

*"There But For the
Grace of God go
I"*

Mia Tay's story

as told to Susan Bourke

Soci 340 Life History Project.

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Prologue

The following is Mia Tay's story of aspects of her involvement in peace work. In fact her whole life has been dedicated to this cause, and so included in this narrative is the story of Mia's childhood, and how it influenced her later life decisions.

This narrative begins with Mia's memories of growing up in a Quaker environment, and how this would shape her adult life. The next section of the story focuses on just a small section of Mia's participation in peace activism. This time period has been chosen, not because the work she did then was any more important than any other work she did, but simply because it was an exciting time in the peace movement.

The narrative is based on conversations between Susan Bourke and Mia Tay in Mia's home between 24 April and 13 May, 1998.

I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation to Mia for sharing her story with me; and doing so with such trust and honesty.

I would also like to thank Mia's mother Angela Brusse for her document "As I remember", which was incredibly useful in helping me form a picture of Mia's early childhood.

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Chapter One

'No qualms about disobeying Nazi regulation'

Mia's mother Angela was born in 1913, in Holland, shortly before the first world war began. Although Holland was not involved in the war, Angela and her siblings spent their early childhood growing up with war around them.

Angela came to Kasteel Eerde in Ommen, in 1938, to teach in the Dutch department of the primary school. Kasteel Eerde was a Quaker school that had been started by a committee of German, English and Dutch Quakers in 1932. It was a sanctuary for people who could no longer be in Germany. The school's philosophy was based on the idea "if children from different countries get together to learn, play, work, study, create music and art; that the process of getting to know each other would foster peace" (Brusse, 1996: 12).



Kasteel Eerde, near where Mia spent her early childhood

Mia recalls one of her mother's students who would only respond to Angela in Dutch, regardless of what language he was addressed in, simply because Dutch was Angela's language. Mia's mother seemed to have a natural affinity with the children.

As the situation in Germany worsened, the American Quakers were becoming concerned that the United States was not being very helpful in terms of providing entry permits for Jewish children. The American Quakers hoped to remedy the matter by starting a farm school for Jewish children that would give them a solid Dutch agricultural training which could provide them with the qualifications that would be acceptable in America or England. As a result of these plans, Mia's father Jos, was appointed headmaster in 1939. He was in charge of the farming section, and the trainer of the German-Jewish young people. He had quite a task in front of him - the land was partly meadow and partly crop, and it was very poor sandy soil. He would have to start the farm from scratch.

Although Angela was a primary school teacher, she was often required to help Jos as he was so busy working the farm and training the students. They married in December of 1939, and Angela moved onto the farm.

While Mia's mother was born just prior to World War One, Mia was born *during* World War Two, in 1941 in Ommen, while the Germans were flying over it to bomb England.

Although home birth is the practice in Holland, Mia's parents were living at the Farm School, and so Mia was actually born at a lady named Wies Wilman's house.

**Angela with baby
Mia on her lap
(Photo by Eva Besnyo)**



Mia's early childhood was spent at the Quaker Farm School. Her family, were part of three farms in a row, and their farm was the middle one. They had accommodation for a dozen students who lived on the farm, consequently the Brusses had just a small amount that was their own space on the farm. When Mia was three years old she contracted diphtheria. It was suspected that the source of the infection was a minister who stopped at their farm to rest. There was no possibility of putting Mia into quarantine, and so she literally had to be kept in solitary confinement, on the farm. Mia's mother had to get protectively robed up to see Mia, and Angela was the only one that was allowed near her.

Mia remembers breaking an astonishing amount of plates because "I would be *so* angry and *so* frustrated; I didn't want to eat, so I would just pick up a plate and throw it on the floor!"

The students would receive instruction at night, and during the day they would help with the farm work, which involved the milking of the cows, the ploughing of the fields, and so on. Mia's mother was in charge of the cooking, the catering and the general domestic side of

things; including the accounts.

There was no set up for child care on the farm, but Mia remembers playing with the children who live on the farms on either side of the Brusses. Unbeknown to her parents, Mia actually picked up the local dialect that the children used, which definitely was not Dutch. In between the journeys to her maternal grandparents' house in Bussum the kids on the street would say, "hmmm, she talks funny". And it was in this way that Mia's parents found her using the local dialect. "That was the children's language", she says.

The part Mia's parents played in the Quaker Farm School was a huge and vitally important one. They were providing a sanctuary for those that were persecuted in Germany, and not only helping them to flee to a safer country when the time was right; but also training them to be able to survive when they got there.

The Quaker Farm School, with help from Holland, managed to get all but seven Jewish children away. In 1938 the school had about 150 pupils, but in a year's time the number of German-Jewish students grew enormously.

