate.

I had to learn to be really well organised so instead of having scrappy pieces of paper, we had to start drafting booklets and papers that were presentable in an academic form. That meant, because I didn't have a PhD at that point, or much academic training, we had to go to colleagues who would be able to do that drafting. But also ones that had the Nobel Peace Prize. That's why we began to work with the International Peace Bureau, the International Association of Lawyers against Nuclear Arms (they didn't form until 1989), and the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War. They became the three co-sponsors of the WCP, but I also went to the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and asked them to be a part of it because they are the oldest women's organisation and it was important that we had women involved. I went to Greenpeace International and the International Committee of the Red Cross and other NGOs, so in many ways, my role was to meet those NGOs who were at the UN and to later on contact them through our personal contacts or meeting them in Geneva or London and asking them if they would come on board as supporters.

So that was our role, whereas the lawyers' role was to prepare legal arguments and the doctors of course eventually took a case to the World Health Organisation to ask its opinion on the question of the health and environmental effects from the use of nuclear weapons. This took at least ten years. What motivated me in those early days was that I knew what Harold was saying was right. He also had the credibility of his 'six wise men' including the head of the International Commission for Jurists, legal academics like Richard Falk and Weeramantry, and Sir Guy Powles who had been NZ's first Ombudsman and others, so he had that sort of mana. Martyn Finlay had taken NZ's case to the World Court earlier.

So Harold had that professional, but very male way of looking at things. What some of us NGOs brought into it, was that sense of passion and knowing how to network. So we had to model a way of working with the Governments or the UN. Documents would often just get lost in the pile because they were too wordy. You had to find a way of connecting with the decision makers, to get them excited about it, say that this is achievable, we've done this in NZ, it can happen, we've used the law, and we've worked on nuclear free zones and we have a South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone. I don't think there would be any other country in the world where that this project would have come out of at that time. NZ was absolutely the right country where you've got people like Alyn Ware, prepared to just go and do it with 'number 8 wire', myself included. We would do it for nothing; as there was no funding. We were excited by what NZ had done, and we knew it was a good idea. We had access to our politicians and officials in a way that I think few other NGOs internationally had at that time.

We were connected with the international scene, so you could start to talk with people who tried to push us aside thinking it was just little old NZ, but also knew that we had our nuclear free act and that had international credibility. There was Alyn and myself, and Erich Geiringer taking on the international medical community and pushing this thing at the UN. I don't know how we had the guts to do it really, except that we'd had that training as activists. We knew that we needed many people working together, including prominent support from across the board, such as lawyers, teachers, doctors, and the churches. We compiled a huge list of supporters, and we collected 32,000 signatures (Declarations of Public Conscience) from New Zealanders up until 1992-3.

So, for a while there was a hiatus where not much happened between when I was at the UN in 1988, and then again in 1991. Of course there was the end of the cold war that came after that, so the whole timing changed. You had a change of government to National in 1990. When Alyn Ware went to the UN in New York in March 1991, I briefed him on the WCP and he visited key missions there including Costa Rica and some small Pacific Island States. Alyn had absolutely brilliant meetings and that excited us that we could now get some countries working on it. He found a diplomat who had done his PhD thesis on international law, so this guy knew about the issues and was keen. Alyn's a great empowerer and a hard worker and he had access to these people. So when he sent his report to me I then went to meet with Erich in Wellington and Alyn finally came back to Wellington and the three of us began



working with the doctors and they began planning to go to the WHO in 1992. I also went to the Geneva in July 1991 with my husband who paid for me, which was lucky because I wasn't earning anything. That was when with Colin Archer of the International Peace Bureau (IPB) and I asked him to accompany me to some of the meetings with 9 key governments, using my experience from having been to the UN in '88.

We went to the missions of India and Pakistan. We didn't know that they were trying to be nuclear states at that time. But they were key members of the non-aligned movement. Indonesia also chaired the non-aligned movement at the time. We also visited China, Nigeria, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Zimbabwe and Mexico. The International Association of Lawyers hadn't been established then. So IPB was absolutely key because it had UN status in Geneva and Colin was another activist. He drafted letters to missions using IPB letter head paper, because then people would know who we were. I had sensibly asked David Lange if he would write a letter of introduction for me. And he did, saying I was an NGO respected in this country and asked diplomats to meet me. That opened doors usually at Ambassador level, as opposed to the third secretary where you would be put in a corner. I can remember some diplomats getting really excited, they said "Look we haven't been able to stop the nuclear weapon states, there has been no mechanism, we might be able to pass UN resolutions, but we haven't been able to go and take them really to somewhere where it's going to hurt. If we can get enough non-aligned States to come on board, we're

going to be able to do it.” I was naive and was saying well we could get 10, the Nigerian said at least 50, if not 100 because of the pressure. I was going “Oh this dream is going to be a bit harder to fulfil”. But we’d achieved bits; we’d been able to get some key NGOs in support of us and prepared to go public on this, and we were starting to get governments that had some traction, including India and Pakistan. NZ and Australia weren’t prepared to touch it, even under a Lange government; even though Lange was personally interested. So what we had to do was to get bigger countries than Costa Rica or Samoa who might have sympathetic, such as Mexico on board.

