

A Tribute to
Datuk Dr. Ronald
Stephen McCoy
5 May 1930—
1 September 2026



by Tilman Ruff

[This tribute relies much on a chapter Ron submitted in January 2010 to a book about Malaysians who could be a source of inspiration for young Malaysians, kindly shared by his son, David McCoy.]

Early life

Ron's father, Stephen James McCoy, was born of mixed British and Indian ancestry in Madras in 1905 and came to Malaya with his family before the outbreak of the First World War. His mother, Lilith Erin Thomas, was born in Singapore of European—mainly Dutch—and Ceylonese ancestry.

Ronald Stephen McCoy was born on 5 May 1930 in Seremban, a town roughly 50 km south of Malaysia's capital Kuala Lumpur (KL). His father worked as a draughtsman in the government post and telegraph department in KL. The family lived in one of many identical government houses in a multiracial neighbourhood, with a real sense of community. Few households possessed a car; most people rode bicycles, with the occasional rickshaw and a bus service. Very few people had a radio or telephone.

On his first day of school, he remembered sitting behind Awtar Singh, resplendent in a turban. He wrote: "It was the first time I saw the magnificence of a turban at close quarters". At school he had Chinese, Indian, and Malay friends. He wrote: "As a result, diversity has become the most natural thing in the world for me. I believe that tolerating diversity is not enough. We must celebrate diversity. The planet's diversity enriches all our lives."

Japanese occupation

In December 1941, Japanese forces invaded Malaya and occupied the whole of the peninsula, including Singapore, by February 1942. Ron's father was in the Federated Malay States Volunteer Force, and part of the retreat south towards Singapore before they were disbanded just before the surrender of Singapore and advised to change into civilian clothes to avoid internment as prisoners of war and a potentially grim fate. Ron's mother Lilith and the three children were left behind in KL, without knowing the fate of their father. After three months of uncertainty, Ron's father Stephen suddenly appeared, having walked the 300 km back from Singapore with four friends, an "unbelievable, joyous" reunion.

Under occupation, Ron learnt to read and write Japanese at school. At 14, he was employed as an apprentice draughtsman in the same drawing office of the Federated

Engineering Company where his father worked, taken over by Japanese forces to manufacture marine engines. During occupation, food was scarce, dependent on monthly rations of rice and cigarettes which they sold.

Ron's parents always placed a high premium on education and arranged for Ron to have private tuition in mathematics and English. When the war ended, at 15 Ron was able to resume his secondary education at the Victoria Institution. He remembered his teachers with great affection and much gratitude, and credited them second only to his parents in making important contributions to his life and values. There he learnt to 'stretch' himself to the maximum and excel, becoming captain of the school hockey and cricket teams, representing the school at football and in its relay team and in his final year becoming School Captain and editor of the school magazine. In 1948 he topped the school certificate exam and was awarded the Rodger Medal. He credited the school's Welsh headmaster Frederick Daniel, though grieving the death of his wife in Japanese captivity in Java during the war, with teaching him to lead and not follow and for awakening his sense of social responsibility and self-discipline. At Ron's memorial, the Victoria Institution cadet band played Auld Lang Syne on bagpipes and drums.

University years

Ron was admitted to study medicine at the University of Malaya in Singapore, the first university in the country, in its founding year 1949, with the assistance of a university scholarship and federal bursary. Ron described university years as the most memorable of his life, plunging into university student life and absorbing everything it had to offer. He was elected to the student council in his first year and later served as general secretary of the University of Malaya Students Union in 1952 and as its president in 1955. He continued to relish sport and represented Singapore at hockey and the Asian Singapore All Blues in rugby and became president of the University of Malaya Athletic Union in 1952.



At the Asia-Pacific regional meeting in Kuala Lumpur, 1993.

It was here that he met Beatrice Susheila Vethavanam, called 'Twinkle' by family and friends, and that was that. They were married in 1959. Like Ron and Susheila, many among this first indigenous university cohort of Malaysians, including Malaysia's later long-serving Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad, who went to university together, forged enduring bonds and many went on to play significant roles in the birth and development of the new Malaysian nation. Ron regarded Onn bin Jaafar, a pioneer of Malaysia's independence from Britain, as Malaysia's greatest visionary, and Ron strove for an inclusive, multiracial, secular country freed from division on racial and religious lines. He was 27 when Tunku Abdul Rahman declared Merdeka/independence for Malaysia.

Medicine

Ron wrote: "it must not be forgotten that above all, medicine is a vocation or calling. It is a profession that is distinguished by altruism, a sense of social responsibility, and fulfilment

of an ethical imperative or spiritual need. It is also an art." Further, "apart from competence, it is professionalism, ethical practice and compassion that transform a doctor into a healer." He argued strongly for the duty of the medical profession to maintain its independence and integrity, independent of the pharmaceutical industry and political influence.

Ron's commitment to medical professionalism and ethics had many manifestations. In 1996, when the Malaysian government favoured corporatisation of government hospitals and privatisation of health care, the Malaysian Medical Association invited him to chair a National Health Plan Committee to analyse health needs and recommend practical steps needed for universal, equitable, affordable and quality healthcare. The 1999 report submitted to the Prime Minister strongly recommended increased health spending, integration of the public and private sectors, together with a single –payer national health financing system, funded by allocations from taxation and compulsory health insurance.

Obstetrics and gynaecology

As a student, Ron had decided to specialise in surgery, but his first posting was to the busy and overcrowded obstetrics and gynaecology department at Kuala Lumpur General Hospital. Inspired by consultant Dr Derek Llewellyn-Jones, he decided to pursue O&G. With limited antenatal care prevalent in the 1950s, there was a high proportion of abnormal pregnancies, late complications in labour, and high maternal and perinatal mortality rates.

Between 1961 and 1963 Ron trained at the Radcliffe Infirmary in Oxford. On return home, he was appalled by the state of the KL General Hospital and produced a factual report on "The Deplorable State of the General Hospital, Kuala Lumpur". This made front-page headlines and the then Minister of Health was forced to immediately announce plans to build a new general hospital.

As punishment for his criticism of the KL General Hospital administration, and following rejection of his proposal to start introducing routine cervical smears in gynaecological clinics, Ron was abruptly transferred to the Seremban General Hospital. Ron's wife Susheila had the distinction of being the first woman appointed to Malaysia's civil service and was reluctant to give up her job in KL. Although Ron was never in favour of the privatisation of health care or any other social service, including education, his dismay about the poor state of public health services and his experience of 'interference by dogmatic nuns' at a Catholic hospital, led him to join with other specialists to build a private hospital as a means to practice medicine in an independent, ethical and progressive manner - Pantai Medical Centre, where he worked until his retirement from clinical practice in 1996. Decades later, when the Centre became corporatized, Ron insisted that his name and photograph, prominently displayed in the foyer without his permission, be removed.

