

Obituary – Owen Wilkes

by Murray Horton

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Owen's suicide in May 2005, aged 65, came as a terrible shock to people throughout New Zealand and in many countries around the world. Sadly, however, to those who had known him a long time (since 1970, in my case) it was not actually a surprise. Owen was a phenomenally high achiever who set punishing standards for both his body and his mind. He obviously reached the conclusion that he could no longer meet those standards, so therefore it had to be time to go. It all made sense to him, but suicide is always brutally hard for those closest, and Owen's was no exception. It was devastating for May Bass, his partner of many years and, judging by the outpouring that followed his death, it made a huge impact on countless numbers of others.

For Owen Wilkes was a legend in his own lifetime. In our immediate context, he was a founder of both the Anti-Bases Campaign (ABC) and, before that, of the Campaign Against Foreign Control of Aotearoa (CAFCA), from whence ABC was born. For virtually all of my life as a political activist, he had been there like a rock and always looking exactly the same – big, strong, bearded, shorts (usually leather), quite often bare chested, sandals or bare feet. He looked like an Old Testament prophet. And his words had the same sort of impact too. He was the most astonishing researcher that I've ever met, and for the best part of quarter of a century, was an absolute godsend for the peace movement, not only in New Zealand but also around the world. He had no formal qualifications of any kind, yet his work was unparalleled. He was a major public figure whose word was law on the subjects in which he specialised. He was so well known that, on at least two occasions that I can remember, his name alone on a billboard around the entire South Island was sufficient to sell the paper without any other details being necessary. And when he chucked in peace research and returned to his first love of archaeology, the standard of his work and the sheer volume of his output were as equally astounding. Owen was a one off. I never met anyone like him and I doubt that I ever will.

Why Did He Kill Himself?

Because of the nature of his death, and the inevitable questions that follow suicides, I'll deal with that issue first. The how is pretty straightforward – he gassed himself in his car, at Kawhia. At least it wasn't one of the really violent methods, which are distressingly popular among male suicides. Why? Owen was a depressive and had been for decades. I was among those who had seen him when he was depressed. He once told me that when he got depressed while living in Wellington, he took to his bed for days on end with a bottle of whisky and cheap detective novels. What did he get depressed about? He was a consummate individualist with a tendency towards being a loner (which was absolutely vital for his unique skills as a researcher) and like all individualists, he took everything personally. In the 1980s, when meeting with the ABC committee, he told us that he had reached some self-imposed age by which he had vowed that he should have personally been responsible for the removal of the US military from New Zealand; that it had not happened, which he saw as his failing; that it was all a waste of time, and he planned to throw the manuscript of the book he was working on into Wellington Harbour. We took the practical step of relieving him of the manuscript but the book was never written (and never will be, because eventually we gave it back to him).

There was one event that depressed him more than anything else and that was the 1990 suicide, at the age of 21, of his only child, Koa. She died in Christchurch – he rushed down from Wellington and stayed with me for several days. So, I saw close up, the impact of a suicide on the people who were nearest and dearest (Koa's was the most gruelling of the many funerals that I have attended). Owen blamed himself for her death, saying that she had inherited his depressive genes. Like all good Old Testament prophets he was fond of pontificating – for a period he used to wax lyrical about the joys of fatherhood (Koa had come back into his life several years after his marriage had broken up) and he told me that I should have kids. After her death, he changed his tune, saying that he could give nobody advice on parenting, as he had stuffed up and was responsible for the death of his only child.

Having said all that, he was not depressed in the period before his suicide. Quite the opposite apparently (which is why May was so shocked and devastated). So why did he do it? It appears that he took a pragmatic decision based on his own perception of his failing health. For decades he had been very, very hard on his body and it took its toll. When he involuntarily returned from Sweden, in 1982, he was depressed because he had bad arthritis in both knees and feared that he would not be able to walk properly, let alone follow his passionate love of tramping in the bush. That was in his early 40s. As it turned out, he was wrong, and he attributed his continuing extraordinary fitness and bushmanship to bee sting therapy, inadvertently brought about by working with his brother's beehives at Karamea. But the arthritis did not go away, it only got worse. I last saw Owen, in 2002, in Hamilton. He was by then dependent on a very large stick for support (thus looking even more like Moses about to part the Red Sea), and was waiting for a double hip replacement. Subsequently, he had one hip replaced. But, in his mind, the last straw came, in May

2005, when the surgeon told him that the second one would have to be postponed because they had found a very major heart problem, which could only be solved by the daunting prospect of a heart transplant. Two days later he killed himself, leaving a note which said, in part, that he thought it was better to go now than to sink into what he foresaw as a miserable and sickly old age, dependent on others, with his acute mental powers on the decline (for years he was anxious about getting Alzheimers). He said that he thought his natural life span was 60 and that he had outlived his use-by date by five years. It all made sense to him and I have some sympathy for him (I've often wondered how I'd react to a diagnosis of an irreversible physical or mental condition), but he didn't discuss it with anyone, something could probably have been worked out (it usually can be) and, as suicides always do, it hurt other people badly.

Since his death, I have come into possession of a 1989 letter that he wrote to a third party. In it, he described his depression at being alone again after ending yet another relationship; he described his memory as "crappy"; and expressed his sense of responsibility for both Koa (who killed herself the following year) and for his octogenarian parents in Christchurch. In the light of everything that happened, it's a very prescient letter.

However, what is done is done. Enough about his death. Let's celebrate his life. And what an amazing life it was, crammed with enough adventure and achievement, not to mention fun, to fill half a dozen more conventional lives. Just researching this made me feel tired. Plus it brought back many memories of sharing some of those adventures with Owen, not only throughout New Zealand but in a number of other countries, on opposite sides of the world.

He Blew Up A Shed

Owen Ronald Wilkes was born in 1940. His father was a corner grocer (a vanished breed now, the victim of supermarkets) in Christchurch's Beckenham and Owen and his younger brother Alan (universally known as Jack) had a pretty idyllic childhood centred on the next door Heathcote River and the nearby Port Hills. He told me that he was the envy of all his schoolfriends as he could go into his old man's shop and help himself to as many icecreams and lollies as he liked. When I was organising his memorial meeting, the sister of his oldest friend insisted that it would have to include an explosion. When I asked why, she said that when Owen got his first Junior Chemistry set, he blew up a shed! Years later, when he was staying with me, I found him rummaging through my pretty sparse wardrobe. He said he was looking for a respectable shirt, because he was in town for the Beckenham Primary School reunion and was off that night to go dancing with his girlfriend from when he was 12 years old. He found something, put on a pair of trousers (now that was a rare sight), jumped on the wobbly old bike that I loaned him and pedalled away down memory lane. When he got back he reckoned that he'd had a great time. Owen remained devoted to "the parents", as he called them, and throughout his adult life usually stayed with them whenever he was back in Christchurch. Ron, his father, was a big strong man well into his late 80s and of a similar disposition to Owen; Tory, his mother, was a classic little old lady who worried a lot when her famous/infamous son got into scrapes such as being sentenced to prison in Sweden. Owen was very close to his parents and when they both died in 1993, within three months of each other, that cut his last tie to Christchurch. He never stayed in his hometown again after that.

He went to Christchurch West High School (now Hagley Community College), which he described as "unmitigated misery". Despite that, a former teacher of his who spoke at his Christchurch memorial meeting told of a brilliant student who was years ahead of the rest of his class, not to mention his teacher (the teacher described himself as having been taught by Owen, who was routinely reading university textbooks while still at school). And he still thought enough of his old alma mater to attend its centenary, in the 1980s, and titillated the media because a fellow attendee was the then Director of the Security Intelligence Service, this coming not long after the time when Owen had laid a complaint about his mail being intercepted by Customs and forwarded to the SIS. Owen's long association with the West Coast began when he got a holiday job working in a Lake Brunner goldmine (they never found any gold) and then roaming the Coast on foot for weeks on end. Just to make it harder his usual means of transport to and from the Coast was by bike.

He went on to the University of Canterbury, principally because he was "too scared to face the world outside the education mill". He was an off and on student for several years, doing a Bachelor of Science, majoring in Geology. He passed five units of the requisite nine but never finished it, and said that he had never been hindered by not having a degree. He spent the summer holidays at the end of his first year cutting tracks in the Abel Tasman National Park and writing a guidebook, commuting by bike between Nelson and his sleeping bag on the beach. One night he got "home" and couldn't find his sleeping bag (kids had hidden it), so he had to sleep out in the sandhills covered by only a few newspapers.

Archaeology, Antarctica

He left university partway through his second year and biked up to Nelson, and then spent several months on what was to become his lifelong love – archaeology. Owen worked on various Canterbury Museum digs in the days when Roger Duff was the Museum's Director and forged an unlikely but enduring friendship with Tony Fomison, who went on to become one of New Zealand's most famous artists. They shared many hairbrained adventures on Maori rock art digs (such as getting stuck together in a North Canterbury cave without any food), and in the catalogue that accompanied Fomison's posthumous exhibition which toured the country after his 1990 death, there is a sketch of Owen and Tony together on a dig. To quote from my obituary of Tony (*Foreign Control Watchdog* 63, April 1990): "I led an expedition to Lewis Pass to look at what I thought was a Maori war canoe; Owen identified it as a colonial period pig trough'. Wilkes and Fomison were the most unlikely pair imaginable, starting with their contrasting physiques, but the friendship was genuine and longlasting. One related incident leaves an extraordinary visual image in my mind – Owen, on a bike, towing Tony on his bike, into a norwester, back into Christchurch after an especially disastrous North Canterbury expedition. The friendship with Owen led the painter into politics. 'I started to decide my sympathies were Left when I saw the poverty in London and Paris. I worked for Owen (in the late 60s, at Governors Bay) and when he wasn't picking tomatoes, he'd be up to his elbows looking for Omega stations. I was impressed...'. In the 1980s, Tony joined CAFCA because he found that *Watchdog* was the best way that he could keep up with news about Owen and he remained a member until his untimely death.

In 1962 Owen went offshore for his first big adventure, spending the summer in Antarctica working as a field assistant for the Bishop Museum of Hawaii. To quote from a 1972 profile that I wrote on Owen for *Canta* (the University of Canterbury student paper): "He did not find Antarctica particularly harsh – in fact, he found it the easiest camping he'd ever had. He lived and worked with the Americans at McMurdo Sound, getting \$US500 per month and duty free booze. He got on very well with the Americans, but became aware of the military nature of the whole Deep Freeze* programme, with Antarctica being used as a gigantic military training ground. Owen, however, was not politicised, and not yet disturbed enough to do anything about it. * *Operation Deep Freeze – the overall name for the US presence in Antarctica. For 50 years the US has had a military base at Christchurch Airport, its only military base at any city in Australasia. Throughout those 50 years, the cover story for that multi-purpose, medium level military transport base is that it exists solely to provide logistic support for peaceful scientific research in Antarctica. The facts to the contrary can be found at ABC's Website otherbases.html*

"From 1963 onwards, he spent 18 months working for the Canterbury Museum as a field archaeologist, spending a total of six months working at the Heaphy River mouth, and returning to (the University of) Canterbury as a part-time student. In 1964 he married Joan Hazlehurst, and they both went on a Museum archaeological expedition to the Cook Islands – he was supposed to have been there for six months, but he was fired after a personal disagreement with the expedition leader (that ended Owen's association with the Museum)....

"He returned to New Zealand, was re-employed by the Bishop Museum, and went on a bug-hunting expedition to the Kermadec Islands... As soon as they landed, they were forced to leave by a volcanic eruption, and spent a week cruising around watching it. They put up nets in the rigging to catch trans-oceanic bugs (making the boat look like a 'transvestite') – once again he discovered the military involvement in scientific research. By checking the Museum records, he discovered that the expedition was part of a US military germ warfare research project. He was still not concerned enough to do anything. He returned to New Zealand and spent the summer working on Stewart Island.

