

# CHEC *Points*

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COMMONWEALTH HUMAN  
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*Human Ecology*

## Zena Isabel Daysh CNZM

1914 - 2011



*Zena Daysh, who died on 23<sup>rd</sup> March aged 96, was the founder of the Commonwealth Human Ecology Council, a visionary environmentalist and a doyenne of the Modern Commonwealth.*

Members and friends of CHEC were deeply saddened to learn of the passing of Zena Daysh on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2011. Tributes to Zena have arrived from all parts of the Commonwealth. Other thoughts and recollections were expressed at her funeral at St. Paul's, Bayswater, United Reform Church, Newton Road, London W2 5LS on Wednesday 6 April. There will be a celebration of her life on 29<sup>th</sup> June, from 6.30 pm, at The Commonwealth Secretariat, Marlborough House, Pall Mall, London SW1Y 5HX. This issue of CHEC Points celebrates the life and achievements of Zena through many of the tributes from her friends and colleagues.

## **Zena Daysh**

### **An active life devoted to the Commonwealth and Human Ecology**

Zena Daysh developed a philosophy of human ecology during the war years, which found fruition in the 1950s as convener of the Commonwealth Committee on Preventative Medicine, and culminating in the foundation of the Commonwealth Human Ecology Council (CHEC) in 1969, which remains active to this day.

After helping to establish the Malta Human Ecology Council Chapter, Zena Daysh was instrumental in organising the First Commonwealth Conference on Development and Human Ecology in 1970. The results of the Malta case study, a project she had suggested to the newly independent Maltese Government in 1964, provided a model of how human ecology could provide a framework for development planning. Her endeavours led to Malta taking an important role at the UN Conference on the Environment in Stockholm in 1972. In the same year, CHEC was given consultative status at the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), which is charged with following up the outcomes of major UN conferences and summits, and from then on was represented at meetings of UN Civil Society organisations.

Thus began CHEC's links with the United Nations and its major international meetings. The United Nations connection grew in strength, with Commonwealth workshops at the Vancouver Habitat I Conference in Vancouver in 1976; a visit to UN ESCAP in Bangkok in 1983; a link with WHO in 1985; and attendance at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992. One early ambition was to have a Commonwealth Ministerial group on human settlements contributing to UN Habitat. First planned in 1976, this goal was achieved in 1997, with the establishment of the Commonwealth Consultative Group on Human Settlements along with its administrative arm ComHabitat. Zena was justifiably proud of her role as standard bearer for human ecology and put the myriad of issues on Ministers' agendas long before climate change and related environmental factors were taken seriously by political audiences around the world.

Known as "Dame" Zena to both friends and detractors, she attended the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings (CHOGM) from 1973 until 2007 when great old age prevented her from going to the Trinidad CHOGM in 2009. Zena was a fiery lady, who developed a reputation for asking visiting dignitaries difficult questions and was well known for accosting Presidents, Prime Ministers and other dignitaries to promote her various causes.

For example, every visit to Malta would inevitably mean an often unannounced call on the President or Prime Minister. George Borg Olivier (Malta's Prime Minister at the time of Independence) once telephoned Professor Salvino Busuttill to say that he was listening to a very attractive lady expounding environmental concerns, and while he was not oblivious to her charms he had other engagements, and would Salvino kindly come over to so signal? Of course, Zena got the support she wanted.

For many, though, her real and most enduring achievements lay not just in terms of lobbying governments at cocktail parties, but in the dissemination of human ecology through education and practical projects around the Commonwealth. She was instrumental in recommending the establishment of the Indira Gandhi Centre for Human Ecology at the University of Rajasthan, which has, since the 1980s, developed practitioners in human ecology and become a full University Department. Zena took a leading role in a series of grass-roots development projects, ranging from settlement development in Kenya, to rainforest sustainable development in Guyana, and afforestation and community development in Tamil Nadu, India. On women's issues, she pushed for the establishment of micro-banks to help the many women small-scale independent traders, food growers and entrepreneurs in Africa. She also worked to provide food, accommodation and rehabilitation for displaced women in Sierra Leone.

