

# Peace and foreign aid worker

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When the Christchurch City Council presented its peace awards, on December 3, one worthy personality was missing.

Teacher and social activist, Marjorie Ockenden died just four days before she was to be honoured for her work with the Sumner Peace group.

The Rev Maurice Gray said her death accorded with the Maori tradition of a person of high place dying — before an auspicious occasion — in order to lay the spiritual foundations for the event.

Miss Ockenden, one of four daughters of Linwood couple Bert and Elsie Ockenden, was born in 1918, three months before the end of the First World War. She spent much of her life pursuing an anti-war theme.

In their early years, the Ockenden sisters regularly attended Christchurch's

Socialist Sunday School, where life-long interests in equality and assistance for the poor were nurtured.

After attending Elmwood and Christchurch East primary schools and Christchurch Girls' High, Marjorie Ockenden trained as a primary teacher at the Christchurch Teachers' Training College. She taught for more than 30 years in schools from Northland to Southland, including Waikuku, Sheffield, Redcliffs, Banks Avenue, and Lyttelton West, in Canterbury.

In 1960, Miss Ockenden completed a year of study in child development at London University. After retirement from teaching, in 1971, she worked with the Kindergarten Association.

She won election to the Canterbury Education Board and the Christchurch Teachers' College Council.



**Marjorie Ockenden**

She sat on panels selecting students for the college.

Miss Ockenden joined the Corso foreign aid and development movement in 1972, sorting and packing clothing parcels for needy countries. She then ran the organisation's cash appeals for three

years, before resigning in 1985. She was concerned that Corso was applying only short-term solutions to long-term economic problems.

She kept busy in her retirement by working also for Unicef and the WEA and by increasing her involvement with the Sumner Library. For many years, she helped run the children's section of the library, while doing voluntary service in the adult section. As chairwoman, she steered the amalgamation with city libraries. She then chaired Friends of the Sumner Library.

Miss Ockenden protested against the 1981 Springbok rugby tour of New Zealand.

She was an active member of the Sumner Peace group and helped it collect the signatures that pushed the council to declare Christchurch a nuclear-free city. As

a long-time member of the Sumner branch of the Labour Party, she helped with distribution of leaflets and collection of votes from the sick.

Miss Ockenden freely expressed her distaste at the Labour Government's economic direction in the late 1980s, but retained her loyalty to the party.

She developed and maintained a model garden and made many trips, often by bicycle, around New Zealand. She also enjoyed swimming and tramping. In 1975 and again in 1985, Miss Ockenden visited China.

Friends say she was a forthright woman, always interested in new developments, and cheerful.

—Mike Crean

● Marjorie Frances Ockenden, born August 23, 1918, Christchurch. Died November 29, 2002, Christchurch. Survived by her sister Enid.