

15 July 2013

JUST MY THOUGHTS----- Veronica Cox

As the wife of a surviving, but Cancer Suffering ex servicemen and a sister who's Brother died in 2002 of oesophagus cancer, both who served in the Royal New Zealand Navy and were on board HMNZS OTAGO when it sailed to Mururoa Atoll in 1973. It disturbs me that WE have heard nothing from Our Government since the release of the Mururoa Testing documents by the French Military after 40 Years.

The reports show that Tahiti some 1250 kilometres away, were exposed to much larger doses of radiation than was originally admitted. Our two ships HMNZS OTAGO and HMNZS CANTERBURY were only 12- 15 kilometres off Mururoa Atoll at the time. Yes my Husband is in receipt of a War Disability Pension, because we were able to, with the help of Medical Specialists around us, to prove the only way **HE** could have contracted **THIS TYPE of CANCER** was to be exposed to **HIGH DOSED OF IONISED RADIATION**. But there are Many of the Crew, who have died without gaining a Pension, and Many, Many more who have been told that they are not eligible. And still some who don't know there is even a pension that may be available to them.

In 1973 the HMNZS OTAGO was about to sail, as ordered by the New Zealand Government, to show the Governments objection to the testing, with **Fraser Coleman MP as the Government Representative Protestor**. The then Labour Prime Minister Norman Kirk, actually shook my husband's hand and said 'You will be alright, Son, If anything goes wrong WE(the New Zealand Government, I presume) will look after you'

At a Reunion we attended about 10 years ago, the then very ill Fraser Coleman although unable to speak, had his wife speak on his behalf, and said 'the sailor's were **not** there as **Protestors**, **He** was the **Protestor, representing the New Zealand Government**. The ships were only there as a means of transport.

A few years later we attended another Reunion and Retired Rear Admiral Ted Thorne, Spoke to this gathering and said 'When these men joined the Royal New Zealand Navy, they signed on the DOTTED line swearing allegiance to Queen and Country and from then on Did as they were told, and did that job very well. They were told where to go and when to go.'

There is no point, as some would like to try, to seek compensation from the French Government. The French didn't invite Our ships to go the Mururoa Atoll and certainly didn't want them there. It was the New Zealand Government who sent these men on these two ships to Mururoa Atoll, and it is the New Zealand Governments responsibility to compensate and look after these Men, their wives/partners and their Children. There are many whose families have been affected by this trip dubbed, in jest, by the crew, as **BIG NORM'S MYSTERY TOUR**.

Each day, for the last 17Years, I live with the fact that it maybe today, tomorrow, next week or next month, we will be told that my Husband 's cancer has gone internal and by then it will probably be too late for any treatment.

It saddens me that My Brother never got to see either of his son's marry and will never get to meet any of his Grand-children.

It is time the New Zealand Public was told what happened. They need to know that 500+ Sailors were exposed to HIGH doses of Radiation. The New Zealand Government has a duty of care to Men and their Families

Veterans Affairs need to HELP these Men and their Families, without putting obstruction in their way as to why their health issues are not attributable to their service of THIS COUNTRY.

The New Zealand Government need to investigate on behalf of these men and their Families the possibilities that the Children may be affected, now or in the future, due to the Service of their Fathers and Grandfathers.