

superpower, that is a fitting epitaph. I'd be happy to settle for that for myself. If you're serious about making real change, you're going to make mistakes and make enemies; people are going to get hurt, including those close to you. The old saying "nice guys finish last" is not usually thought of as applicable to the peace movement, but Larry was proof that you need steel in your backbone to get things achieved. Maybe the 1983 *Christchurch Star* headline labelling him the "strongman of the peace movement" wasn't so silly after all. Most emphatically, Larry wasn't a "hippie dippie". He wasn't even a classic pacifist – in more than one media interview he said that he'd be prepared to "shoot a gun" to defend New Zealand.

Never Stopped Campaigning

New Zealand becoming nuclear free by law was certainly not the end of it for Larry. To quote from the *New Zealand Herald* profile on him (14/11/89, "Larry Ross follows his dream", Gilbert Wong): "But after eight years as a full-time peace worker, Ross is not one jot more optimistic. Humanity, he says, still has a better than even chance of being the first species on the planet to trigger its own extinction. A nuclear free New Zealand is only a faltering step away from that prospect, he says. And a nuclear free zone is only half a foreign policy. It means little if New Zealand does not take the next step and declare itself neutral and walk away from the Western military alliance.

"Ross sees New Zealand becoming a South Pacific Switzerland or Sweden. 'Neutrality does not mean that we would not have armed forces. We would defend ourselves in the case of attack. But neutrality would become our main defence. We would be too valuable a resource for other Pacific nations to invade'. Ross dreams of New Zealand as a nation respected for professional peacekeeping, supplying observers, peacekeeping troops and offering a neutral debating ground... Ross thinks there is ample room for such a nation in the Southern Hemisphere. He has been to see the American Embassy about it. 'The Ambassador heard me out and agreed that it all made sense, but was something the American government could not countenance'....

"Ross shows no sign of losing his enthusiasm for the campaign. But his continuous campaigning has exacted a personal toll. His marriage ended in divorce. 'At times I regret that I was not a better father to my children. I could have been there more'. Two of his children support his work. The others are more distant. Does the continuous pounding against what appears to be the unassailable walls erected by the superpowers, and the mounting evidence he collects of major destruction, weigh down the spirit? 'No, not at all', he says. 'You become like a doctor in an accident and emergency clinic. Every night bloodied bodies pass before you. There's little point in fretting. It's a job that has to be done'. Ross considers what drives him on. 'In five billion years the Sun will be a white dwarf and we'll all be dead anyway. But why do we have to go before our time? It was Jean-Paul Sartre who said that when we choose, we choose in part for all men. I think we have to choose to live rather than to die'".

"Even after the National Party adopted the (nuclear free) policy in 1991, Larry did not give up. He toured 17 towns warning that NZ must not return to ANZUS. He also spoke in Australia, Italy, Japan and Canada. When Christchurch became the first United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Peace City in 2002 Larry received one of eight inaugural Peace City Awards. His amazing collection of papers is safely stored in the Macmillan Brown Library at Canterbury University" (Kate Dewes' obituary of Larry, *The Common Good* 61, 2012). Larry certainly did not give up peace campaigning but he never had the same profile or impact that he'd achieved in the 1980s. Mind you that was a nice problem to have because it was a problem of success, not of failure, namely his leading role in this country becoming nuclear free.

He never ceased campaigning against the threat posed to all life on Earth by nuclear weapons (a threat which remains just as real today). Nor did he stop vigorously campaigning against those who wage war (but the SIS finally worked out that he wasn't an enemy of the State and stopped spying on him. The last clipping in his Personal File is dated 1994. Ironically it's a *New Zealand Herald* article [11/4/94] headed "US admiral's visit splits protesters", featuring opposing quotes from Larry on behalf of the Nuclear Free Peacemaking Association and Nicky Hager on behalf of the Coalition Against Nuclear Warships). He was actively involved in the Christchurch campaigns against the 1991 Gulf War; the 2001 invasion and occupation of Afghanistan (which is still ongoing); the 2003 invasion and years-long occupation of Iraq; and the endless "War on Terror". Just a few years ago, in the middle of the last decade, Larry, by then in his late 70s, was still publicly speaking out against the danger to world peace posed by the Bush Administration's threats to wage war on Iran (that remains a current threat, but one now being waged by Israel, rather than directly by the US). He remained a peace movement activist and supporter until the end of his life, attending peace movement functions until his final year - the nuclear free sticker on the door of his room in the rest home left residents, staff and visitors in no doubt as to what he stood for.