Owen Discovers Politics, In A Rubbish Bin

"In 1965, he worked as a dustman in Christchurch, a job he enjoyed immensely – he recalls occasions such as the one when he dressed up in a white tennis dress found in a rubbish tin (*this was in the days before household rubbish was disposed of in plastic bags*). It was this job that led to him being politicised, an occasion straight out of Gilbert and Sullivan. He pulled a newspaper out of a rubbish tin, and read that during the Wellington visit of the US Ambassador to (the then) South Vietnam, an American Secret Service agent had dropped his gun at the feet of a student protester. Owen began to realise New Zealand's involvement in America's war in Vietnam – he pulled more papers out of rubbish bins, and read them so assiduously that he once fell off the truck. When (National Prime Minister, Sir Keith Holyoake, 1960-72) sent New Zealand troops into Vietnam, later in 1965, Owen decided to get involved in the anti-war movement. He joined the Australasian branch of the former Bertrand Russell* Peace Foundation, and as he was unemployed, made a fulltime job of 'cranking duplicator handles'. The Foundation eventually printed over one million leaflets. It was here that Owen first met Keith Duffield, Christchurch's veteran agitator and future partner in crime" (see my obituary of Keith in *Watchdog*, March 1979. MH.). * *Bertrand Russell, 1872-1970. One of the giants of philosophy, and a pacifist and militant peace activist for many decades. In his last years he was a high profile opponent of the Vietnam War. In New Zealand, the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation was headed by Christchurch's Larry Ross, who is still fighting the good fight 40 years later.*

“He returned to Antarctica in the summer of 1965-66, employed by the Bishop Museum, but this time he was consciously looking for evidence of Operation Deep Freeze being a military operation. In 1966, he and his wife were sent to the United Nations-administered part of New Guinea (*this was a decade before the birth of the independent nation of Papua New Guinea*). They spent six months in the Highlands, communicating by Pidgin English, and living with the tribes they encountered...His job was collecting parasites and he discovered that it was part of a \$US500,000 US Army germ warfare project, a military project using the Bishop Museum as a front. He discovered this by, among other things, having to send his findings to US Army laboratories in Taiwan.

“Whilst in New Guinea, he graduated from printing leaflets to writing his own material. He wrote his first article, for the *New Zealand Monthly Review* (see my obituary of the *Monthly Review*, in *Watchdog* 84, May 1997. MH) on US military activities in Antarctica; he wrote a letter to the editor of the local paper complaining of its slanted coverage of the Vietnam War (the letter was published on the front page); he wrote what he describes as a ‘crank letter’ to Holyoake; and he wrote to the US Embassy in Canberra, about Vietnam. The Embassy wrote back to the expedition director about this – Owen was acting director at the time, he intercepted the letter, and fired off a reply complaining about the Embassy’s invasion of his privacy. The Embassy circumvented Owen, and contacted the expedition director, who ordered Owen to file all his letters with him, as some of them could be ‘embarrassing to his employer’. In September 1966, after six months in New Guinea, he was fired by the Bishop Museum for ‘unsatisfactory performance in the field’ – one wonders how much pressure the US Embassy had to apply. His departure was supervised by the local police, and on the scheduled date of his arrival, an American from Deep Freeze rang his parents to make sure that he had arrived (that was the last time he was employed by the US military).

“Having been fired twice, he decided not to work for a boss again – he bought a house on an acre of land at Governors Bay for himself and his wife. They lived by commercial tomato growing, supplemented by Owen working one day per week in a Sydenham bakery (*this doesn’t quite do justice to the fact that Owen worked a nightshift of 12 or more hours continuously on the bakery ovens, a hot, exhausting and dangerous job, with multiple burns a nightly occupational hazard. This one night’s work gave him enough money for the week. He worked at the former Boons Bakery for more than ten years, quite often biking there and back from as far away as Oxford. In addition to this he worked throughout the day, on other work and peace research. MH*) – in the winters he worked at Temple Basin skifield. In 1967, he returned to university again, as a part-time student. He plunged deeper into the political scene – that year he donated \$US1,000 to the Peace Power and Politics in Asia Conference (money earned from the US Army in New Guinea), to finance the participation of (a high profile foreign speaker) after Robert Muldoon (the Minister of Finance) had refused to allow the release of overseas exchange for that purpose (*those were the days when you needed official permission to purchase foreign currency. MH*). Also that year he became secretary of the Citizens Vietnam Action Committee, a body newly founded by Keith Duffield. Demonstrations weren’t much fun in those days – once, when a US warship was in Lyttelton, wharfies incited schoolkids to throw snowballs at the demonstrators. In May 1967, Operation Deep Freeze imported a US military band to march through Christchurch on the anniversary of the Battle of the Coral Sea (*the WW2 sea and air battle, off New Guinea in 1942, when the Americans defeated the Japanese and stopped their southward advance. To this day, NZ supporters of resuming military ties with the US tell us that we should be grateful for the US for having “saved us at the Battle of the Coral Sea”. MH*). CVAC was refused a permit to demonstrate in Victoria Square, on the grounds that they might damage the flowerbeds! Owen held a one-man protest, following the band down Hereford Street, past a jeering lunch hour crowd. An onlooker grabbed his placard, Owen went berserk, chased him and was in the process of flattening him when the police put them both in a car. On the way to Central, the counter-demonstrator convinced the police that he was mad and they asked Owen if he wanted to lay any charges. No US military band has played in Christchurch since.

Omega Made Him A Household Name

“Owen achieved his breakthrough in June 1968 – working with Phil Howell of the University (of Canterbury) Physics Department, he wrote an article on the proposed US Navy Omega installation at Lake Pearson (near Arthurs Pass). In brief, the Omega system consists of eight transmitters around the world, using Very Low Frequency signals (VLF), which travel through water, as a navigational guide for submarines. Omega would have made New Zealand a nuclear target. His article was rejected by two magazines, then printed in *Canta*, and published by its Editor, Bill Gruar, as a ‘special emergency edition’ – this particular *Canta* eventually ran to 72,000 copies. The article sparked off the massive anti-Omega campaign – the spontaneous demonstration at Harewood (*i.e. the US military base at Christchurch Airport*), the massive march through Christchurch...”

And that campaign achieved unprecedented success in the history of the anti-bases movement in New Zealand, in that it stopped, dead in its tracks, a base from being built. Bases have been and gone, with much protest, in the decades since, but we’ve never replicated that 1960s’ success of stopping one before it started, unfortunately. Owen was instrumental in achieving something absolutely unique in New Zealand and very rare anywhere in the

world. After Omega, Owen Wilkes was a household name, and he stayed one for the next quarter of a century.

From 1968 onwards, Owen was a central figure in the anti-war, anti-bases movements, not only as a researcher of unrivalled ability but also as an activist. He regularly found himself in a leadership and spokesperson role, one with which he wasn't particularly comfortable. I first met him in 1970, when I was a leading light in the Christchurch Progressive Youth Movement (PYM), which became the key organisation in the first generation of anti-bases campaigns. In 1970, Owen came to our flat to attend a meeting to plan the next year's protest against the top secret US Air Force Project Longbank, which was located inside the Royal New Zealand Air Force base at Woodbourne (which is also Blenheim's airport). For each of the first three years of the 1970s, there was an annual national protest at one of the bases, all of which were in the South Island – Woodbourne (1971), the US Air Force observatory atop Mt John in the Mackenzie Country (72) and Harewood (73) – the first two are long gone, Harewood is still with us. Owen was in the thick of all of them, as they grew progressively more militant.

At Mt John, the Police attacked protesters with fists, boots and dogs, with several being bitten and otherwise seriously injured – we retaliated by wrecking the single access road up the mountain, stranding the Americans and the cops. The national backlash against protesters reached hysterical proportions, but equally so was the reaction against the cops (who have never again unleashed dogs onto protesters). In 1973, the Harewood demo was used by the Police as a dry run for that year's scheduled Springboks tour (which was called off by the Kirk Labour government), and was a fullblown assault by both cops and the military. It was the biggest Police operation against a protest until the forcible end of the Bastion Point occupation in 1978. There were mass arrests, the Police used tactics of systematic violence that weren't seen again until the 1981 Springbok Tour protests, Owen was personally bashed in the face and injured by one of the country's most senior policemen, and was later charged and convicted for "encouraging disorder" (ironically the judge who convicted him was Harold Evans, who later became a distinguished peace movement activist himself, achieving international fame with his drive to get the World Court to declare nuclear weapons illegal. He gave Owen a lenient sentence of community service. Years later they met as fellow peace researchers and activists. Harold gave Owen a character reference when he was later on trial in Sweden, on much more serious charges). The best way to refresh your memory about these turbulent years is to view Vanguard Films' seminal 1980s documentary, "Islands Of The Empire" (which is still available for hire from CAFCA for \$10, for one week).

"He is quite happy to divulge how he gets his information on the US military in NZ – he uses libraries, reading all the reports of US Defense Department research, plus trade journals of the US aerospace industry, which contain classified information. He subscribes to US technical publications, and he has a network of correspondents around the world. Then there is his fieldwork – his job as a dustman gave him good practice. He has searched the rubbish tins at Washdyke (*the US headquarters for the Mt John observatory, in an industrial suburb just north of Timaru*), and scoured the matagouri bushes on Mt John for blown-away documents. Occasionally there is a bit of amateur spying – such as 'mushrooming' in the fields around Woodbourne, equipped with a brass telescope".

Owen was never a committee person, never a joiner, but he was tickled pink to be invited to be an honorary member of PYM, particularly as he was a good decade or more older than the rest of us. He proclaimed that membership for years after PYM ceased to exist (Keith Duffield was the only other honorary member of the Christchurch PYM). Owen was involved in all aspects of the protest movement, such as that opposed to sporting ties with apartheid South Africa. On one memorable occasion, in 1971, a South African surf lifesaving team competed at a Christchurch beach. PYM held a protest march but was driven off by a massed attack by a very hostile crowd. Owen was undaunted, slipping on scuba gear and swimming out to move around the marker buoys, thus completely disrupting the event. Officials took after him in a rowboat and tried to get him with a boat hook (!) but he just dived under, popped up somewhere else and taunted them by shouting anti-apartheid slogans. He always had the knack of combining the personal with the political. I have a vivid memory of him turning up at an anti-apartheid picket in those years, taking the other end of the banner I was holding, and opening the conversation with "I've just had a vasectomy" (which was definitely a talking point in those days). And he was quite happy to humour PYM's self-belief that it was a "revolutionary" organisation. He owned a paradisaical block of West Coast native bush, complete with deserted beaches and a wonderful cave for sleeping in – a group of us went there one time for a "revolutionary training camp", to prepare for "urban guerilla warfare". It was a great trip, but the revolution must have started without us.

Apparently, It Was All A Communist Plot

Owen and I were comrades in arms for several decades. So much so that some of our more fevered enemies on the Right saw it all as one big Communist conspiracy. This reached its zenith with the publication of the May 1988 issue of *Plain Talk*, the journal of the Plains Club, which was an influential Christchurch-based Rightwing, pro-US, lobby group during the 1980s' battle to make New Zealand nuclear free. This particular issue devoted no less than

12 pages to its cover story, which was titled: “Rent-A-Demo: New Zealand’s Longest Playing Soap Opera”, and listed the “Leading Characters” as “Horton, Murray” and “Wilkes, Owen”. In great detail, it listed all the joint activities and memberships of Owen and myself (and a “Supporting Cast” of co-conspirators, such as Bill Rosenberg and Bob Leonard) since the 1960s. It even had a diagram to prove that CAFCA and the ABC “grew out of” PYM and so were the latest manifestation of the Communist plot (yes, shock horror revelation – the postal address of CAFCA and ABC is the same Box 2258, Christchurch, that was first used by the PYM). I dug out this newsletter and re-read it for this obituary. I must say it is a peculiar sensation to read your own life (and that of Owen) chronicled in such detail by your enemies, and all presented through a distorting filter. The conclusion: “While Wilkes, (Nicky) Hager, (Maire) Ledbetter (sic), Horton, Rosenberg, Leonard, (Larry) Ross and the many others may not be overtly pro-Soviet, they are socialists. They are steeped in the doctrine of Marxism and have a natural affinity for that cauldron of revolutionary socialism, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Their activities pose a very real threat to the future stability, and indeed the freedom, of the countries of the South Pacific region”. Phew! I think in today’s text message language, the reaction is lol (laughed out loud). As for that “cauldron of revolutionary socialism” (for which I never felt the slightest affinity, and yes, I did go there), the USSR disappeared without a trace three years after this diatribe was published. And as for Owen’s politics, I’ll quote my 1972 *Canta* article again: “He says he is a ‘Leftist’, but stays strictly clear of policies or ideologies”. I can’t remember ever discussing politics with Owen, I think he was allergic to any word ending in “ism” and if he ever voted, I have no idea for whom (a couple of attendees at his Christchurch memorial meeting told me that he voted Labour at least once and “maybe” once for the former Values Party).

“In 1971 his marriage folded, after seven years, and he moved to the Fox River commune on the West Coast (*near Punakaiki, right on the coast*). The commune owns 309 acres, with a permanent population of seven adults and two children, plus visitors who sleep in the woolshed with the goats (*I know, I slept there*)...The house was burnt down last year, so the residents live in improvised dwellings – one couple in a converted railway carriage, another couple in the old Fox River jail, and Owen in an old fowlhouse. The commune boasts a toilet with a panoramic view of the Tasman Sea, and any passing motorists a panoramic view of you...”.

