

[HOME](#) [ABOUT NZINE](#) [NZ MAP](#) [CONTACT](#)[RECENT ARTICLES](#) [YOUR VIEWS](#)

Search Articles

[< Back](#)

Neil Cherry, scientist, teacher, politician, peace worker

Part 14

Travel an integral part of Neil's life and career

Dorothy - 19/09/03

Travel within New Zealand and internationally became an increasing part of Neil Cherry's career and the Cherry family's life as the years went by. As Neil's work on meteorology, climatology, wind research, and the dangers of electromagnetic radiation became more widely known, the opportunities and the need to make contact with scientists world wide also grew. Sabbaticals
Sabbaticals took the Cherry family to live in the US in 1980 and 1986 and with his increasing recognition as an international scientist Neil travelled at other times to fulfil the demands of his work.

In **1980**, after working as the Executive Officer for the New Zealand Wind Energy Survey Programme, he accepted an invitation to spend a sabbatical in Richland, Washington State, as independent international reviewer of the US Wind Resource Programme. He was able to detect the errors in the programme and assist them to correct them.

The family lived in Richland and Jo and Karla went to the local primary school and found that an interesting experience.

In **1986** the family spent seven months in the US while Neil worked at the University of California in Davis. Here he worked mainly with Professor Roger Shaw on developing an instrument to monitor the moisture close to the surface of leaves in greenhouses. This was a joint California and Israeli project, aimed at developing greenhouses which were not overmoist and therefore helping to prevent plant disease.



Family group after their return from Davis

It was during this sabbatical that he met New Zealander, Geoff Henderson, who was working on the wind farms at Altamont Pass - a meeting that was to lead to Neil and Geoff's collaboration on developing a wind energy company in New Zealand called [Windflow](#).

Neil's work involved him in a lot of travelling over the next ten years to countries that included Kenya and Sri Lanka.

In **1996** the work during the sabbatical involved a world trip for Neil and Gae, starting with a conference on Electromagnetic Radiation in Victoria, Vancouver Island.

Neil visited the Scripps Oceanographic Institute on the coast near San Diego in Southern California, and organised a joint project to produce a seasonal forecasting model for New Zealand related to the Antarctic Circumpolar Wave. The staff at the Institute are world experts in El Ninos and the interaction of the ocean with the atmosphere.

This sabbatical was a combination of meteorology and climatology and the health effects of EMR, and Neil aimed to visit the world leaders in key areas.

He visited over forty universities and research laboratories around the world. He interviewed scientists at universities in San Francisco, Davis and Seattle, and from there went to Britain and Europe visiting researchers in Britain, Germany, Denmark and Sweden where he went to the Karolinska Institute, one of the leading health research institutes in the world.

There Neil met Olle Johanson, a researcher in neurological dermatology - the connection between the brain and the skin. Olle proved that there is a clear connection between electrosensitivity and the way the brain and the skin communicate.

Travel to Europe and an address to the European Parliament

Neil's 1999 trip to address the National Congress in Trento which is in northern Italy was extended by invitations to give presentations in Rome, Avellino, Perugia and Florence. In Brussels he addressed the European Parliament about the dangers of electromagnetic radiation. He also gave presentations in Salzburg, Berne, and Dublin as part of the same trip, with many requests for a return visit over the next two years.

Travel in 2002

In spite of the diagnosis of motor neurone disease and his increasing disability Neil continued to travel in 2002.

Baltimore, Swanage, Nova Scotia and Davis

In March Neil appeared in the court case in Baltimore involving Dr Christopher Newman a neurologist who claimed that he had developed brain cancer from cellphone use.

Gae accompanied him in case he needed help, but he was still able to walk with the weakness in his left leg being the only problem. They spent a week in Baltimore. Neil appeared in the court on the first day, but needed to be there a few days early to prepare for the case. It was the coldest week of winter in Baltimore. As Neil was the first witness there was time to enjoy the harbour, the restaurants and

the friends Neil had made on the previous visits while working on the court case.

Next came a week with Karla and Jack in Swanage on the south coast of England near Bournemouth, and then a week in Nova Scotia with Roger Shaw and Susan Macmillan. Roger had formerly been Professor of Meteorology at Davis and Neil worked with him there.

The fourth week they spent in California with their friends in Davis, like Inga and John Carroll, and Neil went through to San Francisco to his friends and colleagues there - Libby Kelley, Bruce Ratcliffe and Chris Beaver - all supportive friends. Neil gave a presentation in the State Building organised by Libby Kelley and some community groups. The topic was Electromagnetic Radiation Health Effects and Genotoxicity and Child Cancer around the Sutro Tower in San Francisco. Neil was working on joint projects with local scientists on health effects in San Francisco.

Media interviews followed and the presentation was recorded on television as part of a documentary. Chris Beaver, a documentary maker, suggested that the written form of the transcript could be used as a primer for schools and libraries for people to understand the health effects of electromagnetic radiation. In talking about that Chris suggested that perhaps the best way to get Neil's wider understanding out to the community was by writing a book.

Neil continued writing the book until two days before he died.

Congress in Tokyo in March

Neil travelled alone to Auckland, to Tokyo and on a direct flight back to Christchurch. As his walking was more limited than on the previous trip he was provided with wheelchair access to Auckland airport and from Tokyo airport right to the hotel.