Born on April 30, 1914, in New Plymouth, New Zealand, Zena came from a political family. Her father was mayor of that town and her grandfather mayor of Blenheim before that. She lost her father in an air crash at New Plymouth in 1920, which served as a major milestone in her young life and gave her the drive to push for later achievements. Sent to England in the 1930's to gain the benefits of a British social education, she was both a sportswoman of considerable ability, especially at fencing, and something of a socialite. Her

mantelpiece was never lacking invitation cards, even in her 97<sup>th</sup> year, indeed no Commonwealth Day was complete without her presence at Westminster Abbey and the Secretary-General's reception for HM the Queen and Head of the Commonwealth at Marlborough House afterwards.

She became a physiotherapist and worked closely with other health professionals, becoming concerned about preventive medicine and individuals taking responsibility for their own health. She married before World War II, but her husband was away for long periods, and by the end of the war, they had separated.

During World War II, Zena Daysh helped to persuade people of the importance, including Lord Beaverbrook and Lord Rootes, of widening the approach to human and social needs in wartime factories. She began to develop a philosophy of the interdependence of people with each other and with nature. This notion eventually became her view of human ecology. She gave evidence to a Ministry of Supply inquiry into production and health for women in munitions factories and her testimony was key in persuading the Chief Medical Officer of Health and the Ministry of the need to adopt a broader approach to human and social needs in wartime factories. An experiment in a large aircraft factory improved production and reinforced changing attitudes to women and social well-being. The results helped in the process leading to the formation of Britain's Joint Industrial Councils in 1946.

Immediately after the War, Zena returned to New Zealand where she persuaded senior Treasury Officials and the Ministry of Labour of the value of collaboration between management and unions and the improvement of working conditions. By 1950, New Zealand had applied the principles developed in Britain to labour relations and working life in both primary and secondary industries. A senior New Zealand agricultural scientist gave her an introduction to Dr. Andrew Topping, Dean of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

Consequently, Zena returned to Britain in the late 1950s and, after meeting Dr. Topping, eventually became the Convenor of the Commonwealth Committee on Preventive Medicine, which formulated a framework for a Commonwealth-wide human ecological pilot project. In a letter to *The Times* of 28<sup>th</sup> April 1960, it was argued that "a Commonwealth Council cutting across – or rather embracing – many traditional separated fields of study could do much to bring together workers from different continents". This idea was developed through the 1960's by ever-widening sets of meetings and discussion, results of which were fed into the Commonwealth Human Ecology Council (CHEC), which absorbed Zena Daysh's formidable energy and powers of persuasion for the rest of her life.

Zena touched the lives of hundreds of people. Many were changed by their contact with her and found themselves doing things they had never expected to do. She was an example of determination, sometimes so much so that she did not recognize that it might be more appropriate to wait for another occasion to push her case! Sitting on her laurels was something that never occurred to Zena. However she never gave up. She would come to CHEC's office in London, climbing four flights of stairs, right into her 97<sup>th</sup> year. She has left the Commonwealth and the wider world a better place through her efforts and her kindness will long be remembered. One young UN intern, Catherine Bonet, wrote: "It was an unforgettable experience for me to work with Zena. I admire her dedication to those that do not have her strong voice in our society".

In the 1999 New Zealand New Year Honours, Zena Daysh was made a Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit "*For services to human ecology*" and in 2003 was awarded the Habitat Scroll of Honour. When in 2009, in her 95<sup>th</sup> year, she was awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of Waikato, Jim Bolger, the former Prime Minister of New Zealand and Chancellor noted that Zena is "The real story of sustainability." She built friendships with five Commonwealth Secretary-Generals and their wives, knew anyone in Commonwealth circles that mattered, always took an interest in the young and encouraged those who worked with her at CHEC to test new waters. In the words of Sir Don McKinnon, former Commonwealth Secretary-General, former New Zealand Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade "Zena is a most respected New Zealander. A true pioneer in a field that demands tremendous commitment, Zena's contributions to educating, not just people but nations, with her insightful understanding of ecology and the human spirit are outstanding. Her great faith was that each of us should inspire the well-being and sustained development of the other. Zena's work, a body of global and community work, with its input over fifty years, is one of the most sterling examples I have seen of selfless service."

## ZENA DAYSH: the New Zealander

**MARGARET EVANS MSocSc (Hons), DPP (Distinction)** is one of New Zealand's sustainability pioneers — promoting social and environmental well-being along with economic prosperity. Mayor of Hamilton for three terms (1989-98), she has held numerous positions in the local government sector at local, national, and international level. In 1995 she was awarded a CBE for services to local government and the community. Margaret has long supported CHEC and she has contributed the following three pages of this issue.