IPPNW

After being told the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki had helped to end the Second World War, it was only when Ron read John Hersey's *Hiroshima* as a medical student that he understood the nature and significance of those two bombings. "It stirred my conscience. I began to understand the indiscriminate, disproportionately destructive nature of atomic bombs. It was clear to me

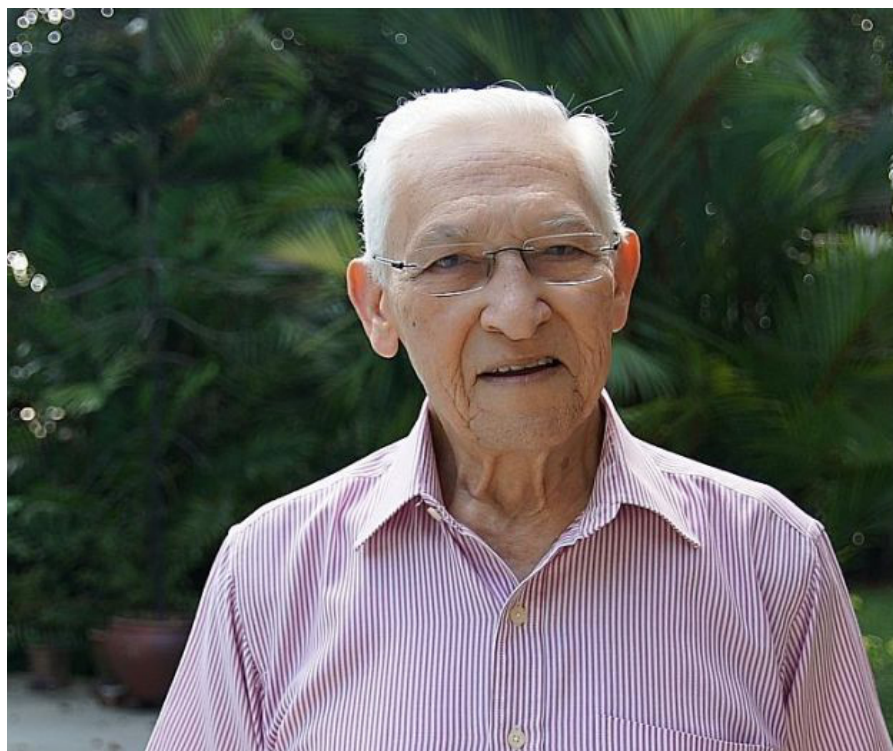


With Tilman Ruff at an ICAN campaigners meeting during the OEWG in Geneva, 2016.

that nuclear weapons are illegal weapons of war under international humanitarian law and that they must be banned."

Ron felt powerless until he read an article in the BMJ in 1986 which described the award of the 1985 Nobel Peace Prize to International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War. The BMJ provided him the address of the Medical Campaign Against Nuclear Weapons in the UK and he became an overseas member. When he learned more about the work of IPPNW, he decided it was time to set up a Malaysian affiliate. In 1987, at the Annual General Meeting of the Malaysian Medical Association, he stood on a chair and announced to those having breakfast that a serious and credible organisation like IPPNW existed and that Malaysian doctors should join it. He circulated a sheet of paper and 32 doctors signed, giving their support to the idea which progressed soon after.

Ron wrote in 2010: "Over forty years, I had the enormous privilege of looking after thousands of pregnancies and delivering about 20,000 babies. Each delivery was the beginning of another life and another family. I realized that I was carefully monitoring and nurturing a pregnancy for several months to ensure the birth of a healthy baby, and yet each baby was born into a world bristling with thousands of nuclear weapons. I was convinced that these babies deserved to live in a world without nuclear weapons." He regarded working for a world freed from nuclear weapons as part of his duty of post-natal care as a complete obstetrician.



My first contact with Ron was in 1986, when he wrote introducing himself and seeking advice about educational materials he could use for presentations about the health dimensions of nuclear war. Among the resources I recommended were the slide sets produced by the Nuclear War Graphics Project in the United States, the first WHO report on the effects of nuclear war on health, the IPPNW book *Last Aid* and the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*. In 1987, Ron attended his first IPPNW World Congress in Moscow, where Malaysian Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War was voted in as an affiliate. MPPNW received strong support from fellow doctor Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad and Malaysia's Foreign Minister Tengku Ahmad Rithauddeen. Ron quickly played an

active and leading role in IPPNW, including as the first vice-president for the Asia-Pacific region in 1994-5, and later as co-president and president between 1996 and 2006.

In 1995 when the International Court of Justice conducted hearings for its Advisory Opinion on the legal status of nuclear weapons, Ron was invited by the Malaysian government to help prepare its written submission to the Court and was included in its delegation to present its oral submission to the ICJ in The Hague.

In December 1995 the Australian government of Prime Minister Paul Keating invited Ron to be a member of the prestigious Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, together with 16 others, including Robert McNamara, Joseph Rotblat, General Lee Butler, Michel Rocard, Maj Britt Theorin and Qian Jiadong. Wishing to devote himself to the important work of the Commission, Ron decided to retire from his busy medical practice at Pantai Medical Centre. The Commission's report remains as cogent today as it was then.



Launching ICAN at the 2007 NPT PrepCom at the United Nations in Vienna. Felicity Hill, the campaign's first staff director, holds a copy of "Securing Our Survival," which promoted a Model Nuclear Weapons Convention.

deadlocked NPT process, which has once again been demonstrated at the UN this month, thirty-five years after the ratification of the NPT.

Although I realise that nuclear weapons are not strategically similar to landmines, I nevertheless believe that IPPNW must coalesce with other groups, find the support of like-minded governments, and launch an 'Ottawa-style process' for the elimination of nuclear weapons by working towards a Nuclear Weapons Convention. We already have a Biological Weapons Convention and a Chemical Weapons Convention. Why not a Nuclear Weapons Convention?

We can call it an International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, with the acronym ICAN. Let's start working on this right now."

The simple but compelling vision embodied in this call struck wide resonance, particularly among IPPNW colleagues in Australia, notably Bill Williams, Sue Wareham and me. At the

ICAN

When the 2005 nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference ended in disarray in no small measure as a result of the intransigence of US President George W Bush, Ron was convinced that it was time to think outside the NPT box and act beyond the failed NPT process.

