

Veteran lobbyist led life full of adventure

Colin Iles: Born Nottingham, England, February 10, 1938. Died Christchurch, March 3, 2012, aged 74.

Pace activist, author and a key player in New Zealand's Men for Non Violence movement Colin Iles, died while visiting Christchurch last weekend. The 74-year-old, whose life was full of adventure, was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer early in the new year.

English-born Mr Iles, who for the past few years lived at the Riverside Community near Motueka, was a veteran lobbyist of the Free East Timor Campaign.

Friend and former colleague Peter Kemp, of Nelson, said Mr Iles was pivotal in raising New Zealand's awareness of the plight of the East Timorese after Indonesia's invasion of their country on December 7, 1975.

The Indonesians overthrew the popular Fretilin-led government of the day and began a violent quarter-century occupation, in which 200,000 East Timorese soldiers and civilians are estimated to have died.

Throughout the occupation, Mr Iles lobbied successive New Zealand governments to recognise this situation in their diplomatic relationships with Indonesia.

For his longtime support of the East Timorese, he was given two awards, including one by former militant and first president of East Timor Xanana Gusmao when he first came to New Zealand as a guest of the Government.

In May 2010, Mr Iles was invited by the government of East Timor to a state ceremony in Dili, where he was awarded a medal and a citation in honour of his work.

In addition to promoting peaceful relationships between countries, Mr Iles was dedicated to promoting peaceful relationships within households.

During the mid-1980s he was a forerunner worker in the Men for Non Violence



Great passions: Colin Iles has been described as an "insightful, truthful open-hearted man".

movement, which began in Wellington, and then took root in local communities around New Zealand, including Nelson. The movement was dedicated to providing education for men to enable them to stop using violence in their families.

While Mr Iles was living at the Riverside Community, he worked as a men's mentor for the Motueka Stop Violence Group.

His book, *Out of Control*, published in 1996 by the Pacific Education Resources Trust, gave accounts of men who had turned their lives away from violence.

Mr Kemp described Mr Iles as an insightful, truthful open-hearted man.

"He cared deeply about people. He was compassionate, but tough at times. His political insights were very sharp and that was one reason why he got involved in East Timor," Mr Kemp said.

Mr Iles loved adventure. As a young man, he decided to

land via the East, where his interest in politics intensified because of what was happening in Vietnam. From then on, social justice and political activism became a strong focus.

He was also a man who could turn his hand to anything, but didn't want to become a "capitalist, entrepreneur". He developed an early prototype of a solar panel, but was unwilling to take the risk needed to turn his ideas into a business.

He lived in Golden Bay for many years, where he was a beekeeper. One year he gave the entire proceeds of his export manuka honey to the Golden Bay Work Centre Trust. He was also involved in the establishment of the Tui Community in Golden Bay. It was his Bee Balm recipe that gave the community an enduring and successful business.

From 1986, he lived in Wellington with his partner, Jo Lynch, and her son, Thomas, but left the capital in 2007 to return to community living.

"It was evident, listening to Colin talk about his childhood, that his love for adventure, his independence of spirit and his sense of justice were with him from the beginning," Ms Lynch said.

"He often said he had more than nine lives and his adventures with Clarinda must have taken several of them.

"He seemed to keep manufacturing new ones, though."

Windsurfing and paragliding were also his great passions. He would often take to Wellington harbour with his board in conditions bad enough to cause the Eastbourne ferry to be cancelled.

He had his last paragliding flight less than a month before he died.

Tracy Neal