Final Few Years In A Home

Throughout those last two decades Larry and I saw each other now and again (we were never personal friends or

direct colleagues; we never had a political discussion outside of the parameters of the peace movement, so I have no idea what his politics were or even who he voted for). He belonged to CAFCA off and on (although he never joined ABC); we saw each other at peace movement activities and meetings; we even bumped into each other at the movies now and again (don't worry; they were good PC anti-war documentaries, not Hollywood action movies). And we socialised in as much as I attended Larry's 70th and 80th birthday parties, and he came to my 60th in 2011 - he enjoyed it so much that as he left, he said: "Have another one next Saturday!". As I've already mentioned I saw more of him in his final three years than ever before, because of our successful joint project to secure his SIS file. That was a long drawn out process and involved me visiting Larry in the home on several occasions and also taking him out for some very sociable lunches, accompanied by old friends and colleagues such as Bob Leonard and Warren Thomson.

To quote from Mike Crean's obituary of Larry in the *Press* (5/5/12, "Leading figure in NZ anti-nuclear crusade"): "His health suffered in latter years and after a spell in hospital, he entered a rest home in 2007. He rebounded and regained much of his independence, helped by the loving care of partner Brenda Crocker. He kept a lively interest in current events, plants, photography, food and arts and crafts". Brenda certainly deserves a big vote of thanks for the care she took of Larry in his final years, and for her constant companionship. It is highly unusual to have got this far into the obituary of a Christchurch person without mentioning the earthquakes. That's because Larry was unaffected by them. The home he lived in is in the west of the city and was unscathed (Larry told me that he looked out the window during the original September 2010 quake and told me: "The land danced!"). Bob Leonard and I took him on a late 2010 outing to see his old New Brighton home of 40 years, which had been converted into a small business – from the outside at least, it looked fine (I don't know how it fared in the much more destructive February 2011 quake and subsequent big aftershocks). But Larry was lucky to no longer be living in New Brighton or anywhere else in the east of the city, where whole neighbourhoods have been condemned as no longer habitable and thousands of people have to involuntarily leave. He was particularly lucky not to have ended up in an eastern suburbs rest home – several were destroyed, leaving their residents not only homeless but substantially out of pocket

Larry remained remarkably fit and youthful looking until the end. He looked more like 64 than 84. When Becky and I paid him a final visit when he was terminally comatose in hospital, she said, with the brutal honesty of the spouse: "You've got more wrinkles than him". Whenever I visited him in the home I had to make sure that I fitted it in around his daily walk. I last saw him, quite unexpectedly, just days before his fatal stroke and he was his usual friendly, chatty self. The problem in his final years was the short term memory loss caused by a series of mini strokes. Bob Leonard and I witnessed this when we took him on another outing, to visit the Owen Wilkes memorial bench in Beckenham Park. When we told him where we were going, he asked: "How is Owen these days?" We had to gently tell him that Owen had killed himself, in 2005. To which Larry replied that he did remember that now. Our outing fired up his old instincts and he parted company with us by saying that he would start writing letters to the *Press* again, maybe do another speaking tour. But those resolutions would have been soon forgotten, as our visit no doubt also was.

Remarkable Legacy; Brilliant Organising Model

"It has been a privilege to work closely with Larry for over 32 years. He leaves a remarkable legacy. His fundamental role in our nuclear free heritage is yet to be properly documented and extolled. When it is, he will be acknowledged for his passion for world peace, his intellectual capabilities and his dogged perseverance despite meagre funding and other challenges. Larry nurtured a compelling obsession that called us all to reject violent solutions and embrace a constructive altruism based on mutual respect, independence and peace. May he now rest knowing he has helped create and shape a policy that New Zealanders will always identify as fundamental to who we are as a nation" (Kate Dewes' obituary of Larry, *The Common Good*, 61, 2012).

"Many people at this funeral and in the wider community have, like me, opposed New Zealand's entanglement in the nuclear threat and the wars of world powers. But Larry was exceptional. He was possibly the single greatest contributor to making New Zealand nuclear free through years of hard work, dedication and sacrifice. His contributions to peace by no means end there, but New Zealand's nuclear free status is a distinctive and invaluable part of New Zealand's history and values. It certainly was influential in changing the thinking of people around the world as to the seriousness of the issue and whether they could do anything to reverse the arms race. Larry, go in peace and with pride in what you achieved" (Bill Rosenberg, tribute for Larry's funeral, April 2012).