Neil in Tokyo

He gave a presentation on Health Effects around Radio and TV Towers at the Congress and was warmly received, with people surrounding him at the end and giving him hugs and taking photographs. The Congress was attended mainly by Japanese with four international scientists present. Libby Kelley from California spoke about the situation in the United States, a Professor from Israel spoke on the biological effects of EMR, and Ann Silk, a public health researcher from England, gave a talk about the situation in England.

Putting the research of all four together was very helpful for the Japanese. Ann Silk told Neil that her current research was on clusters of cases of Motor Neurone Disease in villages in England. She had gone around the villages and interviewed very many people. The only common factor she found among the villages was radio frequency radiation. Every cluster was in the vicinity of a cell tower, a radio or TV tower, or an amateur radio operator. Neil pointed out to her that there were seven studies which showed elevated motor neurone disease in electrical workers and three of these showed significant dose response relationships - that is the higher the exposure the higher the disease rate.

Neil explained to Ann that what she was finding among radio towers in England was not surprising because the biophysics shows that the ELF effects will be produced at a higher level and much stronger by microwave exposures at far lower mean exposure levels. For

instance the biological effects of a cell tower, if it has the same field strength as the electric field in a home, are a billion times stronger on the body than is produced by the electric field in a home. Even if the exposure is 1000 times lower the effects are still a million times stronger. Therefore since the fields are actually about a million times weaker, the effects are still 1000 times higher, so instead of finding one or two cases of Motor Neurone Disease per 100,000 people you can find a cluster of about five people being diagnosed over a year in one village with a population of three or four hundred. That is about 15 or 16 per thousand which is 1600 per 100,000. This is 800 times higher than the normal expected rate.

This is why Neil believed that taking measurements around the Sutro Tower in San Francisco several times, around the Ouruhia Tower several times, and around cell towers contributed to the advancement of his disease along with the many other factors in his life.

Back home in New Zealand

After a couple of days in Christchurch Neil flew up to Auckland and spent a day at a Windflow directors' meeting and then he met Jo and they went to a Conference of the Environmental Faculty of the College of General Practitioners in Taupo. Neil had been asked to give three presentations. The topics were:

1. Health effects of natural electromagnetic radiation - the Schumann Resonance
2. Health effects of low power frequency ELF fields - 50-60 hertz
3. RF microwave biological and health effects

Neil describes how he asked some key questions.

"How many of you in your training have had a course on biochemistry?' They all put their hands up. 'How many of you have done a course on biophysics?' Not one hand went up! 'That means that you understand about half of Mother Nature's work in the body. What are the main electromagnetic organs in the body?' Many frowns all around then someone said, 'The brain' and then after a pause, 'The heart'. Then there was a silence and I supplied the rest of the answer, 'And every cell in the body and especially the central nervous system.' They all nodded and at the end I got very positive unanimous support and amazement that there was so much science backing up what I was saying. They were wanting to have continuing learning about all this."

July 2002 Local Body Conference in Rotorua

Neil and Gae attended the Local Body Conference in Rotorua. They always entered enthusiastically into fun activities, and this time for the Mad Hatters night they wore red and black hats which they had bought in Norway, attracted to them because red and black are the Canterbury colours.



Cantabrians, Gae and Neil, at the Local Body Conference

It was a pleasant trip except for the difficulties Neil experienced using the electric wheelchair at the hotel. Slats of wood had to be used as ramps in four places in the hotel so that Neil could get to their room and to the restaurant. The hotel staff had said that the hotel was suitable for a wheelchair, but did not understand the different needs of someone with an electric wheelchair. This experience made Neil and Gae realise once again the difficulties experienced by disabled people away from home.

August 2002 Investiture

The next trip for the Cherry family was to Wellington for the investiture at which Neil was presented with his ONZM.

The Citation

The citation for the award read as follows.

Dr Neil CHERRY, of Christchurch

For services to science, education and the community Dr Cherry has made an outstanding contribution to meteorology for over 30 years. His research has included areas in Agricultural Meteorology, Meteorology, Human Biometeorology, Environmental Epidemiology, Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Climate Change, and Electromagnetic Radiation Health Effects. Dr Cherry has been involved with the Green Effect Trust, the Environmental Protection for Children Trust and is a Past Company Director of the PlaNet Community Company.

Karla came back to New Zealand for this memorable occasion. Neil and Gae also celebrated their thirty fourth wedding anniversary.



Neil receives his ONZM award from the Governor General, Dame Sylvia Cartwright



Karla, Gae and Jo with Neil after the investiture

A holiday in Australia

In September/October 2002 Gae and Neil next took an eleven day holiday. With Lesley and Murray Compton they spent eight days at Maroola Beach on the Sunshine Coast and made interesting day trips. From there they went to Brisbane and spent three days exploring that area.

On this trip as in Rotorua they had difficulties with access within the hotels with the electric wheelchair. Although the hotels had been chosen because they offered wheelchair access some actually had the shower over the bath which clearly made it impossible for a disabled person to use it.

On the way home on the plane Neil had very stressful experiences as his legs collapsed and would not support his weight when he went to the toilet. The Air New Zealand staff were very supportive in helping him through this crisis.

Clearly this was Neil's last trip.

For more information about Neil Cherry's scientific research go to his website www.neilcherry.com

[Return to the index of Neil Cherry's life story.](#)

[Home](#) [NZ Map](#) [Contact](#) [Recent Articles](#) [Your Views](#)

Copyright 1996 - 2005 NZine - A Quality Service from [Plain Communications LTD](#)