There is a nice story about going to meet diplomats from India and Pakistan. The Indian former ambassador had become a Vice President of the IPB. So he was sympathetic, he was a lawyer. I had a very high up meeting within the Indian mission, because of it being about international law and their person was very important. I asked “Hasn’t India had a role in the past on working on international law issues to do with nuclear issues, and you been very outspoken you’ve called for a convention on the prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons? So you’re absolutely key country to do it”. Very important to do your homework, about what the country had done before hand. He said “We think this is a very good idea, but there is no way you’ll get Pakistan on board.” I said “Would you be happy if I went to see Pakistan, I think it would be very important for India and Pakistan to do it together” ... “Oh you won’t get them on board” he said. I said, “Just let me try”. And the next day I went to the Pakistani Ambassador because of the letter from David Lange. And I asked if there was any chance they’d go with India on this because he thought it was a great idea too. “Oh they won’t go with us on it” “Well actually”, I said, “we just had this discussion yesterday, and they’re keen and they said the same to me about you. Now if you’re both keen to work on it, could we both start to put this together as a report, that there is an expression of interest from you.” And we got it. He was the ambassador that I thought would talk to the male in the group, because I had gone with Colin who was the head of IPB, but he talked to me the whole time. So when I’ve talked in the past about the need for strategies and thinking ahead about how that political system works and how you can make it work to some extent. But it didn’t work with the Nigerian who couldn’t even look me in the eye? So I quietly took the notes like a well behaved woman and Colin took on the debate. But what excited us was, even with the Indonesians, they knew about NZ’s position on the nuclear free issue, therefore we had credibility and the diplomat respected IPB as a Nobel Peace Prize winning NGO with very good credentials within the UN. And they realised that this was an important issue and no-one had been putting those arguments about illegality to them in a systematic way.

The Lawyers Committee on Nuclear Policy had written booklets about it and talked with the odd diplomat, and Sean MacBride had done some work from Ireland as well and had gone to certain governments and said look we need to get a whole lot of you together. The sad thing was that Sean died before he could take it any further. He and Harold never really properly corresponded, but that’s another story. This experience of success in the UN in 1991 really boosted me to think I don’t care what I do for the next 5 or 10 years, I’m going to give my life to do the best I can to make this happen. It’s got a momentum about it now. Alyn’s also had a momentum at the UN. We had worked together before in the past. Harold had a different way of working and he was still extremely important in terms of writing letters. Further

down the track when we got to the UN lobbying in 1993 when the UN resolution actually did go ahead, it did go to the vote but it was stopped at that time. But it was intense lobbying at the UN.

We had a terrible problem with one of Harold's 'wise men' who was there with us as a lawyer. He did not know how to work with governments and was incredibly alienating in the way he worked. When you're with governments, it is extremely important that you do engage with who you're with. You listen to their concerns and you go away and say "Well, we'll look at that and we'll come back, and can we bring a lawyer with us to answer those questions?" Alyn did that brilliantly in New York. He did that for 6 months. I know he slept on people's floors and he found clothing and a bed and things on the streets in the recycling because there was no funding and he ended up being the Director of the Lawyers Committee of Nuclear Policy, with little or no pay. And you look at it now and of course the lawyers would take a lot of credit for what they did. But I know it was this Kiwi joker trying to do it with 'number eight wire' and he was an absolutely key person. He always reckoned his kindergarten teacher training was the best thing for working officials and governments. I found the same about being the mother of three kids; I had to have patience, listen carefully and have a sense of humour. I think that was an extremely important part of what we did, that we weren't too intense and that we had that sense of enthusiasm and passion and urgency.

When we had the vote in 1993 in the UN General Assembly, Alyn and I were both there with Rob and Pauline Tangiora and Hilda Lini. Hilda had been the Health Minister in Vanuatu and had given an amazing statement at the World Health Assembly both as a Health Minister and as a woman. She talked about the jelly fish babies born in the Pacific and what was happening to the water and the resources. She was absolutely brilliant. I mean the whole thing at the WHO turned on a pin to do with her, getting it through. The Solomon Island diplomat said to me "even if the whole non aligned movement crumbles under pressure the Solomon Islands will go ahead and we will sponsor this resolution and we will put it to the UN". He had tears in his eyes and he said "and I want you all to know that it's you women being here, that's keeping us South Pacific member States, really strong." "Pauline and Hilda are our chieftainesses and we look up to them. They're the grandmothers and you're the mothers, and we know you're here because we know you care about what is happening to the planet and we're going to do everything we can in there to try and make it happen." That kept me going too.