Four days after returning home from the NPT Review Conference, on 28 May 2005 Ron emailed the following open letter to IPPNW affiliates:

"There are lessons to be learnt from the landmines ban campaign. As you know, I have for some time been advocating lateral thinking and a new approach to nuclear disarmament, parallel to the

2006 Helsinki Congress, IPPNW's International Council unanimously adopted ICAN as the primary vehicle for IPPNW's work for nuclear weapons abolition. ICAN was developed as a joint project of IPPNW and its Australian affiliate, the Medical Association for Prevention of War (MAPW). A week after its first public launch in Melbourne, Australia, Ron spoke at the international launch of ICAN at the April 2007 NPT Preparatory Committee meeting in Vienna.

Ten years later, Ron was in Oslo when ICAN was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for 2017: "for its work to draw attention to the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons and for its ground-breaking efforts to achieve a treaty-based prohibition of such weapons", the historic UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons adopted in July that year.

Family

Ron's wife Susheila was born in KL. Both her parents had emigrated from Ceylon. Her father was an architect and member of the sanitary board in KL. Susheila's mother had to interrupt their education in her teens when she had to go to work to support her younger siblings after the death of her father. Susheila became the first woman civil servant in Malaysia, then receiving a salary less than any of her male colleagues.



Susheila and Ron at the 22nd IPPNW World Congress in York, 2017

Susheila and Ron had three children: Stephen, David and Ruth. In diverse ways, each of them are a tribute to Susheila and Ron, including empowerment through education, embracing a planetary horizon as global citizens, and excelling in international health, UN, development and humanitarian work. Ron describes perhaps the hardest part of family life being separation from their children when he and Susheila decided to send them to boarding schools in Britain at age 13 to 14 years. He later wrote that: "With hindsight we would not repeat the mistake of sending our children to boarding schools, although it gave them the opportunity of a good education."

At the memorial tribute for Ron in KL on 7 September, David McCoy spoke of the things he thought his father excelled at, to which I have added a little:

- Being Malaysian, with secular humanism and a deep appreciation of the peoples and cultures of his homeland, whose diversity he cherished.
- Speaking his mind on a wide diversity of topics, including the need for free and fair elections, an independent judiciary and media, concern about deaths in detention and about corruption, and nuclear war and climate change as the two greatest threats to human and planetary survival, both requiring cooperative global responses. He no doubt contributed to Malaysia as yet avoiding the fraught path of nuclear power, despite the country's rapid economic growth, technocratic flirtations and the influence of vested interests.

- Medicine. In Ron's practice the Caesarean section rate of 10% was very low for private practice, reflecting good clinical, social and personal care.
- The struggle to rid the world of nuclear weapons, shifting focus to become a more complete obstetrician, striving to make the world safer for all the babies he delivered.
- Being precise, careful, meticulous, considered (and sometimes slow) in all things - speech, writing, dress, manner, thought. I never saw his hair except neatly combed with a dash of Brylcreem.



- A natural leader and visionary, but also a humble and wonderful colleague, comrade and team player.



- Stoicism. Ron endured quite a few years of declining capacity and health, growing old and frail, bearing difficult illnesses and suffering, losing Susheila in November last year, and dying with great dignity and grace.
- Susheila and Ron were the vital nurturing core at the heart of their extended family.

Ron did all these things and more in an unassuming, humble, calm, kind, thoughtful and unegotistical way. In working with him over decades, he was unfailingly warm, supportive, encouraging, honest, sincere and thoroughly decent. You knew exactly where you stood with him. Always willing to listen and learn, always with a sincere invitation: "You must come and stay with us".

Ron and Susheila by no means agreed on everything, but the enduring closeness, positivity and solidity of their mutually supportive and encouraging life partnership was deeply nurturing and generously reassuring to be around. Their bond was always warmly welcoming and inclusive.

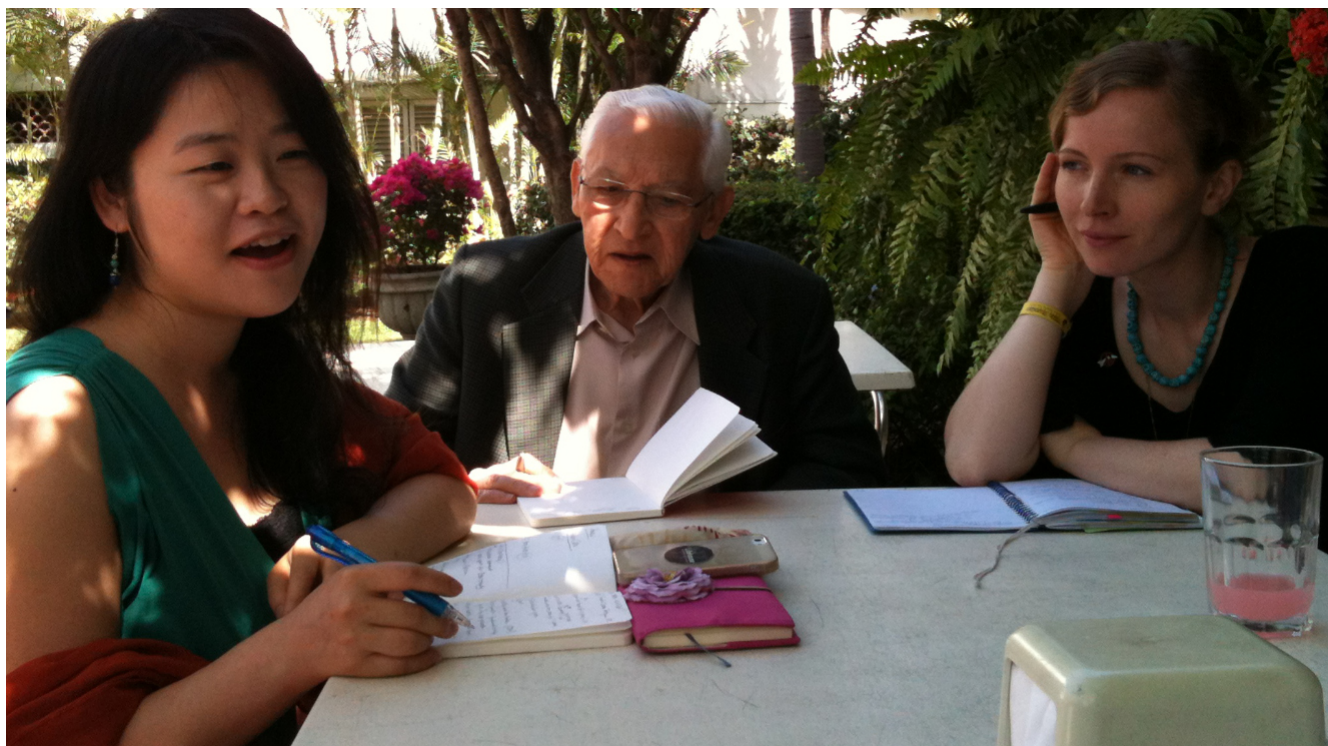
Some fond memories

The house that Ron and Susheila built together and lived and raised their children in for 60 years in Jalan Tanjung, Petaling Jaya was a welcoming oasis and a place of rich conversations. The guest room provided no doubt the most hallowed bed in which I have slept. Before my first stay there, Maestro Ravi Shankar had visited, his immediate focus of