In 1943 the Germans came to take the seven children still at the School away to concentration camps, and not one of those children survived. This was very, very sad for the Dutch Quakers, who found it hard to accept, "(They) still feel it is a blot in their history" (Brusse, 1996: pg 22).

And yet when Mia speaks of what the Nazi's did, and how her family felt about it, she says her parents were very much aware that, "there but for the grace of God I go", and that her parents have never waived from this. With a beautiful understanding of humanity, Mia

explains that it's really not that difficult to break someone, and when survival is at stake, life is very difficult. There were many people who worked in concentration camps, she says, and we "clobber them as 'nasty-nasty Nazis,' but if they hadn't done that, they would've been killed immediately, or have their family members eliminated".

Under the German occupation everything that the farm produced was counted and heavily restricted, so that even though the school needed food for the growing young people, the farm was not really in a position to help them.

The fields of potatoes were counted, their fields of other crops were counted; the fertiliser was limited, they were only allowed a few chickens when once they had owned one hundred or so; and so it went on. And yet Mia always recalls having enough food. She says her father, Jos, ran the farm as a very good farm. He stuck to his principles and had no qualms about disobeying Nazi regulation. He would never tell an untruth, but he mightn't tell the whole truth.

"So if you were entitled to cure one pig, because that's what they said you could do; you would kill two. If you were allowed to sow out a field, you would try as far as possible to double the acreage, which you always kept some milk behind if you could possibly manage to do so".

Mia describes the food as absolutely basic, very plain and always the same. But she recalls that in the morning they would have rye porridge done with milk, which, Mia recalls with some humour, was a real luxury. And at such time of hunger and meagre resources, Mia recollects that the boys on the farm ate huge quantities, and her mother thought that perhaps "it was because they were just eating for all their relatives that *couldn't* eat".

There were other ways of subtle sabotage that Mia remembers, aside from her father's farming methods. Her mother's youngest brother was sent to work in a factory in Germany because he was a watchmaker and was highly capable of precision work.

"In the factory they made sure they were out by a millimetre one way in what ever they were doing, and a millimetre out in the opposite direction in whatever part they were doing so that by the time the parts went to someone else, they wouldn't fit!"

While Mia was born *during* World War Two, her brother Aart arrived while the English were flying over to Germany and bombing "the hell out of there". Her sister Jos was born immediately after the war.



From left: Mia, Jos and Aart

Mia recalls very little of the actual war, but her mother Angela has provided her with many memories. She remembers one particular story about when the English Canadians dismantled the ammunition

camp and the bombs under the bridges, and the Brusses believed they were free. They were organising to go into the township when suddenly they couldn't find Mia. She was eventually discovered on the main road, where she had never been before on her own, sitting on the lap of a Canadian soldier with chocolate all down her chin (Brusse, 1996: 29). Mia laughingly believes this was probably the first time she tasted chocolate!

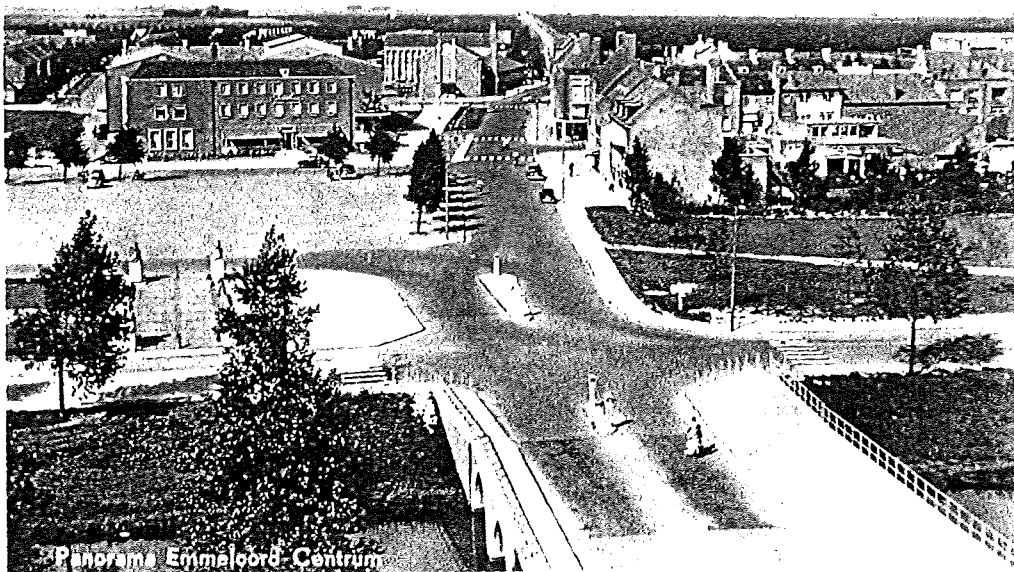
Chapter Two

'It's okay to be different'

Holland was officially liberated on the 5th of May, 1945. Early in 1946, Jos was asked to liquidate the farm as that part of the institution was no longer needed, it had served its purpose.