**Did the wording of the resolution change as you went along, did that evolve over time?**

Yes. There were two resolutions. There was the one about the environmental effects and the World Health Assembly, which did change a bit - it was about the health and environmental effects of the use of a nuclear weapon in armed conflict. When we got to the General Assembly in 1993 and we were doing the final wording for it, there was debate about whether we put in a word 'use' and/or 'threat' of the use of nuclear weapons - this was very contentious. There were huge debates going on with the lawyers that we were dealing with. I know that the word 'threat' would not have been there, if Alyn, Rob and I had not been at those meetings. Because they (the lawyers) felt that the whole question of deterrence was too big to take on in the UN.

But originally when Alyn had helped draft something with Costa Ricans in 1991, they had wanted use, threat, possession, testing, mining, the lot in there - they were neutral on these issues. But we finally got “Is the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons in any circumstance permitted under existing international law”. That was contentious enough; we were challenging the legality of the security policies of all the nuclear weapon states and their allies. This included NATO, Australia, and NZ on the question of whether they supported nuclear deterrence or not, whether they thought it was legal. It was a huge show down with us and the lawyers who were being rabbits at that time. They lived in New York with all the diplomats. We came from outside and we had an absolutely pure conscience about the issue. The morality and the legality issues were absolutely clear from where we came from and we held to that.

### **Tape Five, Side One.**

**I’m really fascinated about the experience of being at the UN as Peace Activists - it is a turning point for peace action and peace work in itself. By putting on the uniform it changes the way that you can work as a Peace Activist. And that it’s getting more credibility for what you’re on about, you have a chance to be heard and people really listen at that level. But also it’s like you’re talking on an equal par as being a politician and a lawyer. How does it still stay as something that represents ordinary people, NGOs? Is it still about action for change and doesn’t become just a political debate, but is seen as you’re representing a body of people just as lawyers are representing this body of people?**

I actually wouldn’t see it as being the same as lawyers and politicians, on the grounds that lawyers are representing someone to try and win their case and it is not necessarily for the truest of motives. Politicians are bound by a political party and a mandate if you like. They are supposed to be accountable back to the communities that they come from, so it is probably closer to politicians in that sense. But I think the experience that I’ve had, and Alyn too, is frequently we haven’t been paid to do the work that we do, so there is a freedom of expression about what you want to do, what you want to say and how you want to work. If you come from grass roots groups, which both of us do, there is a degree of accountability back to those groups. Both of us have a commitment to be accountable back to Maori here. So, I don’t know how many politicians and lawyers have that, but they are safety nets also to some extent in terms of challenging about what you are doing, how you are doing it and why you are doing it, and whether your process of working is still peaceful, whether you are selling out at a soul level.

So, that is another form of accountability that we have here that not many have. I also think there are mechanisms within the movement for that to happen, whether it’s for a national base or whatever. In NZ, there are different groups that act much more as networks and there aren’t many who work for organisations. The Peace Foundation is one of the few that actually has funded workers. So, there are different ways of working from lawyers and politicians, there is also a freedom, there are risks, there is also often having to fund it yourself. Was being the only NGO on the UN Study on Disarmament Education, an example of how I could have sold out? On reflection, a lot would not have been included in the Study if a kiwi NGO hadn’t been there. That was the motivation again with going to the World Court with this issue. Where else could we take it, nothing else was happening in the UN? Here was something that

was action-based that was bringing in the grassroots. We collected over 4 million declarations of public conscience from around the world. Grassroots groups did their own lobbying and some came to the UN. It was an empowering exercise for the movement. We made things happen at a grassroots level and encouraged our government representatives to take it to the UN.

Sometimes you get criticised by the movement that you've sold out and that you're on a government advisory committee or you're on a UN body. Those are decisions that each person has to make between themselves and their conscience about whether they feel they are being effective and are still accountable, and whether they are still speaking out despite the threat of being ostracised from these committees, because it's not easy being on those committees as an activist. Speaking a truth and challenging things that you don't think are right, you can get taken off committees. I've faced that risk and the peace movement doesn't know that because there is a confidentiality clause. I think the movement has to learn how to nurture each other and honour each other's different ways of working and see our differences as some of our strengths. It is important not to view someone as the enemy, because as soon as you start to do that, your process is not peaceful.

**Do you think some of this work, while it is backed up by a movement and a whole network and a range of groups that also is actually quite personality driven, that it comes down to the person who is there in the moment and what they have to offer and their skills and who they are?**

Absolutely, and the same within institutions. I used to see some people in the UN, and officials and the government and politicians as the problem, but in fact we are just as much of the problem, often, in terms of the way we work. We don't always do the listening and finding a solution. And the personalities of certain diplomats are what carried it within the UN. You had people who were prepared to put their jobs and their lives on the line to get this through, because they cared about the greater good of humanity and not their jobs. But some people lost their jobs. The ambassador of Vanuatu did, the guy working with us from Zimbabwe as well, put under intense pressure. That's why you've got to take each situation as it comes, each ambassador is different, they've had life experiences that are different and some have been activists before they went to work as diplomats. So just because they have chosen that, doesn't mean that they are an enemy. If they want to change from within, they also need support.

