

Peace prize for Wanganui man

"Arthur Reddish again!" you cry, reading yet another letter from him in Letters to the Editor in your Herald.

Arthur keeps on plugging away, usually on matters relating to the nuclear arms issue.

And while he may seem to be stuck in a groove, the issue involved must be the most

critical the world has ever faced.

With Hiroshima and Nagasaki behind us, and the knowledge that even one MX missile is equal to 270 Hiroshima bombs, everyone except the deaf-dumb-blind boy Tommy would be hard-pressed not to feel the writing's on the wall.

So Arthur Reddish plugs away, not only through the local press and local peace groups, but nationally, contributing to the debate in such publications as the New Zealand Monthly Review and the NZ International Review, and in submissions to groups such as the Parliamentary Select Committee on Disarmament.

And now his efforts have been recognised, by what is claimed to be the world's biggest peace organisation — the World Peace Council, based in Helsinki.

The Peace Council, with members in over 137 countries including America, Britain and Russia, struck bronze medallions to commemorate its 30th anniversary. Arthur Reddish has been presented with one for his "lifelong dedication to the cause of peace".

Arthur Reddish knows what war is all about. In fact, he admits he used to enjoy it.

As a 19-year-old he joined up with the Sherwood Rangers, a tank regiment, which he says saw more action than most others.

He was wounded four times, the worst when fighting near Tripoli, and he was badly burned when his tank caught fire.

That was when he began to see war in a less romantic light.

Later he took part in the D-Day invasion, in a

swimming tank, which "swam" a few yards then sank, half a mile from the beach.

"So in the end we invaded the Continent in a little cockle boat that floated past, with one steel helmet and a revolver between five of us."

He still bears the scars from his wounds — and with them a desire to find a better way than armed conflict, especially of the nuclear kind, to settle disputes.

formed Wanganui Peace Forum. Last year he was actively involved with the unsuccessful move to declare Wanganui a Nuclear Free Zone, an aim which is still high on his list of priorities.

Arthur first came to Wanganui in 1949, after emigrating from England to work as a bricklayer. Then for a few years he moved around New Zealand and Australia, before finally settling in Castlecliff. He lives the bachelor's life in a cosy little house a few minutes walk (for him and any neighbourhood dogs who care to join him) from the beach.

For four years he worked on the wharf, then, "for the best ten years of my life," he was school cleaner at Aranui.

"I loved the kids. For several years I coached them at soccer. There were some good little players, and I said then, one day New Zealand will have a good soccer team."

He retired six years ago. Not long after he began nursing his mother, in her nineties, and registered blind. He describes it as being full-time work, a matter of catching some rest when he could.

"I've had some hard jobs, but that was the hardest of the lot."

He nursed his mother for three years, until he could no longer cope. No sooner was she taken into care than he had a heart attack from the strain.

These days he is free to pursue his work for the peace movement — in between battling against a yet-to-be-isolated allergy, which besides making him feel decidedly miserable, keeps him busy with treatment for "about three hours a day". In fact, it means that about all he can cope with at the moment is research, and the occasional letter.

Research is Arthur's forte. "I love it. For the past three years I have been making a massive survey of the nuclear arms race, chiefly

"If a person does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps ... he hears the beat of a different drummer."

— Thoreau

...different drum

with John Francis

Looking back

Arthur Reddish at the door of his Castlecliff home. The photograph is of the first Wanganui peace march, in 1971, when 500 people protested against the Vietnam war.

Arthur has his goals and beliefs clearly defined, and is persistent in his campaigning. However, both through meeting this quiet-spoken man, and reading his letters, one gets the impression he would rather state his case through the data he has collected than through emotionalism.

His letters in the press have made his name familiar to most people in the Wanganui district. So much so that a letter addressed from Hawke's Bay, addressed simply "Arthur Reddish, Wanganui", was delivered to him the day after it was posted.

"I've only had one abusive letter over the years," he says, "and that wasn't signed."

"I've found Wanganui people to be most tolerant. When people meet me for the first time, they say, 'Oh, you're the one who writes to the papers, I always read them'. And yet with some of them you know they couldn't possibly agree with you."