I concur with both Kate and Bill and would add one observation of my own. If Larry is remembered for nothing else (but he will be) let it be for the absolute genius of the model he used to drive the nuclear free movement, namely getting councils of cities, town and regions to declare themselves nuclear free. But he didn't approach this as a top down thing to be lobbied for with local body politicians and bureaucrats. No, Larry built it from the bottom up, by urging grassroots people to form local peace groups (there were hundreds of them right through the country in the

80s) and for people to declare their churches, schools, workplace, streets, even their houses, nuclear free. It was a single issue campaign but an incredibly important one, which took on a nuclear superpower and its local collaborators and won. It's an organising model that is applicable to any number of current issues. Of course Larry singlehandedly did not make New Zealand nuclear free, no more than David Lange did. But Larry played a critical, leading, role in achieving that amazing feat.

We Musn't Rest On Our Nuclear Free Laurels

I'm going to conclude by doing something of which Larry would have approved, namely by issuing a call to action. This is a press release that I circulated on behalf of the Anti-Bases Campaign on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Nuclear Free Act, which is "a worthy cause for celebration for what was, and is, a fantastic achievement. It is also timely to remember that it was accomplished by hundreds of thousands of ordinary New Zealanders who were prepared to confront the State and its pro-nuclear, pro-war, pro-ANZUS status quo. They directly confronted the US nuclear machine and its New Zealand enforcers on the water; on land they confronted and defeated a colonial mentality that swapped from gutlessly hiding behind Mother England's skirts to gutlessly hanging onto Uncle Sam's coat tails. The victory belongs to the New Zealand people; the headline hogging politicians only surfed the tsunami of public opinion.

"But New Zealanders can ill afford to rest on our nuclear free laurels. Much remains to be done. For nearly 60 years Christchurch Airport has been the site for a US military base, albeit one that is a medium level transport base. How many New Zealanders know that US military planes using it operate under exactly the same 'neither confirm nor deny' policy that has seen US warships banned from New Zealand since 1987? Christchurch remains the only city in Australasia to host a US military base. This country still operates two 'New Zealand' spy bases – at Waihopai and Tangimoana. In the case of Waihopai, it is a US spy base in all but name, operating as an outpost of the US National Security Agency in rural Marlborough. Details of all three bases can be found at www.converge.org.nz/abc.

"In the 25 years since New Zealand became nuclear free by law, our Government, whether National or Labour, has continued to help the US fight its seemingly endless wars. Currently NZ has troops in Afghanistan, effectively acting as mercenaries helping the US to prop up a corrupt regime of opium barons, warlords, murderers and misogynists, in a totally meaningless war. In recent months NZ has sent troops to train on US soil; hosted US combat troops here; and sent NZ warships to take part in US naval war exercises – all of these for the first time since NZ was unceremoniously kicked out of ANZUS in 1986 for having the unmitigated gall to put our own national interests first.

"Wikileaks reveals that full intelligence relations between NZ and the US were covertly resumed in 2009; plus revealing a whole lot more details about the extent of that cosy covert relationship, right through key organs of the NZ government. All in all it adds up to a concerted drive to putting the 'NZ' back into ANZUS and turning back the clock to the good old days when NZ was a loyal satellite of the American Empire. The nuclear free movement in this country did a great job but it's not finished by any means. And the powers that be in both Washington and Wellington are doing their level best to completely undo it. They need to be forcefully reminded of the successful campaign of the New Zealand people for an independent foreign policy, of which the Nuclear Free law was an important part; a policy which rightly earned this country both international admiration and self-respect. Instead of restoring military and intelligence ties with the US, NZ needs to be breaking the chains that bind us to the world's biggest warmonger" (13/6/12; "We Musn't Rest On Our Nuclear Free Laurels: Concerted Drive To Put The 'NZ' Back Into ANZUS"). Larry, you can rest in peace (how appropriate), you've more than done your bit. But for the rest of us, there's still plenty of work to be done.

Rosa Edith Oliver 3 August 1921 – 16th May 2012

- Evin Wood

She will be remembered for her strong humanitarian, ethical and political beliefs and the tenacious way she stuck to them. Rosa Oliver was born in 1921 at Mexborough, South Yorkshire. She grew up and was schooled at Mexborough Grammar in the 1930s. It was a time of "Depression" in the mining area of South Yorkshire and during her early life she lost both her natural father and then her stepfather; both of these men she admired greatly. Rosa witnessed the hardships of the Depression but was fortunate to have parents who were very loving and caring and who were around, not only to look after their family, but who went out of their way to help others less fortunate than them during this time. Both Rosa and Mary (her elder sister) inherited the love and caring that their parents had shown. In the late 1930s she moved south with her mother and sister to Winchester in Hampshire. Due to hardship and the 1939-45 war she had to delay university education.