**What happened after 1993?**

At the UN, the resolution nearly went through but it was put off on the grounds that the Americans and the other Western states were threatening to undermine the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and other disarmament negotiations. They were threatening all these terrible other things that could have happened within the disarmament arena and a lot of countries weren't prepared to risk this because they knew that the WHA case was going ahead anyway and would get to the UN probably in 1995. But the Indonesians were brilliant in the end they said "Look we'll just quietly let this go at this moment we don't want to lose the CTBT and we will wait another year." But they didn't say that publicly and they came back with a vengeance the following year. Alyn was there in New York, quietly lobbying and we got the

numbers and we got it through. We were working at home backing that up to get the National Government to change. Eventually NZ became the only Western State, besides little San Marino, to vote in favour of the resolution. So we really put ourselves on the line. That was under McKinnon and a conservative government that I had had terrific battles with about their lack of integrity on issues. There were times that I challenged them publicly when they said “We’re not going to put in a submission to the UN on the question of the health and environmental effects, we’re going to wait and see.” And he (McKinnon) said “We’re not going to put one in because we don’t want to be linked with North Korea and Rwanda”, who had both put in submissions and I went straight back to him, effectively calling him a liar but I didn’t use that term. I said to him “Minister, you know perfectly well that when you said that in Parliament that was not true because I had sent you the Swedish, Irish and Ukrainian submissions by fax, and you decided to ignore those and use the ones that would be for your political betterment so that you could get out of it.” But again look at personalities, there was McKinnon, playing a game. He’d tried to change our nuclear policy earlier on. It was Doug Graham in 1993 when we handed him the declarations of public conscience in Parliament he made ‘policy on the hoof’, as Lange called it. He said, “If this goes to the vote, NZ will vote for it”, and it was reported in the media. We were able to use that in fact I was at the UN in 1993 when that came through. It was faxed to us and we were handing it round the diplomats saying, “NZ has said we’ll vote for it”.

I had just been in Ireland before it was going to the vote, and again things happened in an amazingly serendipitous sort of way. As I was going in with an Irish NGO to the Irish Parliament, I was introduced to the Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee who totally supported the idea as he knew Sean MacBride. He asked how long I was in Dublin for and he asked us to address the Foreign Affairs Committee the next day. He got a recommendation through so when we arrived in New York in Alyn’s office the front page of the Irish Times was coming through the fax and it said something like “Government will vote for this resolution if it goes to the UN.” I had this and Doug Graham’s statement and was able to hand out copies to UN Ambassadors and say there’s Ireland and NZ. Swedish peace groups had done something similar so you had three countries that had a lot of credibility, they could not be dismissed as just ‘the non aligned movement’ or whatever. They were absolutely key and it was a NZ diplomat who had advised me to go for those and we wouldn’t have known what the political system was if we hadn’t be prepared to listen and to work alongside these guys. We had activist politicians who chaired certain committees in both Ireland and Sweden, and we were keeping the pressure on at home.

### **So Ireland did vote with NZ in the end?**

No, they didn’t but they did put in submissions to the UN on the World Health Organisation question. They abstained - they came under huge pressure, but NZ did vote for it in 1994 when it finally went through. But it was incredible pressure we were under in 1993. Late one night the Ambassador from Vanuatu, told us that he’d just been to a party with most of the NATO States and a former judge from the World Court had come (which he should never have done) and put pressure on all of them to vote against the resolution the following day. The Ambassador came to meet Hilda, Pauline, me and Rob and said “I hate to have to tell you guys this, but there’s no way we can go ahead with it tomorrow.” I could not stop the tears. We had collected all

these signatures and I'd given my life to this thing for the last 10yrs, I was a solo mother at the time, and it was really hard work. Tears just dripping down my face... Pauline was sitting next to me crying too. He warned us that he wouldn't be able to get it through the non-aligned movement citing too much pressure. We got in the lift and Pauline grabbed my hand and she said "It's not over yet." I sobbed all night thinking of all these people whose hopes were up around the world, 4 million declarations and the bastards are knuckling under. So that's when we went the next day and Hilda went in with the Vanuatu delegation to the non-aligned movement meeting (even though she wasn't supposed to). Pauline and I stood outside and shook hands with all these men as they went in and said "we're out here and we're waiting and we're going to be here until you come back." We sat there and said karakia (prayers) and waited. Then they came out, one of them and said "We got it through!" That was to get the non-aligned to put it together but they were splitting up over it because the pressure was so intense. A few years later when I interviewed one of the Ambassadors for my PhD he said "Kate I need to tell you, that it was your tears, that night, the three of you there that gave me the guts to go and just stick with it no matter what." He's the one who lost his job. So you know there are lots of those things that keep you going really. It was Hilda eye balling them inside and us saying "we're here for you" representing civil society. We were personally supporting them and we were having drinks with them just to bolster them and to keep sharing the latest up date. You can't do it from a distance. You have to be there.