attention on arrival being not himself or anyone else but his sitar, which he was anxious to have rest in a suitably safe and air-conditioned place. Knowing that Ravi Shankar had placed his sitar on the bed that I slept in was a very special benediction.

My favourite part of Ron and Susheila's large and diverse collection of Malaysian art was the fascinating, expressive and beautiful carved and polished wooden figures from all over Malaysia that stood on each end of every step of the staircase up to their bedroom. I know they helped to ground him at the start and end of each day.

Ron's energy and capacity were prodigious. As far as I could tell, there wasn't anything much that Ron did by halves or badly. He said he was unaffected by jet lag and disrupted sleep. Just as well for an obstetrician; labour and babies know their own time. The guest room is next to the driveway, so as a light sleeper I became aware that while I slept, his work went on. He would be called during the night to tend to women in labour and births, frequently multiple times. Yet unfailingly, the next morning he would be up bright and early, often before me, and carry through the whole next day with his usual energy and enthusiasm.



*At the second conference on the Humanitarian Impacts of Nuclear Weapons,
Nayarit, Mexico, 2014.*

One fond memory is of going with Ron on a weekend morning to a nearby restaurant serving one of his favourite simple pleasures, freshly baked roti channai. Walking along the street, in the space of a few hundred meters, Ron was embraced with reverence and gratitude by several mothers and grandmothers whose children he had delivered, sometimes across generations.

Visiting the Malaysian Foreign Ministry with him was a treat unlike any other Foreign Ministry visit in my experience. The deep respect in which he was held as a revered elder was a rare privilege to experience. I think it would be a fair guess to judge that Ron's

leadership and voice have had no small influence in Malaysia being a consistent champion of nuclear disarmament and signing the TPNW the day it opened for signature on 20 September 2017.

Yet when he visited our cooperative farm in northeast Victoria he mucked in helping to plant trees and waited patiently while we conducted a farm meeting, so undemanding, unobtrusive and humble other farm members could be completely unaware of his distinction.

As a copious tea drinker, I appreciated that Ron was ever up for a cup of tea (in his case, seriously sweet). And that other fine English tradition, gin and tonic. But the thing I most enjoyed eating with him was the stinky, sticky and messy ritual in the garden of eating durian.

Perhaps my most precious memory with Ron was at 10:47 in the morning on 7 July 2017 at the United Nations in New York, when the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons was adopted. The tally board we were glued to as states cast their votes showed the result to be 122 nations in favour to 1 against, with 1 abstention. Ron was in the row behind my wife Charlotte Laemmle, IPPNW program director John Loretz, and me. He was on his feet, as we all were, at this epochal moment of hope, affirmation and possibility, when his idea of ICAN definitively proved its worth and a bright light was lit in a darkening time. John and I both looked to Ron, saw him wobble and slump and were worried our 87 year-old friend would fall. As quickly as I could, I went to and held him firm in his uncontainable relief and joy.



Coming full circle in Oslo, at the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize ceremony, with Dave Sweeney (l) and Tilman Ruff, who helped nurture ICAN during its formative years in Australia.

IPPNW Remembers

Ron McCoy

"Over forty years, I had the enormous privilege of looking after thousands of pregnancies and delivering about 20,000 babies....I realized that I was carefully monitoring and nurturing a pregnancy for several months to ensure the birth of a healthy baby, and yet each baby was born into a world bristling with thousands of nuclear weapons. I was convinced that these babies deserved to live in a world without nuclear weapons."



I WAS DEEPLY SADDENED by the passing of Ron McCoy. Having had the privilege of working alongside him, I wanted to express how much his presence meant to all of us in IPPNW and the global nuclear abolition movement.

If my failing memory is correct, I first met Ron as a young staff person at the 1989 IPPNW World Congress in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Nine years and many encounters later, Ron hosted an IPPNW Board meeting in Malaysia, where I was appointed executive director. He arranged for us to live and work together at the beautiful beachfront property Avillion Port Dickson, and he and Susheila welcomed us into their home to share a meal together. Over the ensuing years, I would have the happy occasion to reconnect with them at numerous IPPNW events all over the world. Both were always so warm and supportive.

Of course, I am among the countless people around the globe who were deeply touched and inspired by Ron. He played a uniquely important role in IPPNW for more than four decades. As IPPNW Co-President, his leadership and vision helped IPPNW find its footing in the post-Cold War world.

Ron was a moral compass in our organization. He carried a rare blend of fierce determination and profound humility. What I will remember most is Ron's unwavering optimism and kindness. He never lost faith in humanity's capacity for reason and compassion. He truly believed a world free of nuclear weapons was possible, and that belief sparked the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons and the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

We have lost a giant in the global peace movement, and a truly beautiful soul. Please know that Ron's vision lives on in the work we continue to do every day.

—*Michael Christ, Executive Director*



At the World Congress in Beijing (above) and an IPPNW Board meeting in Havana (left).

WITHOUT RON MCCOY, there would have been no ICAN and, likely, no Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. All of us who were in the room remember the white-haired visionary who boldly proposed a new campaign for a nuclear weapons convention at IPPNW's 2006 board meeting in Helsinki. The failure of the NPT Review Conference in 2005 had been Ron's tipping point, and he had had enough. Ron had a clarity of purpose, an unwavering commitment to the goal of a nuclear-weapons-free world, and a fierce determination that inspired everyone who knew him. I'll admit that I was skeptical at first, but Ron had a way of overcoming skepticism, and he overcame mine. While it took a few years for the embryo to develop (Ron was first and foremost an obstetrician, remember, and had brought thousands of babies into the world), once enough skilled people had got onboard and had given shape and a sharper focus to the campaign, Ron's original vision of ICAN led directly and remarkably quickly to the TPNW.