“...Owen is in something of a quandary at present – what he wants to do is live peacefully at Fox River (‘commune living is the thing’); what he feels he ought to be doing is involving himself in the political hurly burly of the cities. It is not an easy dilemma to resolve and he has found no ready solution as yet. He alternates between optimism and complete disenchantment – he feels the need for public education on the subject, yet loathes public speaking. In many respects he is a contradictory man – he is torn between two conflicting desires, that of not wanting to assume Trevor Richards’ role (Trevor was the very high profile leader of Halt All Racist Tours – HART. See *Watchdog* 72, March 1993, for my obituary of HART. MH), and that of not wanting to be a hermit...”. So there, in my profile written 33 years ago, are words that proved very prophetic in the ensuing decades of his life, and are the reasons that I was not surprised when told that he had killed himself. Unresolved contradictions, complete disenchantment – these were phrases that we heard over and over again.

Owen was never a hippie, apart from a liking for smoking dope, but he was definitely a leading figure in the counter-culture (there’s a term that has completely vanished from the vocabulary). In the early 70s he, along with Tim Shadbolt, was one of the editors of the hugely influential *New Zealand Whole Earth Catalogue*. In 1973 he moved back to Canterbury, he and Joan decided to give it another go, and they moved out to Gricklegrass, a communal farm near Oxford, one run by Christchurch’s Chippenham Community (both Chippenham and its Oxford farm are still extant today). I have a vivid memory of one visit to Gricklegrass where Owen demonstrated the no sweat way to muster pigs, after my flying dive method proved spectacularly unsuccessful. One crafty pig got its own back by sneaking up to the back doorstep of the house and scoffing a freshly baked loaf of bread that had been put there to cool down.

From that time onwards, his international reputation as a peace researcher was established. He started to be invited to major conferences in Japan, virtually on annual basis. Over the next couple of decades he acquired godlike status in the Japanese peace movement. In the late 80s he was flown there solely to receive a prize of several thousand \$US, which he used to buy one of the first personal computers that I had ever seen, a very early version of a laptop (which he eventually wore out, as he did with all his computers). And his research methods in Japan were as classically Wilkesish as the ones he used at home – he told of being smuggled out onto the runway of a US Air Force base in Okinawa, hidden in the boot of a car, so that he could get right among the fighters and bombers. His visits to Hiroshima and Nagasaki led to him suggesting that Christchurch adopt the Japanese practice of floating lighted lanterns in memory of the atomic bomb victims – those lanterns have been floated down the Avon, once a year, ever since. One was burning throughout his Christchurch memorial meeting in honour of him.

Long March, Resistance Ride, House Demolished

In 1974 Owen and Joan and I were amongst the contingent of New Zealanders who took part in the grandiosely

titled Long March, which was actually a three week bus trip, across Australia to protest at the huge US Navy nuclear submarine communications base at North West Cape, the westernmost part of Australia. My God, that was an adventure – I wrote several *Canta* articles about it (I was the Editor that year). Despite being a Kiwi, Owen emerged as the only expert on the trip about the base and the whole issue of US bases in Australia, and he reluctantly found himself the spokesperson for the whole travelling circus. That made him a marked man for the uniformed knucklemen that comprise the various Australian police forces and he was one of a number of people arrested at an “illegal” protest in Perth, and charged with “creating a disturbance”. He simply did not turn up in court, so the charge was dropped. This was a hugely influential trip for the NZ delegation, which decided that we would organise our own equivalent. This was the 1975 South Island Resistance Ride and, instead of the usual ad hoc or shortlived committees that had been set up to organise our previous activities, we decided it was time for something permanent. Thus was born CAFGINZ, which later changed its name to CAFCA. Owen was a founder of this organisation and he and Joan and I were amongst those on the two-week long Resistance Ride.

In the mid-70s he made the strongest possible commitment to living on the Coast, when he and Joan built what was, by all accounts (I never saw it) the most amazingly Green, self-sufficient, passive solar house, on his land. But the then Buller County Council was having none of it and declared it to be an illegal building as it didn't have a permit. Those were the days when redneck local politicians waged war to keep out the “hippies”. Basically, this was the last straw for Owen, who was denied the right of the “good Kiwi jokers” that he so exemplified, the right to live in his own home which he had built on his own land. He had an invitation to work as a fulltime peace researcher in Norway, so he left for Scandinavia, in 1976. Not content with kicking him out, the Council sent its staff to demolish his house, after he had left the country, which had to be done by hand and every single board carried a quarter of a mile up a track which they had to bulldoze through native bush to the road. A number of Owen's mates and supporters were arrested for sitting on the roof and trying to stop it happening. The Council then stored the demolished house for years and tried to charge Owen for the storage cost – eventually they became too ashamed and dropped the whole disgraceful matter. His departure for Norway also marked the definitive end of his marriage, but he and Joan remained friends for the rest of his life, and despite having been divorced from him for 30 years, she was deeply upset when I broke the news to her of his suicide (in 1990, she and Owen shared the dreadful grief of the suicide of their only child, Koa).

“Spying” Cases In Norway And Sweden

Owen thrived in Scandinavia, and particularly loved his 18 months in Norway, paying Norwegians the highest accolade of being “good jokers”. He loved the reaction he got from them when he told them that, in New Zealand, we call our turnips swedes (on the other hand, the only advertising needed to draw a crowd of Swedes to “Monty Python's Life Of Brian” was the phrase: “The film they banned in Norway”). He became famous in Norway by learning cross-country (Nordic) skiing and traversing one of the country's most famous glaciers that way, in winter. He loved to swim in freezing cold fiords. Koa, who was only a little kid then, flew unaccompanied from Christchurch to holiday with him and was disappointed that she didn't get a stamp in her passport to show the kids back at school – Owen took her to the local police station to make sure she got one.

All up, he lived six years in Scandinavia, most of it in Sweden, where he worked for the world famous Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). He applied his unique talents to researching in both countries e.g. he identified the entire security police staff by the simple expedient of ringing every block of particular extension numbers. In 1978, I and my then partner (another one of the “Supporting Cast” in the 1988 issue of *Plain Talk*) did our Big OE, part of which included crossing the Soviet Union on the Trans-Siberian Express and staying with Owen in his Stockholm apartment. In this most sophisticated of northern European cities, he still dressed and acted like The Wild Man of Borneo (when I inquired about toilet paper, he told me that he used the phonebook). It was quite a sight to visit the SIPRI office full of oh so proper Swedes and there was Owen working away at his desk, naked except for shorts. We met up with him for a reason, which was to accompany him on a “spy” trip through Norway's northernmost Finnmark province, which was chokka with North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) military bases and lots of Waihopai-like spy bases, the first time I ever saw those distinctive domes. Norway was then one of only two NATO members with a land border with the Soviet Union.

Off we went, the three of us, on this mad adventure, travelling by boat, train, bus and hitchhiking. We slept in a tent wherever we could pitch it. Christine and I went by bus right up to the Soviet border; Owen got the deeply suspicious driver to drop off him beforehand so that he walk up and check out a spybase in the border zone (photography was strictly forbidden near any of these bases, even at Oslo Airport, because it was also an air force base). He told us that if he hadn't rejoined us within a couple of days, it would mean that he had been arrested and to ring the office in Oslo to let them know. Right on time he turned up.

Now, at such close quarters, with everything on his own terms, Owen could be a very difficult person indeed (the

main speaker at his funeral looked meaningfully at his coffin, saying: “And yes, at times you could be a grumpy old shit”). So it proved in the Arctic Circle. I’ll give one example. When we were camped out next to a river he mistakenly cooked the food in the local equivalent of meths, rather than water (they were in identical containers). Despite being hungry, Christine and I gagged and threw the food away. Owen not only ate it but insisted on giving us a lecture on how eating meths was good for you. The whole trip ended, literally, in tears. We ended up arguing about money, and let me assure you that three people squeezed into a pup tent in the wilds of Norway is not a great place to start arguing about money. He seemed oblivious to what was going on, we went our separate ways, and I took several years before deciding to be a personal friend with him again (we continued to work together politically, and as I said, he seemed oblivious to the effects of his actions on others).

We duly delivered the rolls of film back to the International Peace Research Institute in Oslo (PRIO) and they were used in a book co-authored by Owen and Nils Petter Gleditsch, the PRIO Director. The book, “Uncle Sam’s Rabbits” (a pun on the rabbit ear aerials used at some of the listening post spybases) caused such a sensation in Norway that both authors were charged, tried, convicted and fined for offences under the Official Secrets Act.

Much more excitement was to come not long after, in Sweden. Security police swooped on Owen as he was returning from a bike trip around islands between Sweden and Finland, he was held incommunicado for several days amid sensational headlines about a Soviet spy being arrested (this was the sort of stuff that gave his poor old Mum palpitations back in Christchurch). He was eventually released and charged with offences under Sweden’s Official Secrets Act (after his death, NZ media coverage mistakenly said that he was convicted of espionage offences. That means spying for a foreign country. He wasn’t charged with any such offence, let alone convicted). This was at the height of the Cold War, when neutral Sweden was being particularly paranoid about Soviet spies (not helped when a Soviet Whisky class submarine got embarrassingly stuck in Stockholm Harbour, the famous “Whisky On The Rocks” episode). Owen’s trial was very high profile, attracting international media attention. At first he was convicted and sentenced to six months prison. He never served a day of that, because he appealed, and the sentence was suspended but he was fined heavily and ordered expelled from Sweden for ten years (he used to joke that he should have appealed for it to be increased to 20 years).

Two decades later he and May visited Scandinavia, where the media was still interested in this most famous New Zealand “spy”. His definition of a holiday was to contact the Swedish security police and be allowed to read his case file from the early 1980s (more than 1,000 pages long, in Swedish). He told that me that the file showed that they were absolutely convinced that he was a Soviet spy and there was circumstantial evidence of which he had been unaware – for instance, he had been monitoring a whole lot of radio frequencies broadcasting from the Soviet Union, and in the case of one, he had apparently stumbled onto the means of communication between the KGB (former Soviet spy agency) and their agent in Sweden. He had no idea but this reinforced the Swedish spooks’ idea that he was a Russian spy, rather than an insatiably curious peace researcher.

If he hadn’t been involuntarily compelled to leave Sweden, I think that he would have happily stayed there for many years. He was at peace with himself, happily settled with a German woman, Andrea, and her young daughter. His expulsion forced the end of that relationship, as she didn’t want to, or couldn’t, follow him back to New Zealand. But, in 1982, after six years of high drama in Scandinavia, he returned home in a blaze of publicity and CAFCINZ (as it then was) sent him around the country on an extremely successful speaking tour. Christchurch academic, Professor Bill Willmott, nominated him for the Nobel Peace Prize (funnily enough, he didn’t win it. It was never likely that the Scandinavians would ever award their homegrown prize to a peace activist who had been convicted for “spying” on them). For better or worse Owen was home and he never lived overseas again. He was now an international legend, not merely world famous in New Zealand.

Wellington And The World

At first he went back to life on the Coast, living on the Wangapeka Valley farm, near Karamea, that he’d been involved with for years. But the die was cast and the pull of the world of peace research and activism was too strong, and that meant living in cities. Plus the nasty secret world with which he’d recently tangled, on the other side of the Earth, wouldn’t leave him alone. In 1983, while he was living on the Coast, he was tipped off that Customs was having his mail intercepted and forwarded to the NZ Security Intelligence Service. The SIS has a long history of cockups (and we’ve documented many of them, over the decades), so this became a major national story. Owen complained and, using the then new Official Information Act, applied to see his SIS file (the request was refused).

In fairly short order, he moved to Wellington and that was his home until his final move to Hamilton (and Kawhia) in the 1990s. He became the peace researcher in residence at the newly created Peace Movement Aotearoa (PMA, which is still extant). The 1980s were the decade when his profile was highest in New Zealand. He was in the thick of the huge campaign that led to the country becoming nuclear free and out of the Australia New Zealand United

States (ANZUS) Treaty, which remains the status quo today. He travelled the world as an international expert and sought after speaker. Controversy followed him wherever he went. When he arrived in Canada for a national speaking tour, he was arrested and held pending deportation because of his convictions in Norway and Sweden. There was a national protest campaign to get him released and he made the tour. When he came to fly home he was denied transit access via the US because of his "criminal" record and had to make a more expensive return flight from Vancouver. He promptly filed a civil court case suing President Reagan's Secretary of State, George Shultz, for the extra cost of that fare (he didn't get it). Despite that setback he visited the US more than once, and actually bluffed his way right into a nuclear submarine base in Hawaii, the most militarised state. He continued to travel on an annual basis to the huge conferences hosted by the Japanese peace movement, where his shorts and sandals stood out in a sea of suits and ties (the only time I've ever seen Owen in one of those was in his wedding photo).