### Ode to Zena Daysh (1914-2011)

CNZM, Ph.D (Hons) University of Waikato

Inspired Lifetime Achiever, intrepid Kiwi Pioneer & Global Contributor to public life

Zena Daysh was in a category of her own: an inspiring and generous mentor, intuitive and innovative and insistent, inspirational and demanding, motivational, a magnificent woman with an unstinting life-long commitment to Mother Earth – the tribe and the home. She was a Lifetime Achiever. An intrepid Kiwi pioneer. A global contributor to public life; beyond the Commonwealth for the World. Always glamorous and able to pull a gifted Balenciaga out of her wardrobe. Akin to my mother, a favourite aunt, the sister I never had. My darling friend.

New Zealand-born Zena Daysh sang the songs of earthly and spiritual harmony. She was among the world's most distinguished proponents of sustainability. Over the past half century, she has been acknowledged by presidents and prime ministers, ambassadors, academics, and business leaders, as well as entire communities around the globe after knocking on their doors and arguing for positive change for human and ecological wellbeing and quality of life. This year, she was planning to attend her 19th biennial CHOGM (Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting) in Perth in October. She would have been 97. She leaves us a great legacy and an ongoing challenge. We will miss her greatly. – **Margaret Evans** CBE, former Mayor of Hamilton and Trustee of the Human Ecology Foundation.

*“Being advised of a death of one who was special in many ways is always sad news to receive. Zena Daysh was a remarkable person with a big vision of what could be which I always admire. She was still going strong when we held the Hon Doctoral conferment ceremony in London which becomes an even more memorable event with her passing.”*

– **Rt Hon Jim Bolger** ONZ, Chancellor University of Waikato, former Prime Minister, former Ambassador to US.

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**The following extracts** come from the portfolio gathered for Zena's nomination for New Zealand Royal Honours:

“Zena is a most respected New Zealander. A true pioneer in a field that demands tremendous commitment. Zena's contributions to educating, not just people but nations, with her insightful understanding of ecology and the human spirit. Her great faith was that each should inspire the well being and sustained development of the other. Zena's work, a body of global and community work, its input over fifty years is one of the most sterling examples I have seen of selfless service. Such has been her great generosity, all of us, in the Commonwealth particularly, have surely benefited.” – **Sir Don McKinnon**, former Commonwealth Secretary-General, and former New Zealand Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs & Trade.

“Over time – if we're lucky – we meet one or two people who will change the course of our lives forever. Some four years ago [1994], I was lucky enough to meet Zena Daysh. And it is not an overstatement to say that she has changed not only my life but indeed the lives of millions of people for the better since she began her pioneering work in the field of human ecology and environmental protection. To me Zena was nothing short of a blinding inspiration that led to Waitakere City becoming the first Eco City in New Zealand. Globally, we were not the first – and we certainly will not be the last – to grasp hold of Zena's vision for a brighter future for us all. The results of her vision are all around us, every day: in a greater understanding and respect for our natural environment to more sustainable (and profitable) business opportunities and, of course, a deeper respect for others and the politics of inclusion. For many years – indeed decades - Zena was a voice in the wilderness. She saw change was needed when others simply saw the desecration of the environment as

an "unfortunate" but inevitable by-product of change. Yet Zena, in her own dogged and indomitable way, turned around the mindset of millions, including key decision-makers in both Central and Local Government. She never gave up and future generations will quite literally owe their lives to Zena and her work. Her reputation is now international and her vitality and energy has never dimmed. As a New Zealander excelling in her field, Zena is outstanding: but as a visionary and humanitarian she is ever greater. – **Bob Harvey**, former Mayor of Waitakere City.

“Although she has spent a large part of an extremely productive physical life in the United Kingdom, it has always been clear to her colleagues and friends that she has never been spiritually and culturally far removed from the land of birth and infant nurture. For nearly 35 years, and long before the environment engaged the serious attention of the world community, Zena Daysh has promoted the concept of human ecology. Almost a lone voice in the wilderness of international indifference, she has preached the gospel of harmony between man and nature and mobilised human and material resources in support. In large measure, CHEC owes its genesis and continued international impact to her indefatigable efforts, total dedication to cause, and special skills in human mobilisation and motivation. The world owes New Zealand a great debt of gratitude for the gift and talents of this illustrious daughter. I can think of no personality more worthy of national recognition for her massive contribution in human and material resources, to the cause of the environment and the reflected credit that has accrued to New Zealand by association with this pioneer in a special and crucial area of human endeavour.” - **Ambassador Charles A Liburd**, former Permanent Representative of Guyana to UNEP and HABITAT.