Above all else, Ron was a kind and compassionate man. Whenever we met, wherever we were in the world, he first wanted to know how I was doing, if I was taking care of myself, if my (notoriously bad) back was holding up. He would always ask if there was something he should be doing when he got back to Malaysia, and would remind me that he was always able to get meetings with his country's decision makers because he had delivered so many of their babies. While the love of his life Susheila carried the nickname Twinkle, it was the ever-present twinkle in Ron's eye that made you appreciate his unflinching belief that we could make the world a better place. Ron gave optimism a good name whenever he was in the room.



With another IPPNW giant, Dr. Vic Sidel (center), at his home in New York City.



Vinales, Cuba, 2003

Two images always come to mind when I think of Ron, which is often. The first is looking back over my shoulder in the UN conference room immediately after the vote to adopt the TPNW and seeing Ron collapse into Tilman Ruff's arms, overwhelmed by the emotion of the moment. The second, from several years earlier, is of Ron straddling a water buffalo in Cuba, his smile as wide as the brim of the cowboy hat atop his head. I'm happy and fortunate to have known him.

—John Loretz, IPPNW Program Director (2000-2017)

I FIRST MET RON at the Culture of Peace Congress in Berlin in 2003. It was my first international IPPNW conference, and I had only just joined IPPNW as a medical student a few years earlier. I remember sitting there, listening to Ron's opening speech, and experiencing a feeling that has stayed with me ever since: the sense that I had found a place where I belonged. I felt that IPPNW was an organization in which I could feel welcome and at home, surrounded by people who believed that being a doctor also meant taking responsibility for the world beyond the walls of a hospital or clinic.

At the heart of Ron's speech was an image of the world as a great machine in need of repair. None of us, he said, could fix the whole machine alone. But each of us could work on the part within our reach, using whatever knowledge, skills and possibilities we had—and if enough of us did this, and did it together, perhaps we could repair the machine after all.

I was a young student then, and this simple image made a profound impression on me. More than twenty years later, I still remember it. In many ways, it helped shape my understanding of what IPPNW could be and encouraged me to become more deeply involved in the years that followed.



With former IPPNW Co-President Ime John (left) and former International Student Representative Alex Rosen in 2005

I truly got to know Ron during a trip to Rome, where he, Ime John and I represented IPPNW at a gathering of Nobel Peace Prize laureates. We spent many hours talking, during the conference and in the evenings. What struck me was the wonderful combination of experience and youthfulness that Ron possessed. Despite everything he had already seen and accomplished, he had never lost his curiosity. He wanted to understand other people, to understand

views different from his own, to listen and to engage. And at the same time, there was this remarkable determination in him—the conviction that another world was possible, and that it was worth spending one's life trying to bring it a little closer.

I also remember the early days of ICAN. At the time, I was serving on the IPPNW board, and I still remember Ron speaking about the need for an international campaign to abolish nuclear weapons. There was an urgency and clarity to his vision. What began as an idea, then became a project and a campaign within IPPNW, eventually grew far beyond our organization. Knowing what ICAN would later become, it is extraordinary to look back at those beginnings and to remember Ron's conviction that something so ambitious was not only necessary, but possible.

I was fortunate enough to spend a week with Ron and his wife at their home in Kuala Lumpur. I remember sitting with them over breakfast in their garden, learning that pineapples have to be enjoyed with a pinch of salt, listening to Ron's stories and seeing Malaysia through his eyes and

through his memories. Away from conferences, meetings and campaigns, I had the chance simply to spend time with him. Those mornings and conversations are among the memories I treasure most.

I was certainly not among the people in IPPNW who knew Ron best or worked with him most closely. But I feel extraordinarily fortunate that our paths crossed so many times and that I had the opportunity to know him—not only as one of the remarkable figures in the history of IPPNW, but as a person.

Ron inspired me with his intelligence and his energy, but perhaps even more with his compassion, his curiosity and his enduring belief in our ability to change things for the better. He was one of those people who could make you feel that even an enormous task was worth attempting—that none of us had to repair the whole machine, but that all of us had a part of it within our reach. That is how I will remember him.

I deeply miss him, and I am profoundly grateful that I had the privilege of knowing him.

—Dr. Alexander Rosen, IPPNW-Germany

RON WAS a great man, with a rich wealth of experience. He was an engaging leader and will be missed. May his soul rest in peace.

—Ime John, Nigeria/Sweden

I WOULD LIKE TO SAY what a lovely person Ron was—always happy to greet you, listen to you and laugh with you; always committed and inspiring, and such a great leader.

—Liz Waterston, Medact, UK



With an IPPNW "Dialogues With Decisionmakers" delegation at the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office in London in 1996



Speaking at an IPPNW-Germany event in Bonn, 2006

RON MCCOY is one of the most wonderful people I've ever met. He was authentic, empathetic, pleasant, passionate, and persistent with his approach to lobby the world for peace and justice.

He guided our global movement for many years with outstanding wisdom. I am grateful that it was my privilege over decades to be friends with Ron. I will miss him—and he will keep his place in my heart.

—Lars Pohlmeier, Germany

MEMBERS OF THE GERMAN IPPNW SECTION had the opportunity to meet Ron McCoy in person at our major 2003 conference, "Culture of Peace," where he spoke from the perspective of the Global South about the US war against Iraq, which violated international law. He clearly laid out the facts and was pleased that our then-Chancellor Schröder, together with French President Chirac, had firmly rejected participation in the "coalition of the willing".

For the second time, Ron played a crucial role for us because, as one of the founders of the ICAN campaign, he gave us so much encouragement, urging us to focus all our strength to ensure that nuclear weapons would be banned. At that time, we were timid and didn't really believe in success. His persuasiveness inspired us to take action, especially here in Europe. Ron's pervasiveness and the new studies on nuclear winter, and, not least, the major conference in Vienna in 2014 convinced us.

Thank you, Ron; we will remember you for your persuasive power.

—Angelika Claussen, Germany

I WAS HONORED to meet Ron during his visits to Peace Congresses in Athens and at IPPNW meetings, and I was inspired by his enthusiasm and kindness. We will always remember him and I hope his example would inspire IPPNW's next generation.

—*Maria Arvaniti Sotiropoulou, Greece*

WE SHARE the grief and sorrow of losing Dr. Ron McCoy, a great leader of IPPNW, a missed dear friend and an exemplary physician in the making of peace and health. We extend our sincere condolences to his family and to the IPPNW family.