From there the Brusses moved to Emmeloord where Jos became an agricultural social worker. He not only had the skills to cope with people, but also the academic qualifications to understand land use. Mia's father's task was mainly to look after the Polish men who lived in the camps and who were used to build the roads and dig the canals. They were generally preparing the land so it could be parcelled out and sold as farms.

Emmeloord at this time was a very, very small community of about four streets, a school where Angela taught as a relief teacher and the row of shops opposite to the Brusses house.



Postcard of Emmeloord where Mia lived for 6 or 7 years

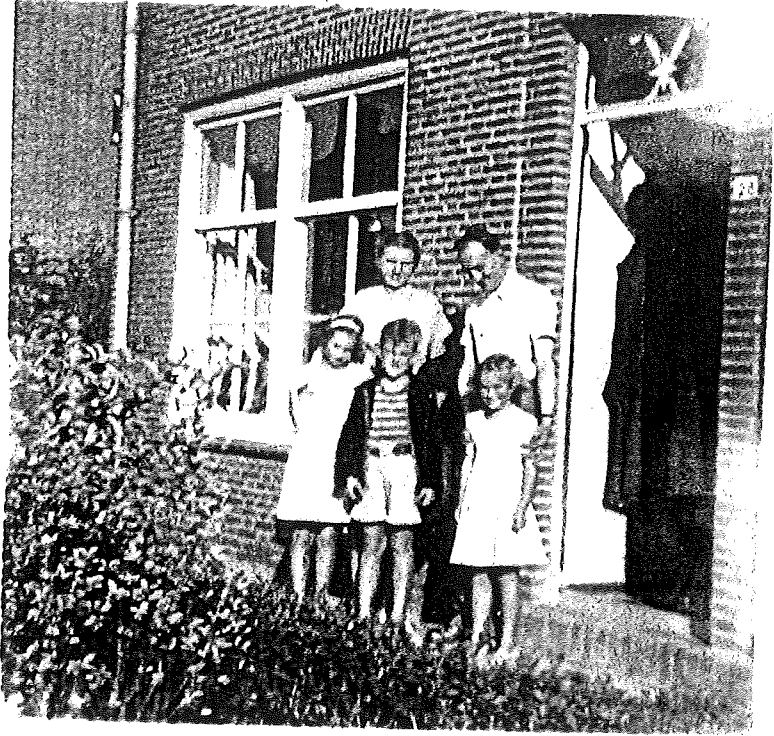
In Holland you do not go to school until you are six, and so when Mia first arrived in Emmeloord she attended kindergarten for a while, and then began primary school when she turned six. It would have been at about this time that Angela and Jos applied to become members of the Religious Society of Friends, and after the necessary processes, they were accepted.

Mia recognises the basic distinctions between herself as a Quaker child and other children that had not been brought up in a Quaker environment. She knows that she had parents with strong personalities and views, and a confidence that it was okay to be different. Before Angela and Jos had even met, they were practicing their different views by protesting against the Red Cross which, as Mia explains, "had a fantastic reputation for patching people up so that they could go back to fighting again". Mia says that she was brought up being used to having differences from others, and having the strength to challenge and the confidence in herself to be able to say, "hey, hang on! I don't have to follow".

Mia did not go to much Quaker worship in Holland, but her parents were concerned that the children have some religious upbringing. While they may not have said grace at every mealtime, the children did attend Sunday school for a while; and at various times throughout their childhood they would read bible stories before bed.

School for Mia in Emmeloord was much like primary school for children in New Zealand, except that they were taught in Dutch. It was a secular state school, and Mia learned the basic ABC, how to read and write, and so forth. In her last couple of years in Emmeloord she was taught geography and history, and Mia can still clearly remember working very hard on her Dutch history at her little table which she

still has now!



The Brusse family outside their house in Emmeloord

Although Quaker meetings for worship usually take place on a Sunday, Quakers do not regard any day as more holy than another, but try to live every day in the presence of God (Department of Religious Studies: pg 6). While this means that technically Quakers would not celebrate occasions such as Christmas and the New Year; the Brusses, living in Holland, celebrated St Nicholas on the 5th of December- a very traditional Dutch festival. The story goes that St Nicholas came from Spain, although historically he was a Bishop in Asia Minor. According to Dutch tradition, if you are a good boy or girl, you get a present; but if you are naughty, you get a bag of salt or a birch rod; or you might be put in the empty bag and taken back to Spain!