**Could you just talk to us a little bit about the character of Hilda and Pauline? About their strengths in those situations?**

Hilda, I've known since we were young. She was the first woman in the Government as Minister of Health of Environment, Water etc and she was a mother of two. She had been a journalist as well, so she had a lot of skills. She had been in the movement for a long time and had an incredible heart, but also an incredible mind. At the WHO, she talked about the ancestors being with her, which is most courageous for a Minister of Health to do in a forum like that. One of the doctors from IPPNW said that the energy was palpable in the room. She is a chieftainess and she knew she was representing many from the region. Straight after she had spoken the woman US Surgeon General said to her "You've changed my heart, but sadly I can't change the vote." Pauline's the same. They carry with them, that mana, that spiritual energy. You know the ancestors are with them. I've seen the energy that comes through them when they are at meetings and it affects people. Amazing women, both mothers, and Pauline is a grandmother and great grandmother. They both work from a base of aroha (love). And it's not a job.



**It sounds like when Pauline grabs your hand and says "It's not over yet" she's right there in the minute and she also knows that the spirit is moving amongst people and anything can happen at any moment.**

Absolutely. People like her and Hilda have dreams about what's going to happen. And I've had that too. I've had people tell me what's going to happen and that keeps me going. We couldn't have done this without that connection with God and all those

people that we worked with - whether they believed in Buddha or are Islamic or whatever. What we carried vibrated with others and you don't know who that's going to touch. So, you've got to trust and take those risks and go. And we did it. We're still doing it. It's bloody hard work but it's also incredibly rewarding and you know you're on a path; you have a specific job to do. Not many in the movement will understand that. So it can be a very lonely path. I know Pauline had to go to Iraq recently after she'd had a dream. She didn't have funding so we found some for her. We are often judged because we're often on the aeroplanes.

**Could you talk about the grassroots nature of the WCP especially the declarations/ How did people get involved to support it?**

I'll give some examples of people here such as Colin Ayres from Rangiora who was a Christian Pacifist aged about 85. He produced a huge banner reading "Chemical banned, biological banned, nuclear, why not?" which Rob had designed. He hung it right across the main road and sat underneath it and collected signatures. Similar story to Arthur Quinn from the little Waiwhetu peace group who collected hundreds of 'Dictates of Public Conscience' declarations which were taken into account as part of international law. It was an idea



from Keith Mothersson in the UK to collect individually signed declarations that say something like, 'we believe that these are morally and illegally wrong and we want them abolished.' So everybody they did their own version so it was very empowering for people. And it wasn't us telling them how to do it, we did a plan of ideas of what we wanted to achieve and a timeline of when we might get to the World Health Organisation or the UN. Groups could take the declarations to their politicians. We delivered 22,000 of these to Doug Graham and he agreed to send them to the UN in the diplomatic bag so the Ministry paid for them. Pauline and Alyn and I were at the Handover ceremony. The same sort of thing happened when we went to The Hague; We were the guardians of these bits of paper from all our people to take to the place where it was going to have an effect. Then we were faxing reports back from the UN to groups here saying this is where it's at. It's going to happen. This is before email. It used to cost \$3 for me to send a fax that big (1 inch long). We got it down to a fine line of how many words it was, to Rob in the UK.

There were only 6 of us on the International Steering Committee: Alyn, Rob, me, Colin Archer from IPB, Michael Christ from the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War in Boston and Willemijn Straeter from the International Association of Lawyers Against Nuclear Arms at The Hague. We had no funding, we had to



L to R: Alyn Ware, Tracy Moavero, Kate Dewes, Colin Archer, Willemijn Straeter, Michael Christ and Rob Green

find our own way to get to these places, and we had to sell things so we could do it. We had to sleep on people's floors to do it. People assumed that we had funding for it. We did not. Rob worked from home. I worked from home, Alyn worked at the Lawyers Committee for Nuclear Policy and most of the time he was there he wasn't paid. So it was real act of faith to make it happen. We had been appointed in 1992 at the launch of the WCP in the UN. That was where I first met Rob. He was appointed onto the steering committee because he was chairing the British branch - they collected nearly a million signatures. There were nearly 3 million from Japan collected by the Consumers Cooperative. One British woman collected over 70,000 by just standing on the street. People felt this was one way they could by-pass politicians and get it to the Court. It's an amazing story!



### **What was the impact of that resolution being passed?**

In 1994, there was talk about it being the most exciting night in the UN, ever. That was Bill Epstein who used to call himself Mr UN because he'd been there for 30 years. Hilda (Lini) told me "they (nuclear weapons states) are not just twisting arms they are breaking legs." States were being threatened with loss of trade and aid. The French pressured their allies in Africa and the Pacific, and NZ was under pressure too. We were the wayward ones. It was public pressure that really kept our guys from going under, because we were working with them in UN and in Wellington. We were eyeballing them the whole time. So there was an impact in the UN. We'd done an education process with diplomats and politicians by giving them the arguments and then they used them in the UN.