—*Derman Boztok, Turkey*



THE YEARS Ron and I worked together as Co-Presidents of IPPNW were among the best in my life. Against all cautionary advice, you took the initiative to start ICAN. When I had a difficult time, you were there, warm and caring.

—*Gunnar Westberg, Sweden*

OUR IPPNW FAMILY have lost one of our greatest leaders ever. Ron showed the way for all of us for the last decades with his initiative for ICAN and the focus on humanitarian impacts. I thank him from my heart for his impatience, wisdom, and friendliness. My thoughts and condolences go to David and the family.

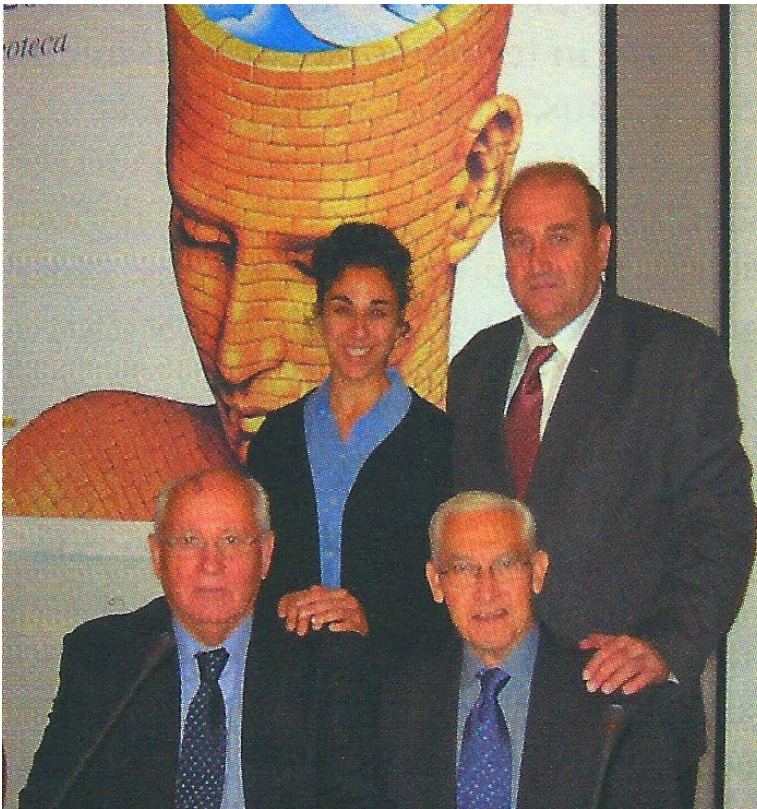
—*Bjørn Hilt, Norway*

I REMEMBER RON as a gentle and visionary leader of IPPNW and then in ICAN. I learned much from him. Concerning ICAN, I still remember the Board meeting after the Congress in Helsinki 2006, when he suggested the name of the new campaign could be International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons. The acronym could also be encouraging—I CAN. The rest is history.

—*Kati Juva, Finland*

RON WAS so important to us in IPPNW, always supporting peace and new ideas for building it up.

—*Ilkka and Vappu Taipale, Finland*



With former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev at the 4th World Summit of Nobel Peace Laureates in Rome in 2003

THE ITALIAN AFFILIATE of our IPPNW cries at the loss of our great Ron. Prof. Ronald McCoy came to Rome in November 2003 for the 4th World Summit of Nobel Peace Laureates. We published his historical photo with the other two members of IPPNW delegation that he wanted with him. On that occasion, Ron was also received by the Italian Medical Association. He came to Rome again in March 2004, and led an historic global seminar at the Rome NATO College about weapons of mass destruction. He received a standing ovation from members of some 90 international delegations when he concluded that nuclear weapons should have been abolished (just as slavery had been abolished!) by the international community. I never will forget his smile when he came to Oslo on 10 December 2017 for ICAN's Nobel Peace Prize. Ron was a kind giant for all of us.

—Michele Di Paolantonio, (AIMPGN)

RON WAS THE DRIVING FORCE behind the founding of the ICAN movement—a movement whose events in Oslo and Vienna I attended, and which succeeded in securing the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Sadly, Gorbachev did not prevail with his proposal to abolish nuclear weapons entirely, and the USA and the West still lay claim—contrary to the UN Charter—to being the world's most powerful states, a stance that threatens to destroy us, as the Russell-Einstein Manifesto warned. He is one of the many people within IPPNW who have left a lasting impression... Let us hope that humanity manages to utterly condemn war and create an enduring culture of peace. This very crisis offers an opportunity to do just that!

—Helmut Kaß, Germany



Rome 2005

I MET RON in London and he was great to chat with and very encouraging to me and complimented my letter in the Guardian about the TPNW which had just been published. That meant a lot to me. Condolences to his family.

—Michael Orgel, Scotland

THE NUCLEAR WEAPONS GROUP of Medact UK will always be indebted to Ron and his family. His son David succeeded me as Chair of Medact and also acted part-time as Director, which was such a good contribution for our survival. I met Ron several times and admire his gracious "exit" which seems so typical of a truly caring person and loving family.

—Frank Boulton, UK

OVER DECADES Ron was a great inspiration to different generations of like minded people who believe we still can improve and save this world. As a Co-President he led many IPPNW meetings internally, co-founded ICAN, joined delegations, talked to world leaders, and, indeed, was impatient and persistent, yet always gentle and diplomatic. I cherish many beautiful memories, also with his family. His medical profession brought him thankfulness from many grandmothers and mothers after many thousands of deliveries. He helped souls in new generations to be inspired and to continue our mission for a better, healthier, and safer world. Thank you Ron, thank you.

—Herman Spanjaard, The Netherlands

WHAT A WONDERFUL PERSON has passed away. I had the honour to meet him once at the dinner in the Railway Museum during the World Congress in York, together with his wife Susheila. His love for life and earth was what made a huge impression on me. I'm grateful for what Ron has given us all.

—Marianne Begemann, The Netherlands



At the Nur Astana Mosque during the 2014 World Congress.

DR. RON MCCOY will be remembered for a long time for his global leadership for peace, for humanity, and for a healthy future for everyone. His many friends in Australia share with others a sense of deep respect, gratitude and warmth for Ron and everything he achieved.

Ron leaves a legacy of the most profound significance for current and future generations. His proposal for the establishment of an International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons became the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, ICAN, which has transformed discussions globally on this existential threat to humanity.