Eventually she went into further education and eventually become a teacher and a posting in Camberley in Surrey where she taught and lived, up to the early 1960s. During this time she remained in close contact with her mother and sister Mary (who had married). She loved to visit her own family in Winchester and also, when she established

her own home, had family visit her. Her mother died in the late 50s and in the early 60s she decided to “up roots” and move to New Zealand to teach French at Marlborough Girls College in Blenheim.

50 Years In Blenheim

Even though Rosa had left her family in the UK, she remained in constant contact either by letter or phone. The family were often to read of the next cause that she would venture into. The letters were always handwritten in Rosa's inimitable style. Rosa was able to meet all of her great nieces and great nephews either on trips to the UK or on their trips to New Zealand. Rosa's last 50 years were as a resident of Blenheim, apart from a couple of years when she went to teach in Botswana in the 1970s.

Her experience in Botswana was a very significant experience for her and she had very fond memories of her time there. Rosa had a staunch Christian socialist attitude and a love to help those less fortunate, together with any cause where an injustice had been perceived. It was with the love, caring and sharing Rosa was brought up. With that instilled in her to forever seek caring and justice for those less fortunate than herself. She could only think of love of humanity and abhorred the thought that war could solve anything.

While teaching at Marlborough Girls' College, Rosa encouraged the students to think about the social issues of the day and as one student said: “We often were able to get Rosa onto topics of social interest rather than the French language that was supposed to be being taught”. She formed a French Club that extended the students into language and social events reflecting French society. Rosa felt very strongly about the situation in South Africa and used her classes and extra-curricular groups to make her views known.

She spoke about the time she had a run-in with the Principal of Girls College, because she was accused of inviting Trevor Richards* to speak to a group of girls without the Principal's permission. This eventually led to Rosa's resignation. At this time she was saving to return to the UK to catch up with her family but she told an ex-student that she decided to give these saving to HART as “It was the right thing to do”. **Trevor Richards was the founding leader of Halt All Racist Tours (HART) through the 1970s. You can read my tribute to HART in the Obituaries in Foreign Control Watchdog 72, March 1993, <http://www.historicalwatchdog.blogspot.co.nz/2009/12/foreign-control-watchdog-march-1993.html>. MH.*

Rosa was strongly opposed to cruelty and injustice where ever she perceived it to be, whether against people or animals. She always had two or more cats she was looking after. One of these still is cared for by her neighbours. Rosa was a keen supporter of many social concerns and often attended meetings of various causes held in Blenheim. One such occasion was when a gathering was trying to form an umbrella group to cover issues of peace and human rights. After several hours of interminable discussion it was felt an agreement had been reached and the meeting could conclude, only to have Rosa call out: “What about vivisection?”

Active In So Many Causes

She was a long term staunch supporter of Corso and an active and avid supporter of Trade Aid. When the Trade Aid shop was in Blenheim she was the person responsible to educate the volunteers on the Trade Aide principles which often led to her feelings of frustration about the volunteers' commitment, when it wasn't as strong as hers. She was a long term supporter of the Women's International League of Peace and Freedom, as well as the Franciscans religious order and the Howard League for Penal Reform. She wrote and was still writing to people in prison, in both New Zealand and the USA, advocating for their rights. She often provided accommodation in her home for people who found themselves down on their luck, always accepting people as they were.

Writing letters in support of one cause or another took much of her time and there were always letters on the go to one politician or official of one sort or another. She was a very long term supporter of the Labour Party and particularly of David Lange's stand on nuclear issues and Helen Clark's strong leadership. Rosa despaired at the fact many people changed their allegiance to the Green Party when it was formed, which she did too after the Clark government's action over the Seabed and Foreshore Bill.

She had strong empathy with issues for Maori and a strong sympathy with the ideals of Maori Party Co-Leader Tariana Turia. She was very proud of the fact that she would always answer her phone with “kia ora”, after the controversy that first caused. She befriended the McDonald family, next door to her home, and they accepted her too as part of their family. They were some of the most regular visitors to her while she was in a rest home. They were able to discuss with her what arrangements she wanted for her funeral and made sure they were carried out.

Rosa nominated BUPA, the British company running her rest home, for CAFCA's annual Roger Award for the Worst

Transnational Corporation Operating in Aotearoa/NZ because of the way they exploited the staff and paid such a pittance in wages. BUPA was placed second in 2010. She also supported the Anti-Bases Campaign and was strongly supportive of the annual Waihopai protests. She was delighted to welcome Murray to her rest home when he was in Marlborough in 2011.