Of the medal from the World Peace Council, he says it "came like a bolt from the blue — I'm not even a member of the council."

Arthur says he is aware some say the Peace Council has a "leftish" slant.

"I feel that reflects the world we live in. Outside the western demo-

cracies, regardless of the nature of the governments, the majority of the citizens have left-wing views, and the views of the World Peace Council reflect them in its extended membership."

He is optimistic over the chances of "nuclear sanity".

"Ordinary people who previously left the issue to politicians have suddenly become aware of the possible consequences. War by accident is becoming more threatening."

He can see the day when nuclear weapons will be gradually dismantled.

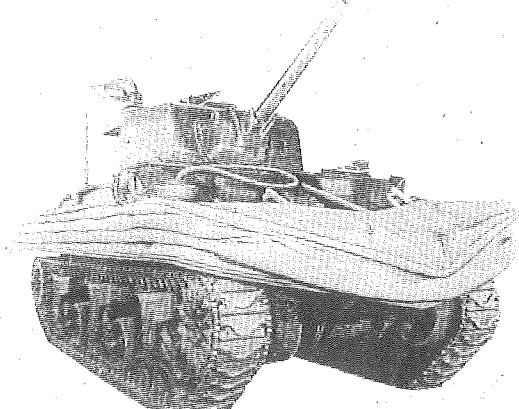
"Some people feel nuclear weapons should not be dispensed with entirely because they have prevented a super-power war. But that's a bridge we'll cross when we come to it."

"First we must have a nuclear freeze, then mutual reduction. But it must be multi-lateral."

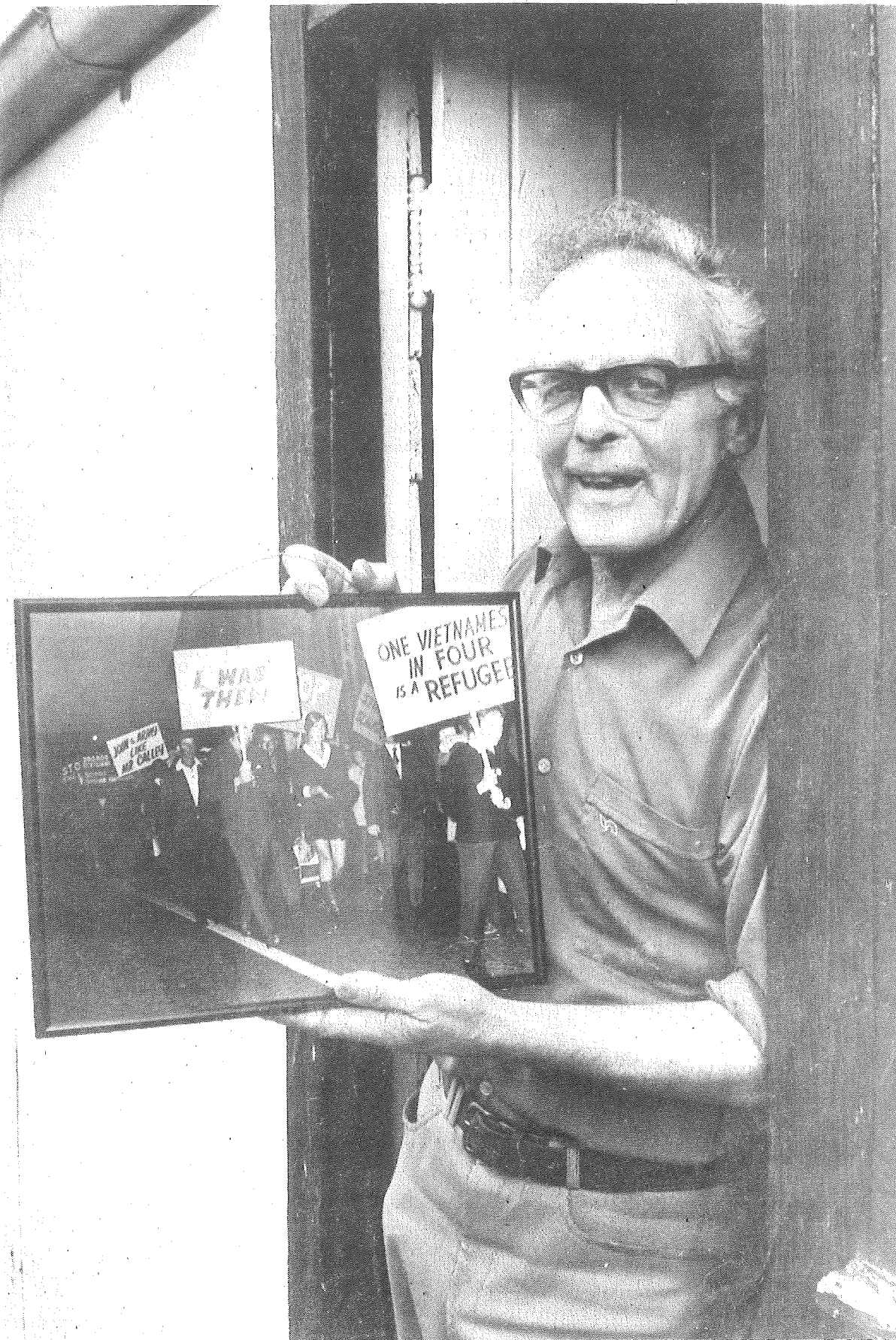
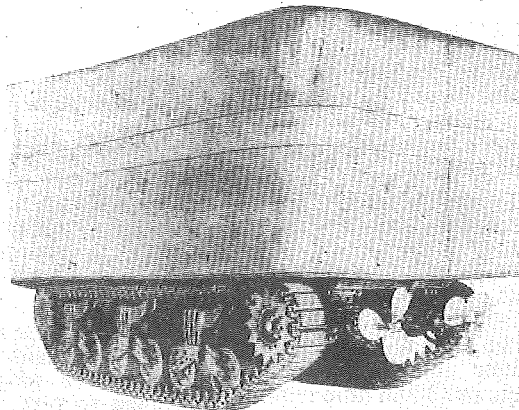
Within the next three years, Arthur Reddish believes, America and Russia "will work something out".