He visited the Philippines, and personally researched the huge US bases there, which were the subject of an enormous protest campaign that eventually saw them chucked out in the early 1990s. There is a great photo, the only one of him at work as a "spy" for peace, using his trusty binoculars to peer into the former Subic Bay Navy Base from a nearby hill. Sometimes he didn't even have to go to the country in question to have a huge impact. I was one of the New Zealand contingent (along with a much larger Australian delegation) that spent a month in the Philippines in 1989 as part of that campaign against the US bases. Owen didn't go but wrote one of the keynote speeches, which was delivered on his behalf by our delegation leader, Maire Leadbeater (another one of the "Supporting Cast" from that 1988 issue of *Plain Talk*). In it, Owen revealed the existence of a previously unknown US military nuclear warfighting facility in the Philippines. This revelation created a sensation. In 1989 he seriously considered a request to spend up to a year living in the Philippines, working as a researcher for the anti-bases movement there – but nothing came of it. The fulsome and generous tribute we received after his death from Roland Simbulan, formerly head of the Nuclear Free Philippines Coalition and now Vice Chancellor of the University of the Philippines, credited Owen with playing a major role in ending nearly 500 years of foreign colonialism in the Philippines, specifically in having the US bases evicted (which happened in 1992).

Australian Adventures: Liberated Trophy & A Jandal Held Hostage

In 1988 Owen and I had another Australian adventure, making our second trip to the US Navy communications base at North West Cape (it has now been "Australianised"). This wasn't as arduous as the 1974 epic, only involving bus travel within Western Australia, rather than crossing the entire country and back again. Mind you, WA is Australia's biggest state and the bus was an old school one, so it was more uncomfortable than the original trip (which used proper, brand new, tour buses). Not only were we the only Kiwis, we were the only two who had also been on the 1974 Long March, so once again, the cops, the media and the protest organisers all looked to Owen to be the resident expert, the group leader and spokesperson. And once again, we ended up camping in the extremely hostile Exmouth, the support town for the base (and a leading candidate for the keenly contested title of Arsehole of Australia).

The all-time classic Owen Wilkes story happened there. While I was being a good boy, asleep in our tent, he went to the pub (the tellingly named Potshot Inn, whose logo was a nuclear mushroom cloud). Behind the bar was a mock shield engraved: "1974. Police 1, Protesters Nil" and ditto for 1988. This was too much for Owen's Aussie sheila (his holiday romance on that trip). She vaulted the bar, snatched the thing, hitched up her tiedyed skirt and ran for it. When the braying pissheads closed in on her, she chucked it to Owen who hoofed it into the bush, and passed it on to somebody else. The drunken rednecks were in uproar and rushed to form a cavalcade to come and burn down our camp. But Exmouth was swarming with cops, headed by the State's Commissioner of Police. They stopped the "yobs" (their word) in their tracks by threatening to breath test them. But we had to promise to return the shield by the next day at the latest. It was duly done but Owen held out for an exchange with one of his jandals, which had got lost in the mad scramble the night before. Just as we were about to board our buses to leave (to the intense relief of all sides), up drove a cop car with siren blaring, the loudspeaker called out "Mr Wilkes", and out stepped the Commissioner clutching the missing jandal. The cop was a good sort and agreed to put on his Commissioner's hat to pose for a photo solemnly handing over the jandal.

Owen's research was omnivorous, it really was. For most of the six years he was in Scandinavia, we were lumbered with his files, the ones that he didn't want over there. Eventually he asked us to index them and they covered some extraordinary topics. My favourite was titled "Mystery Balls", about mysterious metallic objects that landed all over Mid Canterbury in the 70s, covered in Cyrillic script, and were carefully locked up in the Ashburton Police Station. Owen's conclusion was that they came from a Soviet satellite that had broken up on re-entering the Earth's atmosphere. And he was never greedy with what he knew, he always shared it. I'll give one personal example. When I made my second OE trip, all over Europe in 1984, he told me that if I checked out a particular university library in Denmark, I would find fascinating stuff about recent US/NZ relations because that library collected the

papers of all US Presidents. I duly broke my holiday to go there and came home with material so newsworthy about how the Johnson Administration had (unsuccessfully) tried to pressure the Holyoake government into committing more NZ troops to the Vietnam War, in the 1960s, that the *Press* stuck the 20 year old story on its front page and on its billboard.

On the other hand, he expected everyone to be prepared to take the same risks that he revelled in taking. When he heard that, in 1978, my then partner and I would be coming to stay with him in Stockholm via the Trans-Siberian Express, he seriously suggested that as the railway line ran quite close to the Soviet Union's Omega installation, that we might like to get him a photo of it. I had only two words for him and one of those was "off". Which was just as well, because I saw fellow passengers on the train get into strife just for taking photos of Red Army soldiers at railway stations.

Harewood: An Arrest & Deep Freeze's Deep Throat

Throughout the 80s he was a leading light of the anti-bases movement, both as a researcher and activist. Harewood was a hardy perennial. In 1988, Owen and I shared another experience – we were arrested together. The newborn ABC had decided to focus attention on some sovereignty issues at the US base, by the simple method of several people getting arrested, and us then forcing that issue to be heard in court (that was the theory, anyway). Those of us who had decided to be arrested duly entered the base (brimming with hyped up cops who had suppressed a major prison riot and fire the day before). Owen was among the crowd that stayed outside, indeed he was rather the worse for a hangover (a large bottle of gin was his constant travelling companion). But suddenly there he was, holding the other end of my banner – he had rolled under the base fence. What's more, he refused to let go of the banner or go with the cops when they told us we were all under arrest. So, one testosterone overdosed cop started full force kicking his knuckles to try and break his grip, which only made Owen more pigheaded. It made compelling TV news footage that night. It was a weekend, so we were bailed after a few hours to appear later in the week. But that didn't suit Owen, he had things to do and didn't want to be mucking around with inconvenient court appearances. So he refused bail and opted to stay locked up for 24 hours so that the cops had to produce him at the next day's court hearing (which was more convenient for him), where he duly got bail. He told me that he'd found some old *Readers' Digests* in the cells and had had a wonderful uninterrupted time reading their Rightwing conspiracy theories about how the KGB was behind the 1981 assassination attempt on Pope John Paul II. In the meantime I was left to deal with his then partner, who was frantic about how come he'd ended up in custody, as that hadn't been part of their South Island holiday plans. In the end, we fought the good fight in court, were convicted and got a small fine each.

In 1989, he scored a real coup. A most unlikely senior figure inside the base personally handed to Owen, in a meeting straight out of a spy novel, five rubbish bags full of fascinating US military files. And they were originals, not copies. Apparently the source chose Owen as the recipient because he hated my guts. It's a pity that Owen died first because I would have given him first refusal to write the obituary of Deep Freeze's Deep Throat. The contents of the rubbish bags were so newsworthy that the *Listener* devoted an entire cover story to them. They were so extensive that Owen planned to write a book based on them. But, alas, this was the manuscript that he threatened to throw into Wellington Harbour when he plunged into despair because he had not personally succeeded in removing the US military from NZ. We rescued the manuscript from him but eventually returned it and that book will never get written now.

The Inspiration For *Peace Researcher* & Exposing The Spybases

There were of course other bases, new and old. Mount John closed; he was heavily involved in the campaign to expose the true nuclear warfighting role of the US Naval Observatory atop Black Birch Ridge, in Marlborough (it was there for a decade, from the mid 80s to mid 90s). And then there were the "New Zealand" spybases. In the early 80s, he and his then partner, Christine Dann, discovered the one at Tangimoana. At the end of that decade, Owen and I made a memorable trip there. He was driving minus a licence (he never bothered getting one of those until the last few years of his life); he was wearing a red cap inscribed "KGB Agent", which he'd bought at a World Peace Council jumble sale. Dressed thus we drove up the private road to the spybase and, to the intense interest of the spies, hopped the fence to inspect the various aerial configurations all the more closely. Owen was a world famous peace researcher, so he attracted acolytes from everywhere. That day, our companion was a young Swedish woman who was only too aware that Owen had been convicted of "spying" in her country. Hence she was terrified and refused to get out of the car while Owen and I wandered around the spybase (with no adverse consequences, I might add). Two decades later ABC is still campaigning to have Tangimoana closed (we were last there at Easter 2005).

And, of course, he was a leading figure in the late 80s' campaign that protested against the Waihopai spybase, from

conception to commissioning. It was that campaign that led to the birth of the ABC, in 1987, and he was a founder and leader. He was a fixture for the first few years of Waihopai protests. I mentioned earlier that there were a couple of times when his name on a billboard right round the South Island was sufficient to explain what the story was about. "Wilkes: We'll Stop Waihopai" was one such. We didn't, of course, but not from lack of trying. And we're still going – the next Waihopai protest is in January 2006 (the flyer is enclosed with this issue). Nor did he confine himself to American bases. It was Owen who embarrassed the nuclear free Labour government by exposing a French military installation, which had been quietly set up on the Chatham Islands (it was ordered removed).

Owen was the inspiration for the birth of *Peace Researcher*. In the early 1980s he ran a Christchurch seminar on peace research. This was attended by Keith Burgess, who was so inspired that he became our founding editor (to be followed by Bob Leonard, Dennis Small, Warren Thomson and myself. Bob has been involved since the outset, as editor or co-editor with all of the others).

People who only know of Owen from reputation associate him with the anti-bases and broader peace movement. But, in the 1980s, he was into everything. For example, in 1989, CAFCA organised a major protest against the meeting, in Christchurch, of the nasty international Rightwing think tank, the Mont Pelerin Society. It was Owen who alerted us to it; it was Owen who impeccably researched the record of every delegate, all of which we gratefully published in *Watchdog*. He took part in the whole range of protests that occurred in Wellington in those years. He was proudest of getting himself arrested during one Bastille Day protest outside the French Embassy. A la Spiderman, he climbed up the outside of the building and harangued the diplomatic set through the window. The only way the cops could arrest him was by dragging him inside via the window and marching him out through the cocktail party, which he proceeded to berate even more forcefully. He thought that the fine he got was well worth the fun of all that. He played a leading role in exposing several of the US Central Intelligence Agency destabilisation schemes aimed at the 1984-90 Labour government, plots such as the "Maori Loans Affair" and the alleged Soviet submarine spotted in the Cook Islands.

He was a regular writer for the highly influential *Monthly Review* from the 1960s onwards. But in the late 80s there was basically a coup, which replaced the Christchurch people who had published it for many decades. Owen was offered the job of being Wellington-based co-editor, but he refused it in protest at the new committee's treatment of the old. He never wrote for it again, and it ceased publication in 1996. For several years he wrote and published the meticulously cross-referenced and indexed *Wellington Pacific Report*. And he became virtually a surrogate son to veteran activist and muckraker, Toby Truell. When Toby became too crook to continue producing his highly idiosyncratic *Wellington Confidential*, Owen took over the job (see Owen's obituary of Toby in *Watchdog* 73, August 1993. It was the last thing that Owen ever wrote for *Watchdog*. In it, he said: "Toby could be a niggly old bugger". They were perfectly suited). Of course, his major contribution in those years was his co-editing of *Peacelink* with May Bass, a veteran peace activist, who produced it from Hamilton. Owen commuted there to work on it and spent more and more time there, eventually living there permanently with May. *Peacelink* was an excellent publication, reaching the highest standards that we always came to expect of Owen. Its demise, in the early 1990s, when the two of them were basically burnt out, was a serious blow to the peace movement and it's never been replaced by an equivalent publication. Its loss is still keenly felt.

The late 1980s and early 90s were probably the years when we saw the most of Owen. He was having a lot to do with his daughter, Koa, who was alternating between Wellington and Christchurch, and his octogenarian parents needed more attention. I was living alone then (apart from a multitude of motheaten cats) and he stayed with me so often that I left a key out in the letterbox for him. Owen being Owen he liked to travel via the last ferry from Wellington, then come down on an overnight mail bus, arriving at some ungodly hour. One morning I got up and there was no sign of Owen, so I took the key in. When I got home from work, there he was, sitting on the front doorstep with another one of his acolytes, a Pom this time. They'd got to Picton, only to discover that the bus service no longer existed. To the horror of the young peace studies student, all Owen could suggest they do was sleep in an open paddock. To cap things off, it started to rain, so they had to shelter under a bridge. All the cows followed them there too, and the Pom told me that he'd never before spent a night being licked by cows (oh well, whatever turns you on. Actually, I think Owen was partial to a good nocturnal licking by something with four legs. He once told me that one of the more cunning of my cats had sneaked into his sleeping bag and spent the night contentedly licking his armpits).