Rosa's mind was active up to the last and she regularly did crosswords and puzzles in the *Listener*, to which she was a long term subscriber. She had a phenomenal memory for people and events in her life. She considered herself lucky to have had the life she did. Rosa was forever proud of her name being the same as that of Rosa Parks, the woman who first refused to move to the back of the segregated bus in the southern US in 1955 and helped to initiate the civil rights movement there.

The prayer she asked to be included on her service sheet encapsulated her well. It read:

I sought my soul, but my soul I could not see,
I sought my God, but my God eluded me,
I sought my brother and found all three.

In Memory Of Rosa Oliver

- Murray Horton

Although she never joined the Anti-Bases Campaign, Rosa was a regular participant in ABC's protests in Blenheim and at the Waihopai spy base right from the very start in the late 1980s until just a few years ago when old age finally got the better of her and she went into a home. Blenheim is far from fertile ground for peace activists (my sworn affidavit detailing Marlborough institutional prejudice against ABC's Waihopai campaign over the years was the reason that the Domebusters' criminal trial was shifted from Blenheim to Wellington, so that they could get a fair trial) and it takes a brave person to stick their neck out in such a conservative, Tory-voting, military town. For years now ABC has been indebted to a small band of brave souls to be our key contacts and activists in Blenheim (Evin Wood, who wrote Rosa's obituary, is one of them). Rosa was always in the thick of our local supporters. Nothing frightened her. She was garrulous, pugnacious, passionate and fond of a good laugh.

In provincial towns like Blenheim the local activists tend to be involved in everything and Rosa was no exception. She never joined the Campaign Against Foreign Control of Aotearoa (CAFCA) either but she always attended whenever I was in town to address a public meeting as part of a CAFCA speaking tour. And I felt the lash of her tongue when I dared to criticise her beloved Labour Party at one such meeting – she was having none of my disparaging of Helen Clark and Michael Cullen. But, as Evin has said, she became disillusioned with Labour and when I visited her at her rest home in 2011 (the last time I saw her, just months before her 90th, and final, birthday), she told me she'd swapped to supporting the Greens. She also told me she was deeply saddened by what had happened to "her" Labour Party.

Rosa Told It Like It Is

The purpose of that visit to her rest home (which was in the course of my most recent CAFCA speaking tour) was to inform her that her nomination of BUPA, the British transnational corporation which owned that very rest home, had succeeded in winning it second place in the 2010 Roger Award (you can read the *Judges' Report* at <http://canterbury.cyberplace.co.nz/community/CAFCA/publications/Roger/Roger2010.pdf>). As a matter of policy, CAFCA guards the anonymity of those who send in nominations for the Roger Award. But I'm happy to make an exception for Rosa – she's dead, no harm can come to her and, as she was utterly fearless, she wouldn't mind who knew (she was delighted when I told her about the result of her BUPA nomination). Rosa was never one to mince words - the first reason she listed for her nomination of BUPA was "factory farming of elderly" What a wonderfully concise description of that whole for-profit industry from one of its "battery hens"!

My other hat is the Philippines Solidarity Network of Aotearoa (which, needless to say, Rosa also never joined) and when PSNA sent a speaker (Amirah Ali Lidasan) to Blenheim for the first time in 2007, there was Rosa, larger and louder than life, waiting for us when we arrived at the venue for the public meeting. By that stage Rosa was well into her 80s and living in the rest home but she had rung all her friends and contacts the night before and urged them to attend the meeting. We actually got a credible turnout of 15 at that meeting which, believe me, is good for Blenheim. PSNA missed Rosa's magic touch the next time I accompanied Philippine speakers to Blenheim (Luis Jalandoni and his wife Coni Ledesma, in 2010). Rosa wasn't there, wasn't involved and the attendance at the public meeting was a big fat zero.

Rosa was into everything going (including the campaign asserting the innocence of convicted double murderer Scott Watson). I never knew her personally and that 2011 visit to her rest home unit was the only time I saw her in a private setting. So I was deeply touched to be informed by Evin that when he last spoke to Rosa, a couple of days

before her death, she asked him to inform me when she died, and for me to inform the movement. Once met, never forgotten. Complete with her little Noddy car, she reminded me of one of the formidable claymation Northern little old ladies in the marvellous *Wallace And Gromit* films. It is people like Rosa who make a movement and who are particularly invaluable precisely because they are not in the big cities but because they fly the flag in the smaller towns. It takes guts to stick out in a place like Blenheim on an issue like Waihopai (and all the rest) - Rosa had it in spades. Rest in peace old battler, you've earned it.