He contributed tirelessly to ridding the world of this threat, both before and after the formation of ICAN, and always with the active support of his equally-committed wife Susheila. His contributions were recognised, and augmented, by his inclusion as one of the commissioners on the 1996 Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons. It is also fitting, and perhaps no coincidence, that Malaysia was among the original 50 states parties in 2017 to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

But it was not just nuclear weapons that spurred Ron into activism, but the gamut of injustices, particularly those related to militarism. I recall very early in my IPPNW involvement being greatly informed and motivated by his presentation at an early IPPNW regional conference in Kuala Lumpur about the arms trade, its impacts and ways forward.

Fortunately for many of us in Australia, the proximity between our two countries enabled us to involve Ron frequently in our national conferences. In 1993 in Lorne in Victoria, in the aftermath of the Cold War, he spoke of the need for social stability and economic security for everyone, including by wealth redistribution and healthcare for all. In 1997 in Canberra he spoke on “Abolition – getting to zero”. In 1998, at the global IPPNW Congress in Melbourne, the same theme was a key one for Ron and others. In 2003 in Adelaide, as the “war on terror” was unfolding, he spoke on the health consequences of global conflict. In 2005 when he spoke in Melbourne at our conference “Nuclear Terror: 60 Years On”, the idea of ICAN was brewing and taking shape.

Over and above all of that was the deep humanity, humility and warmth towards all that characterised Ron. We will miss him greatly, but we remain profoundly grateful for having shared just a little of this outstanding man’s life. We’re committed to continuing his legacy.

—Sue Wareham, Australia



Ron (at left) hosting the 1993 IPPNW Asia-Pacific regional conference in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

RON WAS one of the true giants of our movement and a truly wonderful human being. We are all forever in his debt.

—*Ira Helfand, US*

RON HAS BEEN an incredible inspiration to all of us, especially those of us who have been graced to know him personally for so many years. Patrice and I cherish his memory and want to express our deepest condolences to his family.

—*Bob Gould and Patrice Sutton, US*

I REALLY LOVED HIM DEARLY. We often walked together when we had insomnia—he claimed it was because he had been an obstetrician and spent so much of his time up at night. He was a gentleman.

—*Dale Dewar, Canada*

*Marching with and speaking to
thousands of supporters of nuclear
abolition in New York City during the
2005 NPT Review Conference*



I WILL ALWAYS be filled with pride that I have known Dr. Ron McCoy, a person, cool but firm with commitment to abolish nuclear weapons to save the world. During several interactions with him I was enriched with more knowledge every time about why we, the doctors should be on forefront in the struggle for complete nuclear disarmament.

It was during these meetings that he introduced me to Maj. Gen. Vinod Saigal (Retd.) who remained an advisor and guide to IDPD until his last breath in February.

Dr. McCoy always vouched for a bigger coordinated movement of like minded people/ organisations to build a larger advocacy group for a complete nuclear disarmament. His concerted efforts and perseverance bore fruits in the form of ICAN – the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons. His brainchild—ICAN—was successful in getting the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) passed by the UN General Assembly.

It was a great pleasure for me to meet his son, Professor David McCoy, at a seminar on corporatization of healthcare in India in September. His discourse was a clearcut reflection of the values of his father.

On behalf of IDPD, we express our heartfelt condolences and pledge to continue the ideals of Ron McCoy.

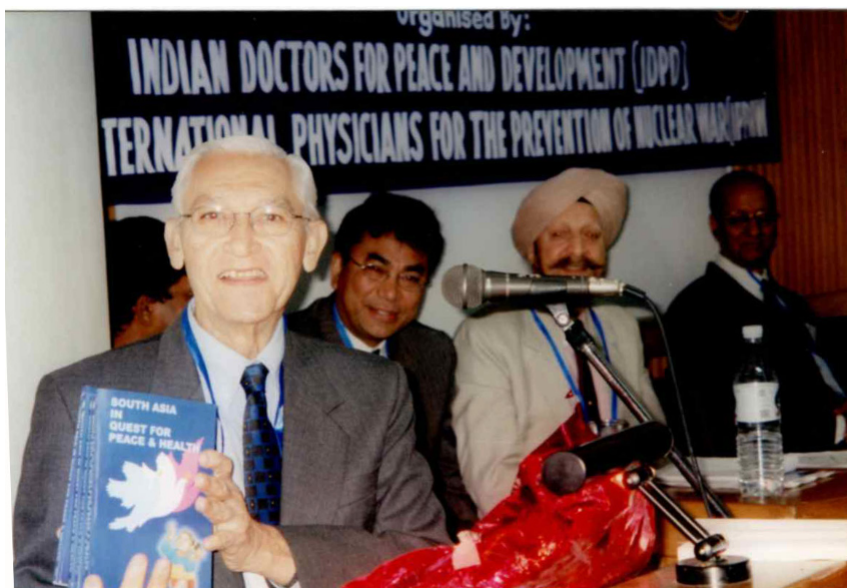
—Arun Mitra, India



Leading an IPPNW delegation that met with Indian President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam in 2004

I AM DEEPLY HEARTBROKEN by the loss Ron. His warmth, kindness and commitment to peace touched all of us who had the privilege of knowing him. My heartfelt condolences to his family and loved ones. May they find strength and comfort in the love and memories you leave behind. He will be deeply missed, and his memory will always remain in our hearts.

—Shakeel Ur Rahman, India



At the South Asian Regional Meeting in 2004.

SHARING my heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family.

—Arashdeep Singh, India



With IPPNW's delegation preparing to walk into Pakistan at the Wagah border crossing in Amritsar, India in 2004.



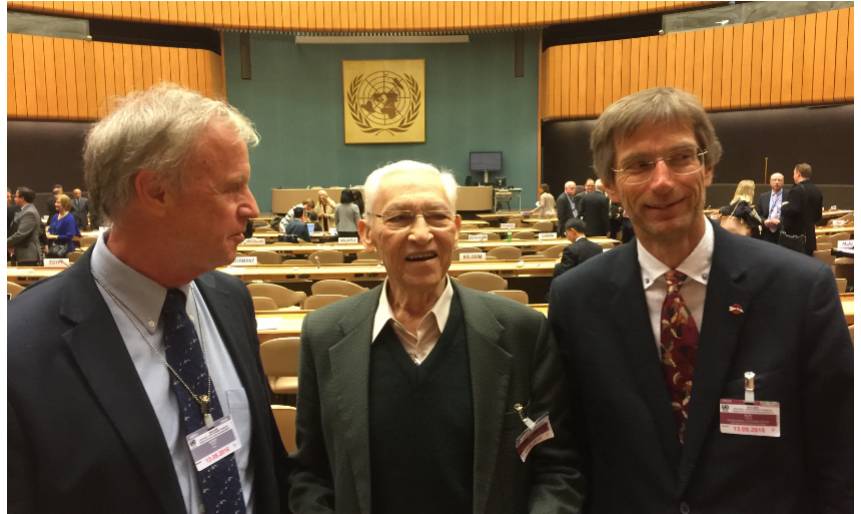
The Godfather of ICAN



Signing the "Cities Are Not Targets" declaration at the 2007 NPT PrepCom, with then-mayor of Hiroshima, Tadatoshi Akiba



With Hirotugu Terasaki of Soka Gakkai International at the UN in 2017



With Tilman Ruff and former head of the ICRC's arms unit Peter Herby at the UN Open-Ended Working Group in Geneva, 2016.