“At the 1989 CHOGM I made an offer to the Commonwealth to set aside an area of approximately one million acres of pristine rainforest for a project to develop a model for the sustainable management of tropical rainforest resources. That offer was accepted and the Iwokrama International Rain Forest Project is now a reality. It would be true to say that the offer I made arose out of my respect for and appreciation of Mrs Daysh’s work and the objectives which she and CHEC have been pursuing so strenuously. I would like to think that, in a special way, the Iwokrama Project is a monument to Mrs Daysh, through which I was introduced to, and became an enthusiast for, the cause of the environment and Human Ecology. Mrs Daysh is by any standard a most outstanding person, whose single-minded devotion to human ecology over the years is widely known and respected in many countries of the world and international institutions.”

– **H.E. Hugh Desmond Hoyte**, SC, MP, former President of Guyana.

“At a time when the world had not yet come to grips with the critical importance of so many of the issues subsumed within the human ecology framework, she was both visionary and activist, and the Commonwealth is in her debt as a result. By dint of her exemplary courtesy and the infectious nature of her advocacy, Zena Daysh did more than simply raise governmental and public consciousness about these issues – a stupendous accomplishment in itself, she achieved an extraordinary degree of co-operation within the Commonwealth and beyond, plus immense meaningful activity. It is not likely that in any other international setting, such a record could be compiled in such an innovative and important field. Nevertheless in my experience no other individual within the Commonwealth has been or could have been so successful. Her record is exemplary and an inspiration to those generations much younger than she.” – **Ivan L Head** OC, QC, Foreign Policy Advisor to Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau.

“Zena Daysh is, without a doubt, a source of inspiration. Ms Daysh was instrumental in mobilising non-governmental organisations throughout the Commonwealth and played a lead role in ensuring that Commonwealth NGOs had their voices heard and their issues included in the negotiating process leading up to the adoption of the Habitat Agenda. Through her dedicated perseverance, the Commonwealth Associations have been able to renew their focus and energies on issues of critical relevance to our global pursuit for more sustainable forms of development.” - **Nicolas You**, UNHabitat Co-ordinator, Best Practices & Local Leadership Programme.

“From time to time one sees a person working tirelessly and unselfishly in a community activity which contributes significantly to the quality of life and of our planet. Such a person is Zena Daysh. It was entirely due to her commitment, her energy, determination and unique skills that a special conference was successfully organised under the umbrella of Commonwealth Human Ecology. It was in fact yet another powerful example of Zena Daysh’s determination to carry on with her lifetime’s dedication towards the promotion and development of the work of CHEC. Her determination and commitment have undoubtedly

motivated countless thousands of Commonwealth citizens as well as organisations to address vital environmental issues which would not otherwise have been tackled and completed. I believe we owe much to this remarkable woman who is an example to all of us.” **Sir Gilbert Thompson** OBE, Chairman of Global Forum ‘94, Manchester.

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“Zena Daysh is no scholar: she is an inspiration. Zena Daysh is no personality in the popular sense: she is a pioneer. Zena Daysh is no leader in a political mode: she is a lodestar. As a New Zealander, Zena Daysh’s upbringing and perspicacity saw the Commonwealth in the strength of its spiritual unity. Against much political wavering, this truth she coveted and proclaimed to become a frame in which the Human Ecology Council was given its distinctive international magnitude. By any criteria of deserts, Zena Daysh measures up.” - **Professor Emeritus D R Denham**, Former Chairman of CHEC.

“Over many years, from her small office in London, always desperately short of funds as well as helping hands, Zena Daysh has created through unflinching conviction and inspiration, the foundation of a global movement of dedicated people who are concerned with sustaining the dignity of life in all its forms. She represents the very best of the humanitarian qualities – the spirit of noblesse oblige – to which the Empire at its best gave birth and which were of profound influence in the subsequent founding of the Commonwealth of Nations and the remarkable relationship sustained by its member states.” - **Richard Causton**, International Vice-President & UK Chairman SGI (Soka Gakkai International Buddhist Lay Society, Society for the Creation of Value).