Mia remembers St Nicholas as a "rip-roaring riot of fun", where "you could tell anybody anything, you wrote the most amazing doggerel poetry, and you dreamt up the most amazing trick presents. Like for

someone that desperately loved rye bread, you would get the baker to
bake you a ryebread, but there would be a hollow box inside!"

Chapter Three

'My mother had always had a penchant for the South Pacific...'

In about 1952, Mia's father was told that he fitted in the "last hired - first fired" scenario because the basic work had been done, and the camps were being closed and it was time to move on. Angela and Jos had three choices: They could take a job in the new *polder and that would mean they would be starting again, but living probably in a place with only one street and no school. As a primary school teacher, this choice did not appeal to Mia's mother. Another option was to use state assistance and buy a farm. But Jos had looked at the agricultural side of that and decided that farming had become industrialised, and so was no longer farming the way he liked it. That left state assisted immigration. "And for immigration you could go out to Canada or New Zealand. My mother had always had a penchant for wanting to go the South Pacific, so New Zealand it was".

Mia herself didn't really want to go to New Zealand. She says, "I thought New Zealand would be a very barbaric country - and, they didn't even speak Dutch! Then I had to wear school uniform which I didn't want to wear".

Mia thinks it would also have been quite difficult for her parents. She recalls her mother saying that once she had sold the baby's bath, she felt she could sell anything. Because the Brusses were state assisted immigrants, "which was a pain to get", they were only allowed one cubic metre of goods for the five of them. Jos had taken the five

* Polder: a stretch of land reclaimed from the sea or a lake; usually in the Netherlands

bicycles down to every single cog to be packed. Angela took the piano and the cello because "she figured those are things I would never buy back. So when we arrived here we had very little in the form of furniture, but we had five bicycles, a piano, a cello and a few other bits and pieces like cutlery and crockery! I think she did amazingly well in what she chose".

Through Quaker connections both Jos and Angela were able to get jobs at the Wanganui Friends School. They each had a sponsor, and each had paid employment. As a result the Brusses were able to come out to the school. This worked very well because they were able to use the school as a springboard. After 18 months or so, Jos moved down to Christchurch where he got some work at Crop Research out at Lincoln.

Mia found New Zealand difficult at first. She recalls that "we were not used to the huge drop in temperature that happens at sunset. This was the tail end of January and I suddenly felt really cold, and I felt really miserable, but possibly just very, very tired. I was twelve and a half years old".

She had difficulty learning English, although Angela had tried to teach it to her children. Describing herself as "shy by nature", Mia recollects that Angela was convinced Mia knew double the amount of English that her brother Aart did, but "I never opened my mouth, and my brother tried out every single word on every Tom, Dick and Harry he met".

In Wanganui Mia was open to a lot more religious teaching. The Brusses were living in the Quaker school, and Mia was attending the Quaker school where she had assembly every morning, hymn singing and possibly some silent worship. Every Sunday there was an hour or

so of worship in which some Quakers would come up from the city and "we always hoped they would speak". While the move to New Zealand was hard for Mia, the schools she attended did their best to help the Brusse children adapt to their new environment. Over time Mia grasped the English language and by the time she was in Wanganui Girls College she was studying Latin and French.

In the middle of December 1955, the Brusses joined Jos in Christchurch and Mia began at Linwood High School which she hated desperately. Their philosophy was not one which she agreed with. She therefore shifted to Avonside Girls' High School where she was much happier.

For School Certificate Mia did a project on apartheid in South Africa. A grandmother in Holland sent a book that could help her, but attached a warning to it for Mia's mother saying that the book may be too explicit, in all regards, for a girl of such a tender age. Mia however, took the book and read it from cover to cover, coming away at the end deeply moved by how wrong apartheid and other expressions of inequality were. "It was just not right". During this time Mia also learned about the atomic bomb and the irrevocable harm that nuclear weapons cause.

As a result of what she had learnt about war, discrimination and inequality, at fifteen Mia made a "personal commitment to the realisation that war is wrong". And at about the same time she made a deliberate choice to join the Quakers because "I felt that that was my home and that's where I belonged".

Chapter Four

'It was just part of the flow of life...'

There was no "big step" for Mia concerning her involvement as a peace activist. She explains that "just as my application for membership of the Religious Society of Friends involved no big step, I just grew into it. It was just part of the flow of life". She does vaguely remember finding a handbill for the youth campaign for nuclear disarmament with her signature on it. And she believes she may have signed it in 1959 when she was about 18 years old. It is this handbill that provides a hazy starting point for her involvement in the peace movement.