Alyn worked very closely with Malaysia and Mexico and some of the others and they got resolutions in the UN, in the following year about implementing the UN advisory opinion from the World Court when it finally came out in 1996. But once the UN resolution had gone through (in 1994) you then had this process of asking governments to put in submissions to the World Court on whether they thought things were legal or not. This was another huge job because the nuclear weapon states wanted to stop that process and only have submissions from minor countries and then all the nuclear weapon States could stand up and say everything's legal. We ended up having the biggest case at the Court especially at the oral hearings in November 1995; we had 43 submissions and one from the WHO. Only four nuclear weapon States put them in - China didn't take part, but Japan had to turn up due to public pressure. At first, the Japanese government wasn't prepared to have the Mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on their delegation. Nauru and New Zealand were considering having them give evidence as part of their delegations. In the end the Japanese had to own them and they had to change their argument because of public outcry over the whole thing. So this was going on all over the world. It was happening at really grassroots level and in the legal and medical communities. And then you had the NZ government prepared to change their position on it and stand out. Within the grassroots movement there was a change because many of those groups hadn't worked together in the past. So the model we used set the scene with what happened with the landmines campaign

later and it certainly was fundamental with the Middle Powers Initiative that Rob, Alyn and I were on later. I know it was fundamental in the development of what became known as the New Agenda Coalition. The countries as part of that were NZ, Sweden, Ireland, Egypt, Mexico, Brazil and South Africa. There were 7 states from right across all continents who then worked together on disarmament. They were the ones that we'd worked really closely with to put submissions into the UN and who were very angry with the way they had been treated by the nuclear weapon states.

### Side Two Tape Five

There was also an impact on the academic community, because when the ICJ advisory opinion was given in July 1996 it created new international law, so lawyers had to start teaching about it. So Alyn went around to law schools and tried to get law schools teaching it. There was also a process of democratisation of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) because hardly anyone knew about it before we started and they had to start opening the doors to NGOs - normally they wouldn't let NGOs in. We were there in force, we were filling up the court when the hearings happened and when the Mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki spoke with their huge photographs, I don't think they'd ever had that before in the UN. You could hear the sobs of the Japanese Hibakusha (bomb survivors). There were about 50 of them and this woman who was 4yrs old when the bomb was dropped ran up to me and threw her arms around my neck sobbing "We have waited 50 years to get this here and thank you for making it happen." All these people there, with their scarred faces - you couldn't help but be affected. There was one woman judge on that panel and she made eye contact with me when the Japanese Mayors gave evidence. You are not supposed to have dialogue with the judges but I had bumped into her outside and congratulated her on being the first woman judge and told her some of us had lobbied for women to be represented on the Court. So when the Japanese addressed the Court she looked up at me nodded and smiled. She did the same when the New Zealanders spoke.

There's another amazing story involving Auntie Pauline. On the Friday just before the oral hearings began on Monday IALANA received a message from the Court that the Venezuelan judge had died suddenly. Now that meant that there were only 14 judges and the Algerian President would have the casting vote on the decision. Pauline sat there in the IALANA office right opposite the Court and said, "I'm not moving. You ring the Court back and tell them we're coming over to pay our respects." And they said "No, no, no, NGOs don't come into the Peace Palace" and Pauline said "Well we're coming, we represent the international community, we're here and we have 4 million declarations of public conscience." She just marched in through the gates with a team of us behind her and said "Sorry, but in our culture, we will pay our respects." So normally the Peace Palace gates only opened for ambassadors because it was a State funeral - his coffin was covered with a UN flag. We walked in and, talk about setting the scene for the following Monday, there were all the 14 judges in their blacks, standing and looking very formal. It was like doing a *hongi* with them but without touching their noses because we shook hands and looked into the eyes of each Judge. When this motley team NGO team, led by Pauline stood in front of the coffin Pauline called to the spirit of the Judge. There was hardly a dry eye in the room. It was one of the most profound experiences in my life and when we came out she (Pauline) said "There is a Maori proverb, that when something auspicious is

about to happen, a chief must die.” That’s why we had to pay our respects to that ‘chief’.

### **What happened after that?**

Well, we went into Court on the Monday and there were all the countries lined up, television crews were there to report on what governments were saying. The US argued that it was ok to use nukes. But you had the courage of all these other countries prepared to speak up. Our lawyers there drafting stuff and giving them information. You had Lijon Eknilang from the Marshall Islands giving evidence with



the 3 South Pacific states. She came dressed in Sunday white with flowers on her head, the only NGO woman to give evidence at the Court. She told the judges about her cancers and all the miscarriages she’d had. She described how other women gave birth to babies that looked like jelly fish babies. Her testimony moved people. I was determined to get a woman from the Pacific to

give evidence so that the Court’s decision wasn’t made just from the heads; it had to have the hearts as well. That gave strength too, to the other Ambassadors. Zimbabwe was amazing. They had been left off the list at one point and Alyn faxed a note to them saying “You’ve got to get here, we’ll help you draft your submission”. And of course the US and UK were giving their statements at the end of the alphabet. We needed a repost, so we needed a ‘Z’; so it was vital to get one of the Zs to turn up. And it was Zimbabwe.