## **International Tributes to Zena Daysh received on news of her death**

### **Professor Salvino Busuttil, Malta**

A lingering memory is that of 'lunching' with her at her small and sparsely furnished maisonette in Summer Street, Paul's Bay, Malta. Living on a small income, Zena offered me a tin of sardines, which with some tasty local olive oil and slices of Maltese bread had nonetheless the aura of a banquet, her enthusiastic verve, brimming with brighter tomorrows, inspiring her lively conversation.

Whether in Valletta or in Stockholm, or London or Nairobi, Zena had the ineffable gift of getting straight to leaders, be they Presidents or Secretary-Generals, and without further ado, lecturing them on pressing environmental needs. Every visit to Malta, for example, would inevitably mean an often unannounced call on the President or the Prime Minister. George Borg Olivier (Malta's Prime Minister at the time of Independence) phoned me once to say that he was listening to a very attractive lady expounding environmental concerns, and while he was not oblivious to her charms, yet nonetheless he had other engagements, and would Salvino kindly come over to so signal to Zena? Of course, Zena got the support she wanted.

Indeed, CHEC and the Malta Human Ecology Council received subsequently substantial financial assistance from the Maltese Government to organise, in 1970, the First Commonwealth Conference on Human Ecology.

Over the years, Zena and I became great friends sharing progress and frustration in the pursuit of global environmental issues. When in 1977 I was appointed Director of Unesco's Division of Human Settlements and the Socio-cultural Environment, I was able to rope in Zena as adviser on a number of areas of interest to CHEC, including training for administrators and planners of human settlements, the Declaration on the Rights of Future Generations to their Environment, and on the document on Responsibilities towards Future Generations.

Frail when I last saw her at the University of Manchester a couple of years ago, she still had her endearing sparkle in her eyes, expressing the depths of an altruistic soul contentedly contemplating creation. Her dream will live on.

### **The Hon. Levi Oguike, Nigeria (Hon. President CHEC)**

The news of the demise of our dear grand Lady, indeed the First Lady of the Human Ecology Community, Zena was received with great sadness. Zena enjoyed a rare privilege of good health until just recently.

She engaged the human ecology mandate with great passion for which she lived and passed on celebrating it.

I first met Zena in Scotland in the 80's at CHOGM struck a friendship that brought me to CHEC. I feel a sense of personal loss having failed to meet with her last October when I visited London and learnt her health was failing coupled with the harsh weather conditions of last year in Europe generally and London in particular. I think Zena had a glorious exit from this colony of time.

I commend Mary most sincerely for keeping faith with her till the end.

May her gentle soul find repose in the realms of eternity.

**From Chief (Mrs) Chinyere Ukpai Asika, Chairman, Board of Trustees, Commonwealth Human Ecology-Nigeria**

**DAME ZENA DAYSH GRACEFUL EXIT**

Breaking the news of the death of Dame Zena Daysh early last week came with delayed shock as we were aware of Zena's failing health since late last year and have continually kept touch with Mary in the secretariat. Zena's passage in every description was graceful and her memory shall linger for a long time.

We at CHEC-Nigeria recall with great nostalgia her visit to Nigeria at CHOGM 2003. It was a splendid pleasure to play host to the CHEC delegation to Nigeria.

We wish to commiserate with the entire human ecology community, for which Zena devoted the better part of, if not her whole, life to serving.

She surely will be missed by all in CHEC through the length and breadth of the Commonwealth Association and indeed beyond.

We are most delighted to be represented at her funeral in London on the 6<sup>th</sup> April 2011 by Lady Jaqueline Oguike, wife of the Hon President Hon. Levi Oguike.

Please accept our sincere condolences.

**From Aisie Lucan, Sierra Leone**

“To serve the present age  
My calling to fulfill  
Oh may it all my powers engage  
To do my masters will”

*Charles Wesley*

This wonderful woman Zena Daysh must have been thinking along the same lines as the author of the above when she conceived of the concept of HUMAN ECOLOGY. She made it her calling to engage all her powers to spread the concept as if it was God's Will. Hence she involved the Commonwealth and with all her zeal brought in stalwarts with whom she set up the organization CHEC with the aim of engaging as many member countries as possible to accept the responsibility of bringing change to their Environment through HUMAN ECOLOGY.