Mia gained her University Entrance and began her university years in 1960 at the University of Canterbury. She remembers enjoying varsity, completing papers in Sociology as she initially hoped to be a social worker. Frank Tay came from Singapore to teach at the University of Canterbury, and he and Mia met in the university cafeteria in 1962. A year later the two were married. Mia then took university more slowly and it was some years later that Mia completed her degree. She sat her finals in 1968 while pregnant with her third baby.

In June of 1969, Mia gave birth to Kim, and within five weeks she was flying to Singapore with her new baby girl to collect Frank and their two boys. They spent three weeks together in Singapore and then they all headed off to Holland for a week or so. The Tays then arrived in England where they were to live for six months before finally going home to New Zealand, via Singapore - for two months. Mia laughingly says, "Kim finally came home to her own house. Her own home and

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she'd never been in it! And she was eleven months old! I think it took me another year to recover from her arrival".

From this point Mia gradually began to get more involved in peace work; joining in marches and protests against involvement in the Vietnam War. But she stayed out of the forefront of such activities, as she recalls, "I would have the boys with me in a pushchair".

By 1975 things were getting very exciting for those involved in the peace movement. Mia started working as a part-time office assistant at the Canterbury Environment Centre, working mainly in the peace and disarmament side of things, where all the action was at the time. The Environment Centre consisted of a whole string of groups focused on a variety of things, not just peace work, but environmental issues as well. At this time the Environment Centre was located where the Dux de Lux is now, on the corner of Peterborough Street and Montreal Street in Christchurch city.

In 1976 Mia attended the International Convention for Peace Action which was run in Wellington to get the Wellington region refocused onto peace. "It was a *huge* conference", Mia recalls. One of the people brought out for the conference was Robert Aldridge, a physicist who for 16 years worked on the Trident submarine designing the Poseidon missile with its cluster of individually targeted re-entry vehicles; each carrying a nuclear warhead (Peace Office, 1977: pg 1).

Mia tells his story; "he was a good Catholic, he had a wife and ten children. And his kids ganged up on him and said to him 'Look Dad, you can't *do* that! That's a killing machine. How can you as a Christian work on a killing machine?' And they talked to him long enough that he saw their point of view. Resigned and joined the peace movement".

Mia met Robert Aldridge at the International Convention for Peace Action, and later, peace groups collected his papers. These would be published by what was to be the Peace Office, where Mia would work. **Attached to this narrative is a report Michael Malloch and Mia put together after the International Convention for Peace. It is both interesting and useful in terms of giving some insight into some of the peace work Mia was doing.**

In about Easter 1977, Mia met again with some of the people she had encountered in Wellington at the International Convention. Together they decided they wanted to do peace work, and they set up what they called the 'Peace Collective'. Mia remembers, "It was just a small group of us who were at the 'people organising for power' type of non-violent action training seminar, run by Rachel Bloomfield and Peter Jones. And at one of these workshops the group decided that 'hang on! We want to go and *do* something.' So we started a meeting". Mia explains that Harold Evans and Kate Boanas both worked very hard on the Peace Collective. "And I sort of sat on the sidelines as somebody who was there when they wanted a protestor or a demonstration".



From left: Reverend Terry Wall, John Boanas, Te Rua, Kate Boanas(now Dewes) with baby Jesse, David Buller, Mia, Anne Findlay and Harold Evans.

Mia saw, and still does see great power in non-violent action. Peter Jones is an English Quaker who came to New Zealand and while Mia remembers hardly anything about his first trip to New Zealand, she recalls that during his second trip the peace groups made a lot of use of him. Peter Jones was running workshops around New Zealand in which he ran non-violent action training. Mia explains that within these workshops "a lot goes into learning to respect the other person's point of view; learning to *listen* without prejudice. And after that, it's learning how to keep on being creative". She believes it depends on where you are planning to use your non-violent action "because if you are just going into two-way personal conversation then a lot of the skills would be basic listening skill, and being able to rephrase and bring in new points of view". But in the case of something like a highly political event you are protesting against "you need a lot more of action training in groups, where you learn the strengths and weaknesses of each other. Where you learn how to be non-violent and at the same time accept that what comes back may be violent". She believes that this last message of needing to accept that your non-violent action may be met with a violent response is a very difficult one to get across.

Rachel Bloomfield is a New Zealand Quaker who hoped to get into some non-violent action training and Peter was "quite happy to train her up". She had done a lot of non violent action training during her years at the Donald Groome Fellowship. This was an Australian fellowship set up by Quakers in memory of Donald Groome. He had been a Quaker working in India doing a lot of work towards promoting peace, harmony and non-violence. Donald Groome had died tragically in a plane crash in India. Mia

believes it was in about 1977 that Peter Jones and Rachel Bloomfield travelled through New Zealand running a series of workshops, and Mia organised the workshops in Christchurch.