During this time, Owen was an enthusiastic member of The Bearded Patriarchs, as the ABC committee was known, regularly attending meetings, which were held in my lounge. He would borrow my wobbly old bike (which only just wobbled its last while I was writing this obituary) and pedal out to Harewood, spending entire days with his trusty binoculars, watching the comings and goings at the US base. Nor was it all business. He was so appalled at the rundown appearance of my house that he offered to paint the exterior woodwork. He was doing his usual meticulous job (he loved painting, and painted the house of more than one friend) until disaster struck and he fell off the ladder,

quite badly hurting himself. I came home from work to find him sitting on the back doorstep, paint splattered and in shock. I had the unique experience of cleaning paint out of his hair and beard whilst he lay in the bath (he was in bad shape for quite a while, and somebody else had to finish the job). During one particularly boisterous social evening, he demonstrated his remarkable party trick of fire breathing, burning off some of my old paintwork in the process (and I've got the photo, to prove it). Actually, he was very expressive at both ends. I've seen a whole couch of people lean sideways as Owen prepared to let fly with one of his stupendous farts during an ABC committee meeting. But he always declared that they didn't stink, which he attributed to having eaten a regular diet of dough during his many years working in the now-defunct Boons Bakery. And I had the job of getting him to fill in his census forms during one stay, because I was legally responsible for him. He bridled at complying with any form of bureaucracy (such as the requirement to have a licence to drive a car) but I prevailed.

But the 1990s were also the decade when he was hit hardest by a number of things. As I've already mentioned, Koa killed herself, in 1990, aged 21. This absolutely devastated both him and Joan. And I'm not sure that he ever fully recovered from it. In 1993, both his parents died within three months of each other. That ended all his personal ties to his former hometown and was the last year that he ever stayed with us (by this time, I was married to Becky). I never saw him again in Christchurch.

Leaving The Peace Movement

The 1990s marked the end of his involvement with the peace movement. National had swept back into power in 1990 and announced a review of the nuclear free policy, using the nuclear propulsion issue as the thin end of the wedge (unsuccessfully as it turned out, as the nuclear free policy has become sacrosanct). Owen horrified his colleagues by publicly saying that nuclear propelled US ships (not to be confused with nuclear armed ships) posed no dangers to New Zealand (in the course of researching this, I came across a fullpage letter that he wrote to *Peacelink* in 1993 – after he had quit its editorship – fervently stating this). There are some that have never forgiven him for this. But Owen never did have any political nous and was always adamant about telling the truth as he saw it. In many respects, he was too honest for his own good. When he involuntarily came home from Sweden, in 1982, he held a well-attended press conference in Christchurch. The reporters basically ignored everything he said but headlined his throwaway line that he now thought that some of his conclusions about the 1960s' aborted Omega project had been incorrect. That was the other occasion that I can remember when his name on a *Press* billboard was sufficient to explain the story: "Wilkes. I Was Wrong About Omega".

In what may well have been his last media interview, Owen told the *Christchurch Star* (17/12/04: "Where are they now? Peace campaigner Owen Wilkes", Stacey Doornenbal) that he retired from the peace movement in 1992. "I got out of the peace movement for all sorts of reasons but there was no longer any passion. As far as I was concerned I was just doing what I was good at. I didn't feel driven anymore. It was better to let younger people take over. It was good for me to get out and good for the peace movement too. It needed newer people to come through and take over leadership roles". That's only part of the story. The rest of it was that Owen was burnt out and disillusioned, and had become embroiled in various personality disputes (the peace movement can be decidedly unpeaceful at times). Owen could be a very prickly character (I speak from experience) and had a lifelong history of disputes, in both his personal and public lives. In his funeral eulogy, Neville Ritchie, who described himself as "Owen's nominal boss" as a Waikato Department of Conservation (DOC) archaeologist for the final years of his life, said that Owen arrived in his Hamilton office in 1995 and pronounced: "All the objectives of the peace movement have been met", so he wanted to return to his first love of archaeology. The ABC, and the wider peace movement, would beg to differ with Owen about the fulfillment of these objectives but he can be forgiven because, of what has been achieved, he played a very leading role.

Writer Of Crank Letters

Owen was gone from the peace movement and the progressive movement in general, but he was determined not to be forgotten. There is no easy way to say this, but in the late 1990s his behaviour towards his old mates in Christchurch veered from the odd to the downright offensive. He wrote a letter to the ABC addressed to the "Flat Earth Society". In it, he urged that we give up the campaign on bases such as Waihopai and Harewood, which he now declared to be innocuous; that we should stop publishing *Peace Researcher*, have a holiday and get a life. Basically, he was renouncing, in writing, his lifetime's work on this subject. He wrote to the Philippines Solidarity Network of Aotearoa and said that the main problems in the Philippines were Catholicism and over-population, describing concerns about US bases as a "diversion". And CAFCA was not spared – in classic Owen style, he wrote us a blistering seven pager (with 20 footnotes), ripping the shit out of us (and more specifically, the judges of the first, 1997, Roger Award for the Worst Transnational Corporation Operating in Aotearoa/New Zealand). As an archaeologist, he took grave umbrage at the judges' findings regarding one of that year's prizewinners, a US mining transnational, which operated a highly polluting tailings dam in the Coromandel. His letter was punctuated with

outbursts such as “What utter crap!”. Here is an extract: “I suspect that you (i.e the 4 judges, rather than you, dear Murray) have been led astray by the Coromandel Corgi (*his derogatory name for the former Coromandel Watchdog group. MH*). I have spent a bit of time in the Coromandel and have met some of the people who have Coromandel Corgi bumper stickers on their shiny new Rangerovers. They are mostly selfish rich bastards and rich bastards’ selfish children (many of them ‘foreign persons’ in the eyes of the Overseas Investment Commission) who have made their wealth destroying the environment someplace else. Now they want to enjoy their wealth and they don’t want the tranquillity and charm in the vicinity of their multimillion dollar baches disturbed by mines paying wages to working class Kiwis. Old mine workings are picturesque, operational mine workings offend their tender sensibilities...” (letter to Murray Horton, 2/8/98). In places it tipped over into a nasty racist rant, referring to Maori as “Ngati Whinga...I am sure the rights of tangata whenua to eat each other will be found to be guaranteed under the ‘Treaty’ of Waitangi...”. He was fond of proclaiming that CAFCA was the most unsuccessful pressure group in New Zealand, which made him sound like my late Dear Old Dad, whose favourite cliché was the one about flogging dead horses.

So, what we were to make of these raves? It goes without saying that we didn’t agree with Owen. I’m afraid that we still haven’t got a life. We knew from personal observation that he was a depressive and we attributed these outpourings to being the products of him being affected by that condition. But we also knew, as he was so accurately described in the main eulogy at his funeral, that he could be “a grumpy old shit at times”. It was part of his unique charm. And in the same time period as he was firing these broadsides at us, he was also writing friendly personal letters to the likes of ABC’s Bob Leonard, discussing subjects like US military aircraft that he’d spotted whilst in transit at Christchurch Airport. I only saw Owen once in the last 11 years of his life. I was in Hamilton on my most recent national CAFCA speaking tour, in 2002. Quite unexpectedly, he and May came to hear me (this after no personal contact for something like eight years). He listened attentively, thanked me for rekindling his interest in the subject, invited me to their house the next morning and it was just like old times between very old friends and colleagues. His raving letters were never mentioned, and we sat for a long time discussing all manner of things. I was delighted to be once again in the presence of such an incredibly focused inquiring mind, a man of such energy. And he couldn’t help himself – he whipped out a photo he’d recently taken in Auckland Harbour of a Chinese ship bristling with domes and antennae, describing it as “a floating Waihopai”. He drove me to the bus terminal (in the car in which he later killed himself) and personally loaded my luggage so he could spend longer talking to me. We shook hands on very warm terms. It was the last time that I ever saw him.

And, rest assured, Owen never lost his interest in matters of war and peace. In that final interview, with the *Christchurch Star* (17/12/04), he said “the world was rapidly moving the wrong way and he was a bit disappointed that people were not getting stuck into the Iraq issue the way they did over Vietnam. ‘I think in some ways the world is in a much worse situation than it was in the 1960s and I think Iraq will be as much of a disaster for the United States as Vietnam was’. Wilkes said that the sheer ability of one superpower to do whatever it liked to whoever it wanted really scared him”. As usual, his analysis was spot on. In fact, despite being retired from peace research, he kept his hand in. Historical stuff only, nothing current, mind. In the past few years he was in the national media breaking stories ranging from the dumping at sea of NZ stocks of mustard gas after WW11 to the one about the NZ scientist who tried to develop a tsunami bomb in WW11 to sweep Japanese forces off Pacific atolls.

Back To His First Love: Archaeology

But Owen’s final decade and more belonged to his first love, archaeology. I’m not qualified to personally comment on it. I never knew him as an archaeologist and I know nothing about the subject. The best thing is to quote from the eulogy at Owen’s funeral from Neville Ritchie, DOC’s Waikato archaeologist. When Owen offered to do an archaeological survey, in 1995, Ritchie sent him off to survey the “tiger country” south of Kawhia to Awakino. “Within a few weeks Owen had organised his partner May and friend (Reverend) Alan Leadley (*who presided over his funeral. MH*) and they began a ten day trek down the Coast recording some 200 Maori sites. Finding more sites than they could handle, Owen repeated the exercise alone a few months later, going from south to north this time and added another 250 sites to the record. About a year later DOC Waikato received funding to establish a halftime DOC archaeologist position to work with me. Owen applied for it and gained the job based on a 40 year track record of research, fieldwork and the production of some 400 papers and articles, which is mindboggling in its depth and diversity.

“Among his major achievements while working with DOC were the production of definitive histories of Cuvier Island and the Pureora Forest. These span from the earliest Maori settlement, through European exploration and activities through to the modern conservation period. He also completed an inventory of the 750 odd archaeological sites on lands administered by the Conservancy; assisted with the restoration of the radar buildings, light station and tramway on Cuvier Island; worked on the restoration of the Christmas Creek and Dancing Camp kauri dams; and the Kakepuku and Te Toto Gorge historic walk projects.

“But the job that has had most impact nationally was the last one he tackled before retiring – a major study, in conjunction with the Forest Research Institute, of the efficiency or otherwise of different timber preservatives used by DOC on historic timber structures nationwide. This project will be continued for the next few years but Owen’s research findings and recommendations have already led to major improvements in the way we will do timber preservation work in future...

“...I recall one time when he had to document a historic steam engine and log hauler down at Pureora. He admitted to me that didn’t know much about steam engines. A couple of days later he came into the office and said ‘I’m an expert on steam engines. Ask me any question you like about them’. I tried and couldn’t fault him. He had spent the previous two days in the library absorbing everything there was to know about steam engines...

“...Although he made many great contributions to DOC’s endeavours he more than once expressed reservations to me about working with a Government department and having to do some of the tasks that he just didn’t want to do or thought were low priority. It eventually led to his decision to retire three years ago. But he came back and did much of his former DOC work (the stuff he enjoyed) for free...”.

When I last saw him, in 2002, he reckoned he was going to chuck in DOC, because he was sick of what he called “the Treaty industry” and specifically sick of Tainui, the main Waikato iwi. But this was obviously not reflected in his work. A Maori speaker delivered an absolutely glowing eulogy at his funeral, saying that Owen’s work and enthusiasm had made him more aware of his own past and who he was. Although he had retired from public life, Owen still hit the national media as an archaeologist. I remember seeing him on TV in the 90s disproving and debunking claims that the so-called “Kaimanawa Wall” was a manmade feature, which proved the existence of pre-Maori human settlement. And Owen loved archaeology with a passion. It was no coincidence that his suicide came two days after he finally had to finish working for DOC, even in a voluntary capacity. Combined with his health worries, it was one of the things that tipped the balance for him.

His Last Years: A Good Life

I had no personal knowledge of his life in Hamilton and Kawhia (indeed, I’ve never been to Kawhia). But judging from the number of shellshocked Kawhia locals who spoke at his funeral, and the wonderful display of photos that May put together for his funeral and subsequent memorial meetings around the country, it seems that he had a great life there. He loved his bach, he was a magnificent gardener (as an aficionado of kumara, I was most impressed by a photo of him with a giant specimen that he’d lovingly grown); they had a boat and he sailed extensively, both on Kawhia Harbour and further afield; he was loved, admired and respected by the new circle of friends that he effortlessly made there. And despite the ravages of the arthritis that so pissed him off, he lived life to the full. Owen was a passionate Kiwi, loved the outdoors, the mountain and bush. He got out into it at every opportunity, not just in the course of his work. He tramped solo, with May and with larger groups. They went to Fiordland and the Southern Alps. And this transplanted Mainlander became a great explorer of what the North Island had to offer. He fell in love with the Central Volcanic Plateau, precisely because it is so different to anywhere in the South Island. He tested his body to the limit. On one epic trip, in the 90s, they traversed the North Island from its easternmost to its westernmost points, which involved crossing the huge Waiouru Army Base (our military didn’t seem too bothered that this notorious “spy” was wandering through its real estate).