And Wanganui efforts, such as the recently-formed Peace Forum?

"In the past it's mainly been left to the old campaigners. That's been our weakness. Now, so many younger ones are coming in. It's thrilling to see the picture change."



A swimming tank, of the kind which sank under Arthur on D-Day. Note the propellers. The raised curtain was supposed to keep the water out, but on his tank it was shot full of holes.



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Research is Arthur's forte. "I love it. For the past three years I have been making an intensive survey of the nuclear arms race, chiefly from the American side, and some European."

"One thing I admire about the Americans is the availability of data. My main source is the Institute of Policy Studies in Washington. They're a liberal, non-profit making group with in my opinion some of the finest brains in America."

Arthur is also impressed with some of the Russian source material. For instance, he says of the Soviet book 'Peace and Disarmament', "the quality is astounding. It's so objective. They appear to be sincere in their desire for peace."

His attitude to the Russians, he says, is non-political, "although I sometimes sympathise with them."

"In Europe I was aware of their immense contributions during World War Two. They lost 20 million people, while the Commonwealth and the US between them lost one million."

Isn't it possible though, as some suggest, that the Russians are using the European peace movement to their own military advantage?

"It could be," says Arthur, "but I prefer to give them the benefit of the doubt. I still believe we have an unpaid debt to them after the Second World War. But I would like to see them get out of Afghanistan."

When Arthur's mother died three years ago, he says he "felt a need to give some of my time to other old folks". He became a regular, often daily visitor to three well-known Wanganui identities (all of whom co-incidentally have now also passed away).

Eric Lewis ("The Gadfly" in the local 'letters' column) and Oscar Strom had both visited Russia, and Arthur valued their impressions of that country. George Easton was a "left-wing intellectual". Blind, as Arthur's mother had been, he would read pertinent articles to him and they would spend hours in discussion afterwards. He says he learnt much from these men.

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