Mia places huge emphasis on the importance of using non-violent action as the resistance to war, and in discussing this she describes one of the "beauties" of non-violent action. She says "it is *so* creative. And you need to be continually alert for the more interesting, innovative, creative ways of expression. The problem is to keep finding creative ways of giving the peace message. And there are so many different ways of doing it".

Mia recalls one year in which groups organised a Mothers' Day march for peace. And one of the things she remembers doing in the Environment Centre was what was called "Rainbow Women", where Mia and others made enormous 'rainbows' to be used for stalls and such things. The rainbows were six metre long strips of waterproof material in the bright colours of the rainbow. These were sewn into banners and could then be put up with polystyrene pipes inside them to make a proper rainbow. Display tables could then go underneath. Two years ago Mia was still making rainbows for people to use.

One very effective and creative idea that the Quakers were the first to try out, was in 1976 with the floating of lanterns for Hiroshima Day during Peace Week. Peace Week was from 3 August till 10 August, and among other things, commemorated the deaths caused by the nuclear bombs dropped in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Since the first year that the lanterns were floated Mia says "we've never missed a year".

The lanterns were a simple design, "It's basically two pieces of wood put together in a cross, and in the middle you would put a candle. Then there are wires coming from each point so that you can put a piece of transparent paper around it, and then you can carry it".

In the past the lanterns were floated "right over to Manchester Street bridge", but these days they are floated from Armagh Street bridge and fished out at Colombo Street by people working for the city council. There is now a procession on Hiroshima Day that goes from the Cathedral to Armagh Street where the lanterns are put in the water, and Mia says that people are asked to bring banners. She says "This is really a ceremony that is, well, it's public, but we really aim it at the peace people as affirmation that the work goes on - that we have achieved something and that there is more to be done".

During 1977 the National Consultative Committee for Disarmament was also set up. Mia recalls that there were three "prongs" who tried to claim it as "their bright idea". These were the Minister of Foreign Affairs, John Male who was head of the Foundation for Peace Studies, and the head of the United Nations Organisation at the time. "And I'm quite happy for them all to claim ownership of the idea".

The organisation was set up to facilitate consultations between non-government organisations (NGO's) in Wellington, and to bring forward suggestions that the government should think about when it came to the first special session of the United Nations on disarmament.

The National Consultative Committee for Disarmament was not without financial assistance; Mia remembers a few of the

meetings were run at the expense of the state, and in the initial stages the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the United Nations Organisation did a lot of the secretarial work. Mia went off to the first of its meetings, and she was originally supposed to be there just until the session started. This was unacceptable. The Minister of Foreign Affairs was told, "Look, we've *got* to have at least one de-briefing session after it". And so for the first few meetings the state paid for Mia to go to Wellington. Some of the time peace groups in Christchurch paid for her trips, and she paid for one or two herself.

1977 was a very busy year for the peace movement. Mia began working part-time as office manager in the Peace Office where she was supervised by Michael Malloch. She describes the Peace Office, located in the Corso building in Barbadoes Street, as having had a very, very loose structure. A lot of the networking things went on from there, and by "networking things" she means, "oh, endless letters, and occasionally telephone calls; but in those days.... mostly letters..."

Attached to this narrative is one of the letters Mia wrote when she worked in the Peace Office. It is an excellent guide as to what was happening in the peace movement at the time. It is also very interesting to see what she herself was doing at the time.

When Mia tries to explain exactly what she would be doing she often refers to the fact that "there was just *so much* to do". She explains that

"peace work, if you really do it, is basically doing a lot of little things.... And all those little things you need to keep on doing, and they have different emphases at different times. One of the things you have is different friendship circles.

You tell somebody something and it gets passed down the line; and so my task very often was to know who would be available, or could be asked to do different things. But there is always so much to do".

Within the Peace Office was a small committee that worked on producing Peace Office Publications. Mia's position in the committee was that of coordinator for the publications. While there was very little money to spare in the peace movement, Peace Office Publications was fortunate to have Michael Malloch and John Curnow as supporters of it. Michael Malloch was a Catholic, and John Curnow, a catholic priest, was director of the Catholic Commission. Through them Peace Office Publications received some grand funding from the Catholic Church. From there the booklets were sold in stalls and to peace groups; and quite a number were sold to schools and churches, as Mia recalls.

Chapter Five

'...One of the one's that helps to get things going.'

The Peace Collective had been so successful that it just grew "bigger and bigger and bigger", and after that the Peace Forum got started. Eventually, Mia says, the Peace Forum became "a much more viable option and the Peace Collective sort of died out". Mia explains this as a normal process in the peace movement. She says, "There are so many little groups, and then the group sort of dies, but the commitment to peace never quite dies".