Owen was not some boorish backwoodsman. He also passionately loved European high culture. Wagner was his favourite composer (a favourite piece was played at his funeral); he was a devotee of opera and ballet (he told me that he “liked some pictures with my music”). On a trip to Sydney, he made a special trip to the Opera House to see an opera, just to experience the ambience. In their eulogies, his Kawhia friends told of “compulsory opera appreciation courses”. These were not passions that I shared with him (my view of opera is summed up by Groucho Marx in the classic “A Night At The Opera”. Arriving at the opera house, he asks the driver if the opera is finished yet. Told no, he instructs him to drive him around the block again). On the other hand, I never mentioned my passion for rugby with Owen, because he made it plain that he had no interest in sport (although we did once play badminton, at a holiday home next to a Swedish lake).

Throughout their 12 years as a couple (plus they worked together on *Peacelink* prior to that) May was the rock in his life. She was absolutely bewildered and distressed by his suicide, Owen was the love of her life. And he would seem to have had it all. A common theme of the speakers at his funeral was that the silly bugger didn’t know when he was well off. He was loved by large numbers of people, and in the one on one context, he was a central figure in the lives of quite a number of women in the decades that I knew him (indeed if I’d known that leather shorts were the secret to being a babe magnet, I would have gone the whole hog and togged up in lederhosen). But he made his choice, of death over life, and he did it on his terms and at a time of his own choosing (and in the place, Kawhia,

which he loved the most). He had his reasons, and nobody else was responsible for his death. A common description of him by family, friends and colleagues, who spoke at ABC/CAFCA's July 4 memorial meeting for him in Christchurch, was of his total inability to compromise. He was as fiercely individualistic and independent in death as he had been throughout his life.

We All Owe Him A Heartfelt Vote Of Gratitude

And what an amazing life it was! What achievements and adventures (some of which we shared, both here and in a number of other countries). He packed more into any one of his six decades than most people can hope to do in a lifetime. He had such incredible energy that he was basically a force of Nature. That's what makes his death so hard to take and so difficult to believe.

I make no apology for the great length of this obituary (which completely dwarfs any others that I've previously written). This only scratches the surface, he deserves a biography, and I hope that one gets written. He was a founder of both CAFCA and ABC, he was an absolutely indispensable figure in the peace movement and the broader progressive movement for decades. Globally, his word was gospel in his numerous fields of expertise. In this country he was a household name and an iconic figure. The words "giant" and "legend" are sadly over used but they both apply very accurately to him. The people of New Zealand and of the wider world owe him a heartfelt vote of gratitude. I'll conclude by simply saying, Owen, on behalf of all of us, thank you.

Christchurch Memorial Meeting for Owen

by Murray Horton

Peace Researcher 31 – October 2005

On the very deliberately chosen date of July 4th, ABC and the Campaign Against Foreign Control of Aotearoa (CAFCA) co-hosted a memorial meeting for Owen (there had already been memorial meetings for him in Wellington and Auckland, following on from his Hamilton funeral). From out of sadness came a wonderful celebration of a unique life. Well over 100 people attended (quite extraordinary when you consider that he hadn't lived in Christchurch since the 1970s, or in the South Island since the early 80s). They came from all walks of his life – friends and family, the peace movement, the West Coast, archaeology, a Kiwi who'd known him in Sweden, even one of his high school teachers. It brought together people whom we hadn't seen, and who hadn't seen each other, for decades, in some cases.

Bob Leonard was the MC; I was the keynote speaker. Kate Dewes read out the heart rending speech given by his partner, May Bass, at the funeral. Other speakers included his brother Jack, his ex-wife Joan (who read an article about Owen, written by their late daughter Koa when she was a kid), a former partner, and CAFGINZ founders Pete Lusk and John Christie (who, along with Owen and I, took part in both the 1974 Long March across Australia and the 1975 South Island Resistance Ride, both events which were seminal in the birth of CAFGINZ). Vanguard Films specially produced a clip of Owen footage taken from their 1980s' documentary "Islands Of The Empire". Ann Currie put together a fantastic display of photos and clippings, some of which had been entrusted to us by May. Other people, including his family, brought other items on the night to add to the display. Kate Dewes and Mia Tay lit a Japanese lantern of the sort that are floated down the Avon every Hiroshima Day in honour of the fact that the idea came from Owen, following one of his visits to Japan. The whole evening was deeply moving, and achieved our goal of giving our old friend and colleague a really fitting Christchurch sendoff. We were able to turn the bleak negativity of suicide into a truly positive occasion.



Owen – No Ordinary Man

by May Bass

Peace Researcher 31 – October 2005

Owen - You were no ordinary man.
An environmentalist in the truest sense.
You took no more from this world than you needed to live.
A simple bach. No posh furniture.
No pretence.

A beautiful garden.
Hollyhocks, lilies and sunflowers.
One woman (I learned recently) knew you as the sunflower man!
Those were the times I loved you most.
Sitting on the verandah watching you dig, plant and harvest your garden.

I'll remember your love and appreciation of the beauty around us.
Your delight in seeing the simplest things.
The monarch butterfly hatching, the stick insect stalking,
Birds on the wire singing and the coloured skies of sunset.

You were never swept along with the tide of consumerism.
A \$400 Honda City got you from place to place and that was enough for you.
I recall you diligently darning an old sock (with multiple holes)
"Why buy more when I can mend these", you would say!

I loved you for your political awareness,
Your hard work, sense of justice, meticulousness
And the courage you contributed to make this a better world.

You were so humble you never realised just how many people admired you,
Appreciated you and how much they loved you.

Life was fun - working, sailing, walking. Good friends.
Then suddenly, sad news.
No new hip for you, to once again roam your beloved hills,
Instead a failing heart.
And so you left - leaving us to mourn our great loss.
But so, too, you left the memories of things shared -
Treasured memories of billowing sails, mountain ranges, blue skies
And the beautiful garden in Kawhia.
Thank you.

May was Owen's partner for the last 12 years of his life, in Hamilton and Kawhia. They were also co-editors of Peacelink for many years. May was a leading peace activist in her own right, including the early protests against the Waihopai spybase. Ed.



No-One Could Tell Stories Like My Father

by Koa Wilkes

Peace Researcher 31 – October 2005

As far as I could tell there wasn't anywhere he hadn't been or anything he hadn't done. He'd worked on the rubbish trucks, for the museum, as a baker, an archaeologist, a scuba diver, a peace researcher and a builder. He'd explored underground caves, broken down in the middle of a desert, felt the earth tremble and seen the sky ablaze staying on a volcanic island when it blew. He'd been tailed by the secret service and arrested in Japan, survived a plane crash and been sledding in Antarctica, shot butterflies and stuffed bats in New Guinea.

And me? I'd done nothing. Absolutely nothing. It was so unfair; how could I ever do so many interesting things. Where was the adventure in my life? It was years before I realised that he probably hadn't done all that much by the age of six either.

Written as a school exercise at age 15. Submitted to the Correspondence School magazine. Koa committed suicide in 1990, aged 21. This was read out to Owen's Christchurch memorial meeting by her mother, Joan Hazlehurst. Ed.



Years Ahead of His Time

by Peter Lusk

Peace Researcher 31 – October 2005

One of the great strengths of Owen's research was showing up the US military by publishing damning information from their own sources. For example, the US Embassy in NZ would make a media statement saying the Mt John observatory was primarily for studying Southern Hemisphere stars. Owen would discover a US military document that stated its primary purpose was fixing the position of stars with great accuracy so they could be used to target missiles. He'd send a photocopy of the document off to the media, along with his press release. The military establishment and rightwing politicians must've hated Owen for this.

We have to remember that the late 60's, 70's and early 80's was a period when NZ was firmly bonded to the US - we were America's South Pacific mercenaries and in exchange got improved access to the US market for beef. Writers of *Letters to the Editor* would commonly use the expression "right-thinking New Zealander", meaning those who backed the Western alliance without question. Every New Zealander was supposed to be like this - it was such a regimented period and those who broke from the regimentation copped it.

Within the activist movement Owen could work very cooperatively at one time, but then do his own thing without telling anyone at another. So he wasn't the easiest person to work with. But most of us realised how important he was to the movement both nationally and globally and supported him where we could. I did my best to keep a small farm going at Karamea - Owen was a partner in this co-op and I knew he wanted somewhere to come back to when he returned from Norway. As it turned out, it finally fell to pieces about the time he got back and he tried setting up a honey business with his brother Jack who also lived in Karamea. This didn't last either and the shed he built sits forlornly in the paddock to this day.

Owen featured in a short TV documentary a few years ago. It was around the time of the invasion of Iraq and Saddam's big crimes were supposed weapons of mass destruction and nerve gas. Owen dug through his old files to find NZ had a nerve gas programme during WWII. The doco showed Owen and some veterans discussing the programme at the site the weapons had been stored.

Two things I think are especially important about Owen's work and the era. Firstly, the era. It was our generation that was finally able to mount a big enough campaign to change attitudes in NZ from pro-war to anti-war. Well into the 1960's most people saw war as inevitable and NZ always sent troops to Britain and America's wars. It wasn't too different from the early years of WWII when my Christchurch-born mother said most of her friends went to war for the adventure - the phrase they used was "you've got to be in the show". My dad was in the war, saw the worse of it, with retreats in Greece and Crete, then captured in North Africa, prisoner of war in Italy, then transferred to Germany and was in Dresden when it was fire-bombed by the Allies. He was a quiet person who almost never spoke of the war. However the angriest I ever saw him was when I expressed opposition to America's war in Vietnam. He wasn't pro-war but he told me I had no right to have an opinion on the war because I hadn't experienced war! The point I'm making is that his generation were unable to campaign against war in a mass way, but ours was.

Secondly, Owens work spanned the anti-war, anti-nuclear, anti-global corporate power and environmental movements. Those of us who took part in the so-called hippie movement were accused of being drop-outs, dope smokers, etc just as anti-war activists got labelled peaceniks or more colourfully "nattering nabobs of negativity". But there was nothing negative about the "alternative lifestylers". People like Owen were very serious about building a world where energy use, for example, would be reduced with the use of novel house design (passive solar), rooftop solar water heaters and power-generating solar panels. Equally important was that people would have a peaceful and non-exploitive relationship with one another, on the "commune", nationally and internationally.

It's no surprise then that I saw my first wind generator, my first solar panel and first composting toilet on the hippie communes. All these things are commonplace today, NZ has huge windfarms, heaps of people have solar panels and compost toilets are readily accepted by the Buller District Council where once they'd have viewed them as a Communist Conspiracy.

Pete Lusk, of Westport, was a founder of the Campaign Against Foreign Control in New Zealand (now CAFCA). Along with Owen, he took part in the 1974 Long March across Australia and the 1975 South Island Resistance Ride, two seminal events in the creation of both CAFCA and ABC. Owen and Pete were partners in a Karamea farm in the 1970s and 80s. Ed.



A Peace Researcher Without Peer

by Kate Dewes

Peace Researcher 31 – October 2005

Murray's comprehensive obituary of Owen covers many of the things I would have liked to write about Owen so I won't repeat them. Owen was a valued friend and consummate peace research and activist colleague for nearly 30 years. Our first contact was while we were studying Peace Studies at Bradford University in the Britain in 1977 and he was at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. Later we worked together on a range of peace issues. His research was invaluable to me as a member of many local and national peace groups, and especially as a member of the Public Advisory Committee on Disarmament and Arms Control from 1988-90. He always responded promptly to requests for information with long detailed letters and he always turned up as a speaker for meetings when asked. Even when we disagreed in later years about the safety of nuclear-powered warships, we maintained a friendship while respecting our differences.

One of my lasting and most poignant memories of Owen was in 1991, after the death of his beloved Koa. On the way home from the airport we stood together in the cold at Koa's grave. The new green grass shoots were just beginning to show through. With few words shared, he stoically returned to our home, faced my three lively teenage daughters and went out to address a public meeting about the Gulf War.

It is an honour to have this opportunity to share some background and anecdotes about Owen - especially in relation to the Christchurch peace movement - and to acknowledge the amazing range of research topics Owen wrote about for nearly a decade in *Peacelink*. One of his lasting legacies to Christchurch, is the annual lantern ceremony on the Avon River. We recently held Peace Week and the 30th consecutive lantern ceremony to mark the 60th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. On August 5th the Quaker meeting house was a hive of activity as young and old gathered to repair and make new lanterns. In the early 1970s Owen returned to Christchurch after attending a conference in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. He had taken part in the Japanese lantern ceremony when the souls of the dead are remembered by floating lanterns down the cities' rivers. He was determined to do something similar here. According to Mia Tay, he called together representatives of the Christian Pacifist Society, Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and Quakers to organise the lantern making with what 'any self-respecting Kiwi would have in their shed' - a couple of pieces of wood, some wire, nails and paper.