Alyn told me this later that- he was typing away madly getting it done and he went over and checked it with the Zimbabwe team at lunchtime after the US and UK had spoken. He came back to the office and put some changes in and printed it out and then when he got back to the Court he realised that he’d printed out the earlier version. The Zimbabwe ambassador remembered what their discussion was and realised what Alyn had done and just ad-libbed. This really empowered the officials. I was in the Court when the Malaysian Ambassador Razali (he then became UN President - quite a key position despite this), addressed the judges and he said something like “The hapless States that have come under incredible pressure in the UN because of the bullying that has gone on is reflected in the fact that four States have not turned up to argue their case.” And he said “I say this on behalf of the non-aligned movement”. That quote is in my PhD. Basically he said “We are representing the biggest populations in the world, we’ve been colonised.” That then strengthened Malaysia when the outcome came from the Court to say, “We’re going to sponsor the follow up resolutions in the UN and we’ll bring whatever countries we can on board”. And because Alyn in particular had built up such good relationships with these guys he was able to help draft these resolutions and a draft model UN convention which was then tabled by Costa Rica. Amazing stuff kept happening as follow on, it wasn’t just within the NGO community, it was at government level and amongst those personalities that were changed by that experience.

### **After the UN World Court decision, what happened next?**

Well the Opinion came out on July 8<sup>th</sup> 1996. I fielded media calls through the night, even from Helen Clark at 5.30am in the morning determined to get in before Jim Bolger on Radio NZ, because she'd been so strong on this issue. Later Bolger claimed that his officials had done it all in Wellington at the Press conference. There was a lot of media interest in it, internationally, especially in Japan and NZ. But again it was mis-reported, people said the WHO question had been dismissed, thrown out basically. Well it hadn't been they didn't wait and



listen also to hear what had happened with the UN General Assembly request. But at the WHA, it had been dismissed on grounds that it wasn't the correct forum and so it was wonderful that we did finally get the General Assembly one through. It was the correct forum for it to go through, so sticking with it until 1994 was very important. So when it did come out finally again the nuclear weapon states said well we'll ignore it. It's only advisory, but the other states said "We will definitely use it."

Of course since then it has empowered the movement to do non-violent direct action all around the world, especially in NATO states, in the UK in particular. People have been arrested so that they could argue that nuclear weapons were illegal and they used the advisory opinion. At least it did empower people and it's still being used not least by governments standing up even at the Non Proliferation Treaty that has just folded in disarray in New York governments are quoting it. So it's not lost.

### **But how is it affecting politics, in terms of the fact that there is still a build up of nuclear weapons?**

The NWS dismiss the advisory opinion. There is mis-reporting on what the final decision said. It was a huge report, with a 34 page summary. But the main statement that came out said that there is no existing law that bans the use or the threat of the use of nuclear weapons. But the two final paragraphs, one that was unanimously adopted that all States have the responsibility and obligation actually to negotiate the abolition of nuclear weapons. I haven't got the exact wording. Both the Algerian Judge and Judge Weeramantry (who Harold had consulted, ten years prior in Australia and he became vice president of the World Court) played key roles. However, the Court could not decide whether the use of nuclear weapons could be justified when the very survival of a State was at risk, meaning for example, Israel. When you read the whole opinion carefully, what they had said was that all the huge nukes could not be used, that they were generally illegal under existing international law, especially humanitarian law. It wasn't as strong as we wanted because there was

huge pressure on the judges, and I've had confirmed from some people who would know. The fact we were all sitting there in the court - the lawyers, doctors, activists, Hibakusha, and the media, it empowered them. You don't normally get that in the UN.

**This Court decision now stands forever?**

It's on the books forever. They can't change it. It's not perfect, by any means. But it has empowered the Japanese movement. NHK TV did a feature film on taking the case to the World Court and it was shown on television nationwide to millions. Sometimes I was invited to Japan up to 5 times a year. One day they flew me from here to Nagasaki to be on television for a two hour special and then back home again. If it reaches millions it's worth doing. That film won an award and I now keep finding lecturers throughout Japan they say to me "Oh I've just seen you on television, we were using that film that the NHK made 8 years ago and I use it for all my teaching." They made a book on it saying the project started at the kitchen table in it, and it's such a myth. They love saying it started with a mother. I just kept saying that it's not true. Well it started with Harold, but Falk was an absolutely key person in terms of triggering it. The Mayor of Nagasaki came and sat at the kitchen table and wanted his photo taken at it and we were quite worried that we might start getting bus loads of Japanese tourists going to see the Peace house.

**Have you been filmed on Television in any other countries?**

No Japan is the main one. Oh in Canada we've been on a feature film. I was filmed at The Hague and then that was shown in the States but very briefly.