By 1981 the Peace Forum was very busy, and that year it moved in with the Environment Centre and shared an office, which Mia managed. While Mia described her own part in the Peace Forum as "really the elbow grease work", her role and her spirit was vital to the organisation. She began working "ten hours a week at \$20, and that eventually became \$40. And I would've done twenty hours anyway! Never mind about all the telephoning you do at home".

The ten hours that she was paid to work involved many things, not just writing letters. She remembers that,

"in order to finance the whole show, there'd be levies to the groups to belong. There was also the sale of memorabilia, of badges and posters and Peace Office Publication leaflets and booklets. That sort of thing to manage. And there was a need to apply for grant funding. There was a need to get the newsletters out, to get the information around; so I got quite

expert at working the duplicating machines".

Mia laughs with some cynicism at the memory of these: "You got very dirty fingers, thankyou! Because you had to work with real ink. Very sticky goo. That was a duplicating system that was considerably more difficult than what we have now!"

Mia believes her wages came from "all the groups putting in a little bit". She says "I'm not quite sure how it all gelled together. We made a little bit of money on the sales of goods, but not a lot". And this was where the VOTP scheme was so useful. VOTP's were Voluntary Organisation Training Persons who were employed by the Peace Forum for a year. "They were given training in return for which they would do some office work; and that was a state funded scheme". Mia says that programmes like the VOTP scheme were "crucial for getting people to do the work. But I think it worked both ways, like the VOTP people helped us, but we helped them as well". The VOTP's were able to get employment after their time in the Peace Forum.

In 1979 Peter Jones was travelling through New Zealand running his workshops and Mia did all the organising for the workshops that would be run in Christchurch. She also did some of the national coordinating. And in terms of the Springbok tour in 1981, Mia says, "I'm still convinced that because of *that* work the protest was *so* non-violent". She says that the training of people was "in a way the peace movement's gift to the anti-racist movement".

Mia says that the Peace Forum did "a lot of work on the nuclear free legislation. A lot of grass roots work". She says that it was

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"really, really useful when it came to getting the New Zealand Government to get a move on with our nuclear free status and our nuclear free act".

Peace Movement New Zealand (which later became the more politically correct Peace Movement Aotearoa) was doing "lots of networking when we needed to get the nuclear free legislation through".

Mia also worked on the Peace Movement New Zealand Newsletters and the Peacelink magazines, helping a great deal in putting them together and mailing them out. "It was a magazine for an enormous variety of people. We had articles from all over New Zealand".

Chapter Six

'So Help me God, I can do no other'

Throughout Mia's involvement in the peace movement she continuously described herself as "basically one of the ones that helps to get things going". When talking about her letter writing skills, she conceded that, "Oh, I can be quite persuasive and get the message across, oh, I can do that. But, I'm no wordsmith. And I have never thought of myself as being in the prophet line in the movement".

Her role could perhaps be described as a 'behind the scenes' role - so crucial to any movement, but rarely ever heard about in detail. It is the "prophets" who are generally in the spotlight. Mia's way was to quietly but conscientiously keep working for peace.

Mia's upbringing, her religion and her complete confidence in her beliefs were perhaps what kept her from losing hope when things got tough. She mentioned a meeting where some peace workers sat down and talked about how they all felt about their work, and why they did it.

"It basically came down to 'so help me God, I can do no other,' which is a religious way of saying it*. And for those who did not have religious beliefs, they had similar spiritual feelings about it. And the going can be really tough. And you can feel like you're not going to get anywhere.

*'So help me God, I can do no other' is a paraphrase of Martin Luther (1483-1546) when he said: "Here I stand. I can do no otherwise. God help me. Amen"(spoken at the Diet of Worms).

And then things happen and you sit back and you say 'Well, a long time ago these things happened and they don't happen anymore'. Like you look at the campaign to get rid of the slave trade. Okay, there's still slavery, a little bit, but it is not as blatant; it's no longer acceptable. And there's still a big campaign going to stop torture, but there are a lot of countries where it is not acceptable to torture your prisoners. So Amnesty International has done a huge amount of work with that.

We have a nuclear free legislation within New Zealand; we have got rid of conscription. And in a way the successes can mean that you lose the focus, but you just have to keep finding new ways and keep going".

Epilogue

Mia's story is by no means finished, neither in terms of her involvement in the peace movement nor in terms of her life as a Quaker.

She stopped working for the Peace Forum in 1985 and directed more of her attention towards doing some work for the Quakers for a while. Her involvement with the Quakers was constant all through her life, but she has not always just done peace work with them. Sometime in the late 1980's Quaker Peace and Service and the Quaker Peace Committee were combined, and they came to Christchurch. Mia joined the group and has stayed with the peace section of it right till the present day.