This year two young women members of the Youth Peace Network - including my middle daughter Annie - attended the lantern ceremonies in Hiroshima with the Mayors of Christchurch and Waitakere, and Wellington's Deputy Mayor. Other local young people, inspired by his writing and research abilities, have, among other things, prepared a special issue of *Canta* (the newspaper of the University of Canterbury Students' Association) on nuclear weapons; organised an exhibition of photos on the effects of depleted uranium weapons; and screened "The War Game" at the University of Canterbury on Nagasaki Day.

Without Owen The World Court Project Might Never Have Happened

In March 1979, John Boanas, Mia Tay, myself and a few others formed the Christchurch Peace Collective and invited Owen to a meeting in June during a visit home. He warned us that the group could be infiltrated, and suggested we should check out any potential members with him. That week a retired stipendiary magistrate* called Harold Evans phoned asking to become a member. Due to our recent shift to Christchurch, we did not know him and were a little suspicious. With a wry smile, Owen recalled how Harold had been the presiding magistrate when he was up for sentencing for protests over US bases. Harold had sympathy for the cause and had taken quite a risk by only sentencing him to community service. Owen thought he would make a great member of the peace group - and, as history shows, he did! * *Magistrates have since been re-titled as judges. Ed.*

In the course of researching this, I have enjoyed delving into my *Peacelink* collection to see what Owen did on his return from Sweden in 1982. During September and October that year he toured the country, sponsored by the NZ University Students Association. Beginning at the University of Canterbury, he travelled to Dunedin, Blenheim, Wellington, Levin, Palmerston North, Wanganui, Auckland, Whangarei, Hamilton, Nelson and Tauranga where he spoke at the National Peace Workshops. He encouraged the movement to "devote our energies to long term goals and work to change attitudes and establish a more peaceful outlook. He emphasised the need for research as well as education. He said that New Zealanders are a favoured people with not too many pressing problems, with good access to the media and politicians and with resources at our disposal, so we have a special responsibility to take a peace initiative in the world".

In March 1983 he spoke at a Dunedin Conference on New Zealand Defence Policy Options with the top party defence spokespeople, National's Minister of Defence, Doug Kidd, Mick Connelly (Labour), Commander Dick Ryan

(Social Credit) and the Secretary of Defence, Dennis McLean. Owen stayed over for a second day and “saw a two-pronged defence policy emerging from the day’s discussion, one in which the first line of defence would be armed neutrality, but in the event of successful occupation, giving way to non-violent resistance techniques” (*Peacelink*, Issue 9, May 1983). At the National Peace Workshops in October 1983 at Riverside Community, Owen “took a ramble through the nuclear minefields of the Pacific. He talked about the deployment of missiles in the Pacific and the nuclear capability of the (British Navy’s) *Invincible* task force ...and ... on the build-up of ‘conventional’ and counter-insurgency forces in the region” (Issue 15).

In mid-1984 Owen began working in Wellington as a part-time peace researcher for Peace Movement New Zealand. In his first *Peacelink* article in April 1984 there is a three page expose of Tangimoana - “our most important foreign base”. In it, he challenges the peace organisations to take a serious look at it and demand that the Government comes clean with what is really going on there. As always, he asked the tough questions: “Who controls the station, who pays for it, what happens to the data it generates, do we get any benefit from it? What risks do we incur as a result? Do we want to help with the targeting of Tomahawk cruise missiles? Do we want to be giving the US intelligence data which it can use in fighting wars we do not approve of? Do we want to provide intelligence data which helps give the US the confidence that it can start, fight and win a nuclear war?”.

The front cover of Issue 22 features Owen addressing the Beyond ANZUS Conference in Wellington Town Hall in June 1984. This conference featured representatives of the Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific movement including leading Maori activists making strong links between colonialism and militarism at home and in the region. The next issue is devoted to “Defence ... What is it? Why do we need it? What are the alternatives?”. Owen’s contribution discusses “the price of non-alignment”, analysing the costs of adopting a more independent foreign policy by comparing the Gross Domestic Product and military expenditures of countries such as Switzerland, Sweden, Finland, Australia, Ireland, Albania, Papua New Guinea, Israel and Singapore with New Zealand. In the next edition (No 24), he documents the countries which have in some way rejected US military basing and activities requests and which have not been unduly penalised as a result. He cites Egypt, France, Indonesia, Japan, Panama, Saudi Arabia, Spain and Thailand. He notes that “within the (former) Warsaw Pact, Rumania seems to enjoy more freedom and independence than some people think we in NZ can exercise within the ANZUS relationship”.

In March 1985 Owen reported in *Peacelink* that “it seemed too good to be true” that David Lange had been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize the very morning that he was due to go before the Labour caucus to get their approval for a ban on whatever nuclear-capable ship it was that the US wanted to send into a New Zealand port. When the *Sunday News* “concocted a cock-and-bull front page story succinctly headlined ‘Jack-up!’”, Owen phoned his contacts in Sweden and Norway to find out what really happened. The Swedish Peace and Arbitration Society, which had nominated Lange, had no idea that things were at a crucial stage in New Zealand, and had innocently sent it in that day because that was when it was due. However, Owen uncovered a real Nobel Prize jack-up scandal. “The evening after Mr Lange’s nomination was announced, Oslo International Airport had to stay open after its normal closing time to receive a charter jet from the US bearing the nomination papers for none other than (US President) Ronald Reagan”.

By 1986, the Peace Movement Aotearoa office, based in Wellington, had four part-time paid workers – Owen Wilkes, Kevin Hackwell, Nicky Hager and Jacquelyn Reeves. Besides research, the staff dealt with media, helped coordinate and network between the 400 peace groups around the country; organised national tours – e.g. the Peter Garrett/Topp Twins tour, and the Kanagawa peace workers from Japan - and hosted many international visitors. During 1986 there was the first public input into a Defence Review, and the drafting of the New Zealand Nuclear Free Legislation. Many sets of slides, scripts and resource material were produced for groups to help them in encouraging submissions on the Defence Review and the legislation, and “cottage evenings” were held around the country.

In 1985-6 Owen had done some very important research exposing New Zealand’s voting patterns on disarmament issues within the United Nations. This showed that, despite our anti-nuclear policy, we were still voting with the US against resolutions calling for a nuclear arms freeze; a cessation of the nuclear arms race; a ban on the use of threat of use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear states; declarations by nuclear powers that they would not be the first to use nuclear weapons; a reversal of the nuclear arms race; and a convention to ban the use of nuclear weapons. He listed actions which peace groups could take to show the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that our voting was under close scrutiny from the public, and that our international stand must match our domestic nuclear-free policy (No’s 36 and 43). In July 1990 he did another article on UN voting asking if NZ has a “two-faced nuclear stance”. Issue 102 was devoted to “Disarmament, the UN and New Zealand” with another extremely helpful expose of our voting patterns on disarmament following a change in government. In the next, and last, issue to be produced by the Hamilton Peacelink Collective, Owen produced VUNDABAR - a “Voting UN Data Base for Activist Researchers”. This was an extremely useful visual aid for me, and other World Court Project activists, showing how

many countries voted consistently for disarmament – and how the “Big Three” – the US, UK and France - consistently blocked consensus in the UN (No 103).

For Nearly A Decade, Owen Wrote Extensively For *Peacelink*

He was quietly radicalising and educating the peace movement and wider public - here and overseas. The wide range of subjects included: the activities of New Zealand's Ready Reaction force in the Takaka Valley (No 51); the US involvement in the Fiji Coup (No 53); arms smuggling (No 55); the anti- bases campaigns around the country (No 56); Waihopai spybase and “Starwars, Trident Missiles and Black Birch” (No 60); US bases in Australia and the need to develop stronger relationships with the Australian peace movement (No 67); whether Black Birch violated the Nuclear-Free Act (No 70); the Rarotonga Treaty, and the Partial Test Ban Treaty amendment conference (No 87); a covert French installation called “Doris” on the Chatham Islands (No 80); an update on the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks between (Soviet leader) Gorbachev and (the first US President) Bush (No 84); the Gulf War; whether chemical weapons from Johnston Atoll were used in the Persian Gulf; the US neither confirm nor deny policy conflicting with the Non Proliferation Treaty; and the US nuclear power plant based on New Zealand's territory in Antarctica (No 85); a survey of peace movement opinion on six years of a Labour government, and “Kiwi disease strikes Sweden” (No 86), the activities of the US Embassy in Wellington, and a review of an international military scientific conference in Auckland (No 88); “Krazy KGB Kapers in the Kiwi Kapital” and a “Directory of KGB agents in NZ” (No 90); South Africa and the Bomb; the Defence White Paper, and the attempts by the National government to resurrect its relationship with the US (No 92); Biological Warfare in the Pacific (No 93); a review of the new Public Advisory Committee on Disarmament; US War plans for Canada (No 94); An Arms Industry special highlighting “the Global Arms Trade” and “NZ Defence Manufacturers” (No 95); The future of the Philippines if the US is forced out of Subic Bay Naval Base and Clark Air Force Base (No 96); a chronological list of US warship visits to NZ from WW II to the present; the debate over whether visits by nuclear-powered warships were safe, including accidents to nuclear-capable vessels (No 97); and the thriving NZ “Defence Industry” (100/101).

His Legacy As A Peace Researcher And Activist Is Legendary

For over 30 years he was in great demand all over the world as a keynote speaker on many of these issues. When Owen died, we searched a database of videos and taped interviews which we have been collating as part of the Christchurch Peace City archive project. We found ten audio tapes of Owen speaking at conferences and radio interviews about chemical weapons, Social Credit policies, nuclear ship risks and ANZUS. There is also a video on Waihopai, and a two hour film produced by Tony Currie with Dave Worth interviewing Owen on his trip as the “expert” on US bases in Australia during 1984. These were placed in the University of Canterbury's Macmillan Brown Library, as part of the Larry Ross collection, in September 2005.

Murray is right to call for a full biography of Owen's remarkable achievements. As already documented, there is a mass of peace material published in *Peacelink*, and international journals and peace newsletters. Many of the public libraries in our main centres hold nearly complete sets of *Peacelink* and some have his other publications. These include “Nuclear Warfare in the Pacific and nuclear warships in New Zealand”, Wellington, Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, 1976; the 1973 publication “Protest: demonstrations against the American military presence in New Zealand: Omega 1968, Woodbourne 1970, Mount John 1972, Harewood/Weedons 1973”; his Report on the US Air Force base at Woodbourne (1971?); “The First New Zealand Whole Earth Catalogue” (1972); “Omega: Nuclear Warfare Subsystem or International Navigational Aid?”, Farm Road Branch of the NZ Labour Party, 1969; “Chasing gravity's rainbow: Kwajalein and US ballistic missile testing” by Owen Wilkes, Megan Van Frank and Peter Hayes, Australian National University, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, 1991; and “Loran-C and Omega: a study of the military importance of radio navigation aids” by Owen Wilkes and Nils Petter Gleditsch in collaboration with Ingvar Botnen, Oxford University Press, 1987. There is also a chapter by Owen on “Militarisation of the Pacific” in David Robie's book *Tu Galala: Social Change in the Pacific*, Pluto Press, 1992; and another chapter entitled “New Zealand and the atom bomb” in *Kia Kaha: New Zealand in the Second World War* by John Crawford, Oxford University Press, 2002. The Christchurch City Library has “Papers concerning American military presence in New Zealand and related issues” compiled by Owen and the Canterbury Museum has confirmed that they hold material relating to his archaeological work for them in the Ethnology Department.

Although this list is not comprehensive, it gives readers some idea of the range of material published by Owen. I hope our young people in particular will study Owen's work and be inspired to follow his example of research and activism at every level. I for one will continue to show the film “Islands of the Empire” to our University of Canterbury Peace Studies students, and talk about Owen's role in our peace history. Thank you Owen for your years of devotion to the peace movement, and for your gifts of selflessness and commitment to a cause which you helped to become part of the Aotearoa/New Zealand's identity.

Kate Dewes, of Christchurch, is a peace activist who is renowned throughout New Zealand and around the world. One of her numerous projects involves archiving the records and history of the NZ peace movement. Ed.

Not Like Anyone I Have Ever Known

by Nils Petter Gleditsch

Peace Researcher 31 – October 2005

Owen Wilkes died May 11, aged 65 years. Today he is, for the most part, forgotten by the Norwegian public, despite having had a greater impact on discussions of security policy in this country than many are aware of. For several years from the end of the seventies this New Zealand peace activist and researcher figured prominently in the headlines of Norwegian newspapers.

He studied various natural sciences, but was too impatient to take exams or get an academic degree. He was a leading peace activist in several countries, but was too much of a scientist to accept either approximations or oversimplified slogans. He had many jobs, but no career in the usual sense. In his youth he was a research assistant on various research projects. One of these, an American project in the Antarctic, gave rise to Owen's interest in the military potential of research on a continent that was supposed to be demilitarised.

