

Life threatened

It was in Nicaragua, while she was following these principles, that her life was threatened. She was walking with Warwick alongside a main highway in the dark when a vehicle hit a dog. There was terrible screaming and "half a dog" crawled off the road and "bit the nearest thing". That happened to be Margaret.

Rabies was endemic in this country and stray dogs were shot all the time. United States destabilisation was cutting into the last years of the Sandinista Government and the country had no vaccine. The only way was to fly quickly to Guatemala, a land with an oppressive political regime.

Margaret survived the ordeal with no long-lasting ill effects and - the following year - was back in Nicaragua picking coffee with an international brigade.

Other travels have included the United States and Canada. Margaret's USA travels were characteristic - pack, tent and public transport, with some illegal hitch-hiking in national parks.

"Travelling with white hair is a great advantage. People stop to find out who you are and why you're doing it."

It was during that trip in the south-west corner of Yukon that Margaret shared the early morning with a bear who was digging for roots just metres from her tent flap. She had been told by a filling station attendant it would be safe to pitch a tent as his dogs would drive off any bears. The next morning, there were no dogs in sight - but there was a black bear.

In 1982, Margaret was on the road again - this time backpacking through the highlands of Papua New Guinea. She has further travels planned - but they will not be to her country of birth or Europe.

"I don't want to see any more degraded environments - there are enough in New Zealand," she says.

"It is so important for me to go to places where there is some semblance of the original flora and fauna. If we are going to replenish the earth's resources, we have to go to where there is some baseline of what it was like.

"What I am concerned about is that we have destroyed this paradise in 100 years. Each generation accepts a more degraded environment."

Major role

In the Marlborough years, Margaret has played a major role in the planting of thousands of trees, she fought to save the province's rare broom plants from destruction, she lobbied against the pine tree invasion of the Marlborough Sounds and she wielded shovel and crowbar to establish a mini-native forest along the Taylor River in Blenheim.

She has served on both the Marlborough Catchment Board and the Marlborough Sounds Maritime Parks Board. She was the first woman to challenge for election to the former Marlborough County Council.

The National Organisation of Women in Marlborough nominated her for a Zonta

award, which resulted in the Marlborough area recognising her promotion of environmental issues. She is one of a world-wide network of Women in the Environment.

She has been an active member of all the main conservation organisations in New Zealand, written numerous articles for newspapers and magazines about caring for the environment, lectured to national and local audiences and given many radio talks.

In the future she will not be waiting for things to come her way. In inimitable fashion, she is devoting time to the teaching of permaculture skills. Her work was recognised at the fourth international permaculture conference in Katmandu earlier this year. There, she was nominated as one of a dozen foundation members of an International Guild of Permaculture Practitioners.

The skills of this hardy and devoted environmentalist are a precious asset in today's world. Each time she passes them on, the world seems a little brighter. ✨

Footnote: we are pleased to announce that the winner of our competition for a holiday in Rarotonga is Margaret Peace.

Go with the flow



It's early morning.

Perhaps you wish you'd left some of your gear at home, because your pack feels as if someone filled it with bricks. Boulder hopping is a nightmare.

Your pack behaves like a straightjacket and belongs in the garage.

The solution is obvious

Macpac's unique Dynamic harness lets the pack flow with your body, and not against it. The hip belt is centrally attached, so the pack pivots and flexes at the base of your back.

Get yourself a **Macpac** and free yourself for what is really important.

Enjoying the outdoors in unrivalled comfort.