**Could you talk about that and the booklet Aotearoa/NZ at the World Court?**

Yes, that was done very quickly within about 2 weeks. It was based on my thesis and we wanted it in a simple, easy to read form with lots of photos, that we could get to The Hague Appeal for Peace conference where there were 10,000 people. We needed 3,000 to hand out. So people would learn how the World Court had been used. It was at The Hague and not far from the World Court. We wanted to tell the NZ story about taking France there over nuclear testing. It wasn't very professionally done because again we didn't have funding for it. We got some from the Rainbow Warrior trust fund, I think, about \$2,000

**When did you start writing your PhD?**

About 1993/4. I had been teaching Peace Studies part time at Canterbury for about 8 years with no official qualifications other than a BA in music. Of course the academics didn't like that and I was encouraged to do an MA Hons in Peace Studies which I did from Australia. As we were making history I started to write it - again no scholarship to start with. No funding - I was at home with the kids. But I was determined to get it written and when I sent the first three or four draft chapters my two supervisors said this is much bigger than an MA Hons thesis, you have to write a PhD and they had me upgraded to a PhD. Otherwise I would never have done one because I had never done Sociology or Political Science at Canterbury. I just kept researching and writing and writing.

**How long did it take you?**

About 4 years part time, because I was teaching part time, running the Peace Foundation office, bringing up the kids and taking the case to the court. I had to have a cut off point, once the opinion came out. I submitted it in 1998. So from about '94 – 98 I was doing an MA (Hons)/ PhD. You know what encouraged me to do that? It was that years ago some male academics had come through NZ wanting to write their PhDs on how NZ became nuclear free and I was giving them information. I thought “No this is our story, they are not going to have it and I don't want an American writing it because they won't tell it with the correct background”. So when writing it, I had to admit that it was subjective and participatory. The participatory part was its strength because having been in those situations with the diplomats, and at all the meetings I had access to information that no-one looking at papers would know about. I interviewed 44 key people including David Lange, Russell Marshall, Razali (the Malaysian Ambassador), and the Vanuatu Ambassador. They knew me and trusted me enough to tell me things that they wouldn't normally tell any researcher. So it's a very different PhD. I said it can't be theoretical because there is no theory based experience like this. We were making it happen and so it's historical, and written from a woman's and activist's point of view. All 5 examiners were men.

**Now you're at the stage where it could be put together as a book?**

It should be but needs to be written by someone else as I was too closely involved.

**You've had a very full life, incredibly, and like you said before sometimes there are torrents and at other times there is just incredible amazing things that you've witnessed and seen happen and it's that sense of living with that fullness of the potential that is right here, right now of you know how wonderful everything could be. You're also doing work but it's not a job. How do you think more and more people could get to the UN and have that experience? How can the waka could get bigger and more people could be on it?**

Well I agree sharing inspiring stories helps people and also those of us who have had that experience, opening a space for other younger ones to come forward and also training them in how to do it. It's not necessarily officially training them but allowing them to be a part of the way in which you're working and therefore you learn from each other about ways to work. An example of that is Anna who worked here, that our WILPF group raised a little bit of money to help get her to the UN in Geneva as an intern for WILPF, she was only there for 6 weeks or so and then went to the Hague Appeal for Peace. We raised a little bit of money to get her across for that, so she experienced that amazing huge international movement which then inspired her and then she came back and asked to work with us. But she's one who's really had an amazing experience of developing those skills and going to Bougainville, India and Ireland, she's part of the work and trusts it. If this is your life path that you're supposed to be on, it may not be going to the UN, but once you trust where your heart is taking you and where you feel you're being led to go, then the doors will open. And it won't be clear from the start, you will have no idea where you're heading and it's scary stuff when you meet some of those people and you think how am I ever going to have a dialogue with this President of this country, this ambassador or whatever. But it's trusting your gut, your heart and the process. We all have different

roles in that. Your job for example is recording some of these stories at this point which mean that it gets out wider and inspires more people.

**Do you think that the Peace work on so many levels right through from education, activism, to the political arena, has put in place something that is permanent new frameworks by which people can see things and new language, that people are using where the work is being done?**

Yes, I can see it happening and I can see models of that - people learning to work in a more decentralised way and a more cooperative way and for the reasons of spirit as opposed to doing it for a job or power. And once those models are more in place, then they become models for people at every level and once you can start to get that into some form of structure as well, even within something like the little thing of the Peace city. That's a model that Christchurch can have so that when the whole debate of racism comes up, we ask how do we work through that, through dialogue, through listening through allowing people that democratic process. And who are the speakers, what are they saying, what are they talking about? They are talking about listening to each other, respecting cultures, all those things that are basic peace ways of working are getting out into the mainstream. We've got to learn now to get the media to think that reporting about Peace issues is as important if not more so than the violence side of things. So it's up to all of us to take a responsibility for teaching about those peace values and modelling them in our everyday life, at every level. Not an easy one.

I'm very grateful to you for making these tapes of lots of peace people in this area and again I hope lots of others around the country will get these stories down, because when you start on these journeys you have no idea where the river is going to take you. There are going to be more torrents and rapids, and falling out of the wakas at times too in the future. But it's staying with that job you've been given, that *mahi* and trusting it. Believing that when enough of us work together cooperatively we can change things. In this country of Aotearoa/NZ we have many models that are in existence now that have changed things and we have become a model globally - so there is a lot of hope and encouragement for our own history and her story.

**Thank you very much Kate.**

**END**