Sierra Leone in West Africa, a former British Colony became a member of the Commonwealth and through Zena's enthusiasm was invited to a conference in Edinburgh, Scotland in September 1989. There the country's representative Aisie Lucan presented a description of the Sierra Leone Environment which immediately aroused the interest of the dynamic hostess. The outcome was a promise to do everything possible to set up a branch of CHEC in Sierra Leone.

This promise was strengthened by the meeting of CHOGM that year when Mrs. Zena Daysh had the opportunity of convincing the President of Sierra Leone about the need for a branch of CHEC in His country.

So CHEC Sierra Leone (CHECSIL) was launched by His Excellency the President J.S. Momoh on 13<sup>th</sup> February 1990 in the capital city Freetown, under the watchful eyes of Mrs. Zena Daysh who had spared no pains in travelling from London to witness the occasion.

In her speech to dignitaries, Ministers of Government members of the Diplomatic Corps including the British High Commissioner, U.N. Representatives, Civil Servants, Educationists including students, Non-Governmental Organizations and the General Public, she stated.

“Sierra Leone is the first country in West Africa  
To take up the torch of Human Ecology  
With its intimate social systems and  
Rural population and a group of people forming Checsil  
“I wish Checsil a successful inspired

Long and dynamic life as part of the greater whole”

The officers and members of CHECSIL, beneficiaries of the environmental and other projects it has undertaken with the leadership and assistance of Zena, the Mother and Founder of such an illustrious organization, now mourn with gratitude the loss of such a wonderful, dynamic resourceful and enterprising personality, who will be sadly missed.

“Well done thou good and faithful servant  
Enter thou into the joy of the Lord”.

May your dear soul rest in perfect peace Zena and may light perpetual shine upon you.

**Norbert Manyasi Sangura, Kenya**

I, on behalf of CHEC members and all supporters in Kenya send to the CHEC community world wide and all those who worked with, or just knew, the great grand MAMA Zena our sincere and heart felt condolences on her untimely death. We were expecting her in the forthcoming UN Habitat GOVERNING COUNCIL just around the corner. We'll miss her very much.

May almighty rest her soul till we meet in his kingdom.

**From Jim Bolger, New Zealand**

Being advised of a death of one who was special in many ways is always sad news to receive. Zena Daysh was a remarkable person with a big vision of what could be which I always admire. She was still going strong when we held the Hon Doctoral conferment ceremony in London which becomes an even more memorable event with her passing.

**From Norm Stannard, New Zealand**

Zena was a most remarkable woman, forthright and committed to the organisation created around her following her remarkable World War 11 work dedicated to improving the quality and on-going protection of life for all. She has led the Commonwealth Human Ecology Council through to her final days with the same unremitting drive.

I first encountered her at the follow on conference to Rio, at the UN Manchester Cities Summit in 1994 and for us down under, as for the rest of the Commonwealth, she will remain a signpost for anyone who believes in humanity's ability to improve the world and the ability of individuals to do just that.

The loss of Zena resonates in a very particular way; she was one of us, a New Zealander whose social conscience and engagement with the world community epitomises the virtues this country has always strived to embody. Her best memorial is for us to continue her work and to stay strong. Kia Kaha. Haere ra, Haere ra, Haere ra.

**On April 5<sup>th</sup> Norm Stannard wrote:**

We have had positive reflective messages from many people in NZ that have spent time with Zena and sadly due to distance could not be with us.

Tonight Zena's Waikato NZ broad range of friends came together to honour her and share their own like stories. These stories will echo in the minds of all her friends during her funeral service; during which we here in her home country will be with you all in spirit.

Her best memorial is for us all to continue her work and to stay strong. Kia Kaha.

**Norm Stannard also wrote:**

As ever Keith [Thompson] remains deep into either bogs or encouraging youth into sustaining the environment, here or overseas. Today it was with a group out at Te Kauri Lodge with its own environmentally safe valley near Kawhia; which is the home of Waikato Junior Naturalists. Keith is a founder member and remains a leading light of this very active 50 year old organisation. A place Zena would have visited during her many stays with Jean and Keith.



**From Keith Thompson, Waikato:**

As a Briton, who made his home in New Zealand, I wish to send my own message about an amazing Kiwi, Zena Daysh, who made her home in Britain. I heard about CHEC when I was teaching at Makerere University-Kampala, in the early 1970's because CHEC was developing links there. In 1972 during a conference visit to London I enjoyed a cup of coffee with her in the old CHEC office in Stanhope Gardens.