A year ago Mia talked at the Quaker Yearly Meeting and said:

"Well, why don't we do cards for No More Frigates? And", she says, "bless me! There was somebody there who said 'that's a wonderful idea!' And this person went ahead and he must've had something like 5000 cards printed with message of 'No More Frigates' on them. And he was a printer from Auckland and he knew people in the printing trade, so he got mates rates all the way through. And he pushed them right through the country, and ever so many MP's must've got these wonderful cards saying 'please ensure that New Zealand does not buy or lease any more ANZAC frigates'. And I'm quite sure that's made a difference".

Of this Mia says: "It was wonderful to have an idea so enthusiastically taken up by another person and acted upon to such effect. I'll be a special person to Eric forever, he loved being given the opportunity for this work".

Currently Mia is the clerk of the Peace Action Group which involves "basically organising meetings, and making sure that the Quakers keep up to date on the in-and-out information. Just a continuous drip feed programme".

Mia's life has obviously branched in so many other directions that are not discussed in this document. What *can* be seen is that the commitments she made to work for peace when she was fifteen, have been the commitments of a life time. They were embedded in her personal beliefs right from childhood.

REPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION FOR PEACE

PRESENTED BY MICHAEL MALLOCH AND MIA TAY
TO CATHOLIC OVERSEAS AID.

We have since the Peace Convention given consideration to the co-ordination of the various areas concerned. Even to look at some loose co-ordination has been a mammoth undertaking and I have worked closely with Mia Tay (a Quaker - co-ordinator of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament in Christchurch and the International Peace Convention Christchurch contact).

We have since pooled resources and have been given (free of charge) an office by the N.C.C. in which we intend to establish a peace office. The immediate areas we are working on are:

1. The co-ordination of a N.Z.-Northern Irish Peace Body. This we hope in three months would be an autonomous body aimed at:

(a) Helping the refugee question.

(b) Giving moral and financial support to the Northern Irish Peace movement.

(c) Promoting the community politics concepts and philosophy in New Zealand.

2. Co-ordinating the campaign opposing the Trident and keeping N.C.C. C.O.A.C. C.M.D. C.O.R.S.O. ETC., informed and aware. An up to date kit would be supplied on this issue.

3. Assisting with the marketing of the New Internationalist.

4. Promoting visits of people. Schumacher will be the next major national visitor, late May, early June.

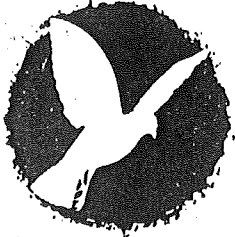
Mia will work with me for \$1.00 an hour, including expenses about 4 hours a day and a proposal is being put to C.O.A.C. to pay a portion of labour costs.

We are also fortunate to have free of charge the services of a Shorthand/Typist, Colleen Leeming and also a competent secretarial person for the Irish Peace Movement section, Rosemary Clutterbuck.

I believe with the increasing involvement of C.O.A.C. with peace and justice issues, this is a logical move and from here on the aid programme should be aligned to the reduction in weapons, particularly nuclear.

Also, I extend an open invitation to anybody in C.O.A.C. who would like to get involved in any of these issues to contact me.

Catholic Overseas Aid Committee
C.O.A.C. Peace Convention Representative
Michael Malloch.



PEACE OFFICE

Supported by
Independent Community & Development Organization

P.O. Box 297,
CHRISTCHURCH.

8th July, 1977.

Dear Minister,

There are many problems, many concerns, and many people trying to help make this world a more Christian place to live in. As Secretary of the recently set up Peace Office, I would like to draw your attention to the need to avoid war and find ways of celebrating peace.

The Peace Office is the result of ideas and enthusiasm of people to do something about joint efforts to highlight the problems of this world, especially in the area of peace and war. We do believe that peace is possible. The concept of liaison is also recorded in the 2nd action proposal of the International Convention for Peace Action held in Wellington last February.

For people involved with the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, Hiroshima Day, 6th August has always been a special day on which to remember the past, but above all, look at the future and reaffirm the belief that such tragedies can and should be avoided. To this end, I would like to suggest that 7th August be a special day with peace as its theme in all pulpits.

If you are willing to use this theme, Peace is Possible, on 7th August, it would be a great step forward in the field of co-operation. We suggest that topics for inclusion could be:

1. Facts on Trident.
2. The right use of World resources - along the lines that present spending on armaments limits the poverty clean up drive.
3. The aftermath of Hiroshima and Nagasaki used as a message of hope - man can learn from his past mistakes.

It is the belief of this Office that man has the skills to resolve conflicts without going to war, but the means of settling disputes without resort to armed violence needs to be constantly worked at.

We thank you for your time and if you are interested in a prepared sermon, please phone 857-504 or write to the above box number.

Yours in Peace,

Mia Tay
Secretary.

References

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