Celebrating with Hiroshima survivor and ICAN campaigner Setsuko Thurlow immediately after the UN vote to adopt the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

OH. A HEART-STOPPING MOMENT. Ron was a true gentle man/gentleman with a shining humanity. Vale dear Dr. Ron McCoy.

I first met him when we were both invited to speak at a peace conference on Okinawa in 2001. It was just after 911; the US military occupation forces there were on high alert and things were tense. We had heard of each other's work (I was returning from work with Flick at Reaching Critical Will in the immediate post-911 weeks and months—and he was of course the legendary Ron McCoy of IPPNW!) and as two of just half-a-dozen invited international guest speakers to this conference, we found one another over a hotel breakfast buffet as we transitioned to the conference. Started talking at breakfast, don't remember either of us drawing breath through a bus ride that followed (except to exclaim at some of the scenery) and continued for days of the conference too.

When my child was born in Adelaide a couple of years on, Ron McCoy was there at a meeting with MAPW folks, and left the meeting to travel across town and come and inspect the little one, bringing a beautiful gift of yellow baby pyjamas from Malaysia. We sat in the sun as he held Xan in his well versed gentle hands and I recalled how he had first told me the great story of his career—that over his many years as an obstetrician he had delivered around 20,000 babies, many of them crossing generations, and that he felt his work for peace and nuclear disarmament were part of his duty of care to each of them. It was not just a line—he felt it and lived it—his self defined mandate or philosophy of love in this world it seemed. I felt he was a guardian angel and he became an honorary grandparent to our young one immediately. He always asked after my young one and I'd send photos and updates throughout Xan's childhood.

Of course he was an essential part of our origin story for ICAN—he was the one who we spent hours discussing the ideas we had in the aftermath of failures of the NPT process in 2005 and the one who first proposed our new name. I can see him now sitting at the long table in one of Fred Mendelsohn's meeting rooms at the Florey Building at UniMelb as we talked about our ideas for this movement with a bunch of us in MAPW.

On his visits to Australia we would catch up for meals or he would occasionally join our early ICAN meetings. We met up again at IPPNW Congress meetings (Helsinki and Basel for example). He'd offer encouragement and words of wisdom through the campaigners lists over the years since we kicked off the campaign. I treasure a photo I have of him, Dave and Til grinning like schoolboys in Oslo at the Nobel celebrations.

He traveled to be with us in our sorrow when our dear Bill Williams died, speaking at his memorial at Trades Hall ten years ago. In more recent years, his emails have waned but I understand he kept in touch with all the goings on in ICAN. He lost his beautiful wife Susheila last December, and my thoughts are with his family who must be broken hearted.

For those who didn't have the pleasure of knowing him, believe me when I say he was truly a wonderful human being. I wrote him a note in reply to a beautiful message he sent a few years back now, "Your kindness, clarity of vision and generosity to me then and still now has been a foundation on which I stand and from which I try to build my own work with others. Thank you for making ICAN happen. Thank you for your vision, your care for the people of this world (so many of whom you saw safely into it!) and your generosity to show the way to so many of us."

Bless him on his way now.

—Dimity Hawkins, narrm/Australia

I FIRST MET RON at the international launch of ICAN in Vienna in 2007, where he spoke eloquently and passionately about the urgent need to abolish nuclear weapons, the greatest threat to humankind and our planet. Though I was just a newcomer to the movement back then, he asked for my thoughts on how we might build the campaign and promote its ambitious goals. This surprised me. What ideas could I possibly offer this distinguished elder of our movement that would be of any interest?

Shouldn't he instead be imparting his wisdom? I soon came to appreciate Ron's great humility and genuine

interest in what others have to say, including (or especially) youth. I know that he was very encouraging of the medical students in IPPNW. Over the past two decades, I had the great pleasure of conversing with Ron at many of our ICAN meetings around the world. He was always focused on the big picture and helped us see a pathway forward when one wasn't easily visible. On a few occasions, I was delighted to experience his and Susheila's warm hospitality in KL on my way through. He would seize these opportunities to set up meetings with the Malaysian foreign ministry, eager for his country to play a leadership role in banning the bomb. I'll miss his wisdom and warmth at our international gatherings, including the forthcoming TPNW review conference in New York, which I understand he had hoped to attend. We will be thinking of him then and well into the future.

—Tim Wright, Australia



Offering inspiration and encouragement at ICAN campaigners meeting in Geneva in 2016



At the ICAN campaigners meeting in Oslo, on the eve of the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize ceremony

IT WAS A PRIVILEGE to know Dr. McCoy and to have a few words with him at the 2nd Humanitarian Conference, where I went to find out more about ICAN. I worked in Malaysia and he was the premier renowned doctor there and active in CSO causes. I recall another occasion in NY CSO gallery, where he was already thinking and worrying far ahead on implementation of the TPNW.

—Vanessa Griffen, Fiji/Australia



Look closely and you can find Ron at the 1990 IPPNW Asia-Pacific regional conference in Manila, The Philippines (second row, 5th from right).

IT WAS WITHIN the global movement for humanitarian disarmament that I came to know Ron McCoy, not personally, but through his ideas, his work, and the lasting impression he made on those who worked alongside him. He reflected a rare combination of scientific rigor, moral courage, humility, and persistence. He understood that nuclear weapons were not simply instruments of military strategy. They were a profound threat to human life, human dignity, public health, and the future of humanity.

Ron's example reinforced a conviction I have carried throughout my advocacy: preventing suffering is as important as treating it, and protecting future generations is part of our duty to those who suffered before us. I regret that I never met Ron McCoy. Yet some people enter our lives through the values they embody and the paths they illuminate. Ron was one of those people for me. His legacy is the courage he awakened in others to continue the work.

—Ghassan Shahrour, Syria