Back home in New Zealand he became interested in bringing to light research projects and electronic infrastructure that could support USA's global military apparatus. He was an eager participant in demonstrations against nuclear weapons, American bases and the Vietnam War, but his specialty was unearthing information through his reading of American military journals and Congressional hearings. In this way he could assemble information like pieces in a puzzle while historians normally had to wait for years for such information to be declassified.

To his surprise, Owen found that there was an interest in his knowledge and methodology on the other side of the globe. In the mid-70s he discovered that the same Baker-Nunn camera that the US Air Force had installed at Harestua outside Oslo in 1960 had later found its way to New Zealand (*at Mt John. Ed.*). In both cases it was used for space surveillance, providing data that was a part of the US's space defence and plans for space warfare – decades before the debate on President Reagan's Star Wars programme of the 1980s. At the same time it became evident that both Norway and New Zealand, though a world apart, had another feature in common - American plans to deploy the military navigation system, Omega.

Not Everyone In The Peace Movement Was Pleased

Owen Wilkes came to Norway in 1976 and worked at the International Peace Research Institute (PRIO) in Oslo for almost two years before he moved to Sweden where he was connected to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). In these years he wrote about space surveillance, military navigation and intelligence. It soon became evident that another American military navigation system, Loran-C, had greater strategic importance than Omega and that deployment of the first transmitters had occurred under an even greater blanket of secrecy. Parliament members, Finn Gustavsen and Berge Furre, were more prominent in the public spotlight when they read aloud from the secret parts of an investigative report about the Loran-C and Omega affair at a public meeting held in 1977. But critics of the Norwegian support for the Loran-C system would not have as well equipped with information if Owen had not been active behind the scenes. While working on military navigation Owen came to the conclusion that even though the Omega system had originally been intended to play a role as a navigation aid for ballistic missile submarines, it had eventually been rejected in this role because it proved to be too inaccurate. He had no trouble admitting that he had been partially wrong in his original criticism of Omega and he said so publicly. Not everyone in the peace movement was pleased.

Shortly after he moved to Sweden a bomb exploded when Owen together with this writer released a report on US-financed electronic intelligence stations in Norway, later published as a book entitled "Uncle Sam's Rabbits" (Pax, 1981). The Norwegian judiciary system pronounced that Owen's many bits of information could be put together to form a picture that jeopardised national security. Thus the authors of this unreadable bestseller were awarded fines and suspended jail sentences. Incidentally, this was the last Norwegian case of this kind that ended in a conviction. A similar case against the peace movement journal *Ikkevold* followed in its wake, but after four rounds in the judicial system it ended in complete acquittal. Since then no researcher, journalist or peace activist has been taken to court in Norway for having violated the "jigsaw puzzle principle". You might say that here, as in several other areas, Owen Wilkes lost the battle, but won the war. In 1981 he again became involved in a conflict over secrecy in Sweden after a bicycle tour on the island of Gotland. To be on the safe side, the Swedish authorities deported him for a period of ten years and he went home.

Back in New Zealand he found himself in the middle of a much larger political debate when the Labour Party government, after strong pressure from the peace movement, decided to ban US naval vessels from bringing nuclear weapons into New Zealand's harbours. The stated policy of the USA was "neither to confirm nor to deny" that any ship was carrying nuclear weapons, and a serious crisis developed in the relationship between the US and

a previously loyal ally. Once again, Owen supplied the peace movement with detailed technical and political information that few others were capable of hunting up.

Skiing In Shorts In Minus 20 Degrees

But peace activism was not his whole life. As a practical environmentalist he built an energy-efficient house (on the West Coast). The authorities tore it down since he had not obtained a building permit. At one point he was a beekeeper, and right up until the end of his life he grew his own vegetables. When the most heroic period of the New Zealand peace movement was over, he worked for many years for the Department of Conservation in Waikato. He surveyed and restored old Maori forts, early industrial buildings, and even a once-secret radar station from World War II. His ideal working schedule was to spend half his time outdoors with binoculars and a sketchbook, and the other half in a dusty archive. And I shall never forget his happiness when, late one evening in 1998 on the Dusky Track in Fiordland, he spotted for the first time a kiwi in its natural habitat. He partook of the joys of nature in Norway as well. An Easter trip to Hardangervidda with three friends led to his first Norwegian newspaper notice when he was spotted skiing in shorts in minus 20 degrees. On the way home he decided to take a detour to check out a military antenna located on Gaustadtoppen. He set off from Rjukan, but was surprised by bad weather and had to spend the night in the mountains. He broke all the mountain safety rules – as he did in other aspects of life.

Owen Wilkes was not like anyone I have ever known. He could be a demanding friend and comrade-in-arms, but the highest demands were the ones he made upon himself. Not least of all when it came to his principled stand on attempts to prolong life artificially. He agreed reluctantly to replace a hip three years ago. But when the doctors wanted to fix his heart before replacing the second hip, he refused. Nevertheless, his sudden death is the greatest trial for his many friends in Norway and Sweden and on the other side of the world.

Nils Petter Gleditsch is a research professor at the International Peace Research Institute, Oslo (PRIO) and editor of Journal of Peace Research. As mentioned, he was co-defendant with Owen in their early 1980s Official Secrets Act trial. This is a translation of his obituary of Owen which was published in the Norwegian daily paper, Klassekampen.
Ed



He Helped End 470 Years of Foreign Military Bases in The Philippines

by Roland Simbulan

Peace Researcher 31 – October 2005

It is with a heavy heart that I share this Internet tribute for a friend, co-peacemaker and an outstanding peace researcher and advocate, Owen Wilkes, who passed away last May, 2005.

I first met and got to know Owen in 1981 at an international peace conference in Tokyo, Japan. We were both speakers in that large conference of almost 800 participants, and Owen at that time was a senior researcher at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). Owen immediately impressed me as SIPRI's highly knowledgeable technical expert on foreign military bases and facilities, specifically as a specialist on communications and signals intelligence (SIGINT). He could look at photographs of any kind of logistics/communications facilities and interpret what they were used for. He knew by just looking at the set-up of foreign military bases and facilities, or the configuration of naval and air force vessels and determine whether they were nuclear-armed and nuclear-capable. I was glad he was on our side, a veritable walking think tank for the international peace movement.

“This Is Me”

And yet, he was so modest, was so full of humility and had a good sense of humour. His sense of humour was in itself so sharp, as one time when he remarked to me that he was unsure of the shooting effectiveness of the elite US Rapid Deployment Force because he was so sure that they too, as human beings, would be suffering from jet lag after an 8-10 hour trip with different time zones! And when I once asked him why he always wore shorts and sandals even in the very formal international peace conferences in Japan, he just smiled and said: "this is me".

Owen's research and work - both published and unpublished - on foreign military bases and facilities especially when he was with SIPRI, was of vital importance to the peace advocates and organisers of the peace movement all over the world and in that sense had an important role in ending the Cold War. In the Philippines, Owen's work inspired me and others to do more serious peace research IN SUPPORT of peace advocacy and organising.

I saw Owen so vigorously full of zest and fulfillment during the Beyond ANZUS Conference in New Zealand in 1984, on the eve of the Labour Party's election victory that eventually made New Zealand nuclear-free. Owen had just then come back from Europe to finally do full-time peace work in his beloved country. It was during my lecture tour in both Australia and New Zealand where I likewise addressed the Beyond ANZUS Conference at Wellington that I invited Owen to visit the Philippines. It was in late 1980s that Owen finally did visit the Philippines where he visited the vast and then still active US military bases and facilities, especially at Subic Naval Base and at Clark Air Base. Owen's technical expertise helped us interpret the bases' role in the context of the American global nuclear infrastructure. I had my disagreements with him though, especially on the particular nature and placement of the facilities, their counter-insurgency role, but our discussions were very productive, constructive as well as instructive. The technical information about the US bases and facilities that Owen shared with us especially in the light of the nuclear weapons-free 1987 Philippine Constitution, helped in no small way in the Philippine Senate's decision to reject the proposed bases treaty of renewal, thus ending 470 years of foreign military bases in the Philippines.

Thank you Owen, as we join others in celebrating your life, your outstanding intellectual advocacy, and what you have given so much to the international peace movement.

Roland Simbulan is Vice Chancellor of, and a Professor at, the University of the Philippines. He was the National Chairperson of the Nuclear Free-Philippines Coalition. This online tribute was published on the NoUSBases international e-mail list. Ed.

An Old Mate Remembers: Norway & New Zealand

by Ross Brown

Peace Researcher 31 – October 2005

...One classic letter from him tells of his bike-madness trip around the fiords and mountains, where he snoozed, sodden and hungry, in barns and caves and ditches, and once found himself on a quayside in a coastal hamlet around 5 a.m. when a freighter nudged in, the lone and bedraggled Owen handling a hawser flung from the vessel and securing the craft. "Fulfilling a lifelong dream", he wrote. ...Up here, in 1980, and today, at 1000 metres, we saw the woollen jersey with trailing strands and short-panted biking figure of Owen before us! He was commencing his "bloody marvellous trip" of a fortnight around the fiords and mountains...

...Owen swam a long way out into the Sunnylvn Fiord when I brought him to the west coast in 1980: we drank homebrew from a friend the daylight-night long, my family slept, Owen read maps and biked off early next day! Before we woke. My wife Reidun, youngest son Stephan, and self stood by the fiord two days ago and saw the green water where Owen had swum so many years back. Long, smooth, confident backstrokes, then a dive somewhere - would this human porpoise arise? - and afterwards his swagger to the grassy shore. "Yeah, it may have been a bit cold!".

...Memories pour in! In NZ in February 1991, with son Stephan, we left a bus on the Desert Road and met Owen and May, who guided us into the crater area of Tongariro at 1800 m, where Owen horrified us by peering closely into gaping blowholes ready to fire out a jet-stream of gas or boiling water. Stayed in two huts, one at Keketahi, not much compared with Norwegian cabins, with no annex inside the door, so that when you entered you brought in the slicing rain along with sodden gear, and had no place to dry anything, no kindling anywhere to fuel the range. Recall Owen eating at a table stupidly positioned under a clothes drying-rack hung from the ceiling, and watched apprehensively as drops of water from a German's woollen sock hit his piece of bread. He ate on, anyway. During the long night, about 20 people rolling around on hard-cushioned bunks, he let loose a tremendous fart, causing sniggers. May explained, "He sure is an expert there!" Going downhill next day, on a trail crammed in by bush and with native birds, we met several ascending pink-panting Pommies, who queried, "What's the hut like up there?" Owen informed them, "Highly luxurious!".

...Owen's Kawhia abode, where I can still recall the dead mouse spinning around in the pan when you pulled the chain in his outdoor dunny! He met son Rolf and self at Hamilton Railway station about 5 a.m. in 1998, we were on the night-express from Wellington, and drove us insanely at around 120 kph in a Rent-a-Wreck car in low mist to Kawhia - we were horrified, shattered, by this performance. Later, driving around Kawhia and over a judder-bar at high speed something fell from beneath the vehicle but we never stopped to make an inspection! Owen said something like "Mmmm". From then on, I persuaded him to let me drive to a nephew's place outside Auckland!...

Ross Brown is an old Kiwi mate of Owen's, who has spent most of his life in Norway. These are extracts from various e-mails he sent to Murray Horton after Owen's death. Ed.



Another Death In The *Peace Researcher* Family

Peace Researcher has been produced every year since 1983. And for at least 15 of those years it was printed by independent Christchurch printer, Ray Butterfield, working out of his home print shop. The unmistakable front cover was Ray's creation as a layout artist as well as printer (we still have a supply of Ray's covers, and when those run out, *PR's* look will have to change. Only Ray could do those covers). Ray died very suddenly on July 13, 2005, at the age of 57. He was engaged in one of his favourite activities, running. As a marathoner Ray was extremely fit, but his heart problems were well known. He had had multiple bypass surgery in 2001. The surgery slowed him down briefly, but he was soon back into his running and tramping and fishing, with Lake Sumner always a favourite spot. In addition to running his printing business, Ray somehow managed a factory day job, with energy left over to restore old cars in his garage.

Former *PR* editor Dennis Small was Ray's close friend and fishing and tramping mate for over 30 years. It was Dennis who suggested Ray as a printer sympathetic to our cause. His profit margins in the printing of *PR* were near zero, and he sometimes even forgot to send an invoice. We had to be persistent to assure that he got his payments. As Dennis emphasised, and we agree completely, Ray was a wonderful man, gentle and good-natured. He was very popular and made many friends over the years. The chapel at his funeral was overflowing.

Ray is survived by his wife Fay and two grown children, Sheldon and Tamara. He died only a few days after his 57th birthday on July 4th, which, just coincidentally, was the day of the Christchurch memorial for Owen Wilkes.

