

# FEATURES

## 'Always something to do for peace'

Jos Brusse, who died in Wanganui this month, was involved in the struggle for peace and justice for 60 years.

He was born in 1913 in Rotterdam, Holland.

As a 14-year-old schoolboy he printed illegal pamphlets in his father's basement, which raised the issue of social justice in Holland.

On leaving school he trained in agriculture with the Heide Maatschappij (Heath Reclamation Society) and worked for the Dutch Government as a supervisor in schemes providing work for the unemployed.

He was asked by the International Quaker Body to set up a farm section at their International Boarding School in Ommen.

He was in charge of that, throughout World War Two, hoping to train German-Jewish boys for work in the USA and so help them escape from the terror of Nazism.

In this work place he found his belief in God among people who like him cared for the peace and justice issues so dear to his heart.

He also met and married a teacher from the primary school section.

Together Jos and Angela kept the Quaker Farm School going after the German occupation had commandeered everything else belonging to the school, including some pupils who had been unable to get away and were sent to concentration camps.

The farm was close to the German border, there was an ammunition dump, a local concentration camp and the school buildings now occupied by Hitler Jugend all within easy walking distance.

Yet both Jos and Angela were able through those years to play their humble role in the Dutch Underground resistance.

The end of the war also closed a chapter in their lives, the farm school no longer needed was liquidated.

Jos moved on to become an agricultural social worker in the North East Polder, or the new reclamation as it was also called.

There his special concern was the needs of single men living in work camps, these men were there to make the land ready for farming.

Among them was a group of displaced people from Poland, soldiers who had fought in the wrong army and were now denied permission to go home and were thus stateless.

These men were his special concern.

The New Reclamation became a thriving agricultural centre and the men's work camps were finished. It was again time to move.

*This tribute was prepared by Mia Tay, daughter of Jos Brusse, assisted by Maurice Hurford.*



Jos Brusse makes sure there's no doubt about Quaker Acres' stand on nuclear weapons.

Jos and Angela with their three children immigrated to New Zealand in 1954, starting work at the Friends School in Wanganui.

There were better job opportunities for Jos' agricultural training in Christchurch, so the family moved there in 1957.

Jos worked as a technician with the DSIR (crop research) in Lincoln and also some time at Canterbury University, returning to work at crop research on a green leaf for food project.

In Christchurch he was an active member of the Quaker Meeting, serving on their National Peace Committee.

He was a member of the Joint Council on Vietnam, and counselled many young men faced with the draft, on the rights and responsibilities of conscientious objectors and that it was not a soft option.

He found that out himself when he authorised the Canterbury University students paper, *Canta*, to place a "Skip the Draft" advertisement.

Some Quakers thought this wording far too flippant, but it helped many young people to understand their attitude to life, death and nationality.

He loved singing and joined the Royal Christchurch Musical Society, because that was the choir that sang St Matthew Passion every year.

He took early retirement so that he and Angela could travel round the world to meet Quakers and relatives in Holland, and then settle in Wanganui at the Friends Settlement (Quaker Acres).

Freed from the burden of earning a living, he threw his heart and soul into peace and justice work in Wanganui, while never neglecting

his work for the Quaker community at the settlement.

He worked with Corso, and supported Trade Aid.

Although actually living in Waitotara county, Jos (and Angela) threw themselves into the campaign to have the city declared a nuclear free zone.

When in 1983 Helen Caldicott toured it was the Brusses who hired a 40-seater coach and invited people to travel to hear the Palmerston North meeting.

As Jos said afterwards, he and Angela had prepared themselves for some expensive seats to take them to that meeting. But as things turned out the bus was full.

In response to this initiative the Wanganui Peace Forum was formed.

There followed several years of intense activity till 1986, when as their contribution to that International Year of Peace, Jos and Angela initiated and sponsored a wall calendar.

This calendar indicated a peace activity for each month of the year, something so typical because for them there was indeed always something to do for peace.

His biggest concern was with what is now Peace Movement Aotearoa.

He was present in Wellington in 1980 when it was decided that national peace co-ordination was necessary, he was present in 1981 when the first annual peace workshops were held near Christchurch and again at Lower Hutt in early 1982 when Peace Movement New Zealand was finally set up.

He was very concerned that this organisation would help link the many and varied peace groups, so that these groups could work together more effectively.

He was delighted when justice issues were also raised, feeling strongly that one without the other was incomplete.

His last international Quaker project was the Costa Rica action group reaching round the world meeting up with Quakers now living in Costa Rica, who had worked with him at the Quaker School in Holland.

Jos has now laid down his tasks, but Angela will carry on living and working for the things they held dear, at Quaker Acres, in Wanganui.

All over New Zealand there will be people who, inspired by his vision, will carry on the work for peace and justice. These include his three children and his treasured grandchildren.

The memorial meeting for worship to give thanks for that of God in the life of Jos Brusse included the words "Jos Brusse was a man whose life has been spent in two countries but whose spirit has spanned all frontiers. The broken rifle badge of the War Resisters International which he wore symbolised his lifelong opposition to militarism and his active work for peace. As a farmer, a horticulturalist and gardener he was close to nature in all its variety."