A single encounter with Zena and I was duly 'organised' - 'no' was never an option! Seriously though, meeting Zena was one of my life-changing experiences. Thereafter, Human Ecology played a major role in my teaching and research.

It was with great sadness that I heard Zena is no longer with us. Most of us are instantly replaceable when we pass on, but Zena was special: her legacy is far more than most of us can ever hope to achieve in our lifetimes. Her infectious enthusiasm for social justice and her dedication to improving the lives of people was an example to us all. She was a mine of ideas, an indefatigable campaigner and an irresistible negotiator. I am privileged to have known Zena and I will miss her.

**From Narelle Townsend, New York (CHEC's representative at the UN)**

Through my tears and condolences for dear Zena, I have to be happy for the extraordinary life she led and to remember all the great times we had together on those many UN conferences in Nairobi HQ for UN-Habitat, New York, Turkey and other locales.

She was an itinerant traveller and always carried her notes and the most important issues which she planned to address, with the contacts of proposed recipients she planned to take on in her quest for results whether at government level or private enterprise. She "suffered no fools" in her determination to get things done and to contribute text to official policies. Her zeal for life and commitment to her greatest cause of advancing human ecology in all its aspects remains an example to all with whom she came in touch. We know we will miss her but with the best respect we honour her memory by continuing to support beneficial programmes for environmental improvements and ethical stewardship of our finite resources, human, material and physical.

**From Saadiyah Chishti, Pakistan**

I have come to know heart-breaking news just now; my eyes are full of tears; so where speech is silver, silence is gold. Zena was a close friend of mine and indeed a pious soul. May God bestow his choicest blessings on her purified soul! Amen!

**From T.K.N. and Gerda Unnithan, University of Rajasthan, Jaipur, India**

Our dear Zenaji is no more - a great person, a warm and enduring friend for many years with an unbeatable belief in her mission to propagate human ecology across the globe. CHEC will be her monument and her memorial. We shall be sorely missing her, not only as a motivator and driving force for the good things of this earth and the promotion of human ecology in India, but also for her great hospitality and concern for our family members.

**From Professor H.S. Sharma, President, on behalf of the members of Chec-India,**

We the members of Indian Human Ecology Council (Indian Chapter of Commonwealth Human Ecology India) shocked to learn the sudden demise of Mrs Zena Daysh, Executive Vice-Chair, CHEC, London, on 23 March 2011 at the age of 96 years. Her dedication to the cause of Environment is inextricably linked to the organization and its globally associated network of the Commonwealth Human Ecology Council of which Zena was Executive Vice Chair. She was appointed by the Queen of England as Commander in the New Zealand Order of Merit in recognition of her pioneering work in the field of Human Ecology in the Commonwealth and beyond in May, 1999.

From the beginning, through her personal drive and unselfish dedication, an increasing number of Commonwealth and non-Commonwealth countries have developed national CHEC organizations, human ecology administration and programmes. Such local organizations have been developed within a systematic, multi level, Commonwealth and international network on the area of environment and human ecology. In particular, Zena Daysh encouraged the founding of the Indira Gandhi Centre for Environment and Human Ecology, University of Rajasthan, Jaipur, India. She has been instrumental in organizing International

Conferences at Jaipur under the auspices of CHEC India and creating a network which provided the platform for a greater awareness of sustainable objectives and the exchange of valuable information towards improving human and environmental well-being.

Zena Daysh touched the lives of hundreds of people. She has left Commonwealth and the materialistic World a better place through her dedicated efforts and her kindness will long be remembered. All the members of Chec-India deeply mourn her sad demise and pray to God to give courage to Commonwealth fellows to bear this irreparable loss and give peace to the departed soul.

**From Professor D.P. Jaroli and Dr. T.I.Khan, Indira Gandhi Centre for Human Ecology, Environmental and Population Studies, University of Rajasthan, India**

We the members (Teachers, Non-teaching staff, Research Scholars and the students) of Indira Gandhi Centre for Human Ecology, Environmental and Population Studies, University of Rajasthan, Jaipur, India are shocked to know the sudden demise of Mrs Zena Daysh, Executive Vice-Chair, CHEC-London while she was quite enthusiastic in keeping the wheels of Human Ecology active around the world. She will always be remembered as she sowed the seeds of the Indira Gandhi Centre way back in 1979 which is now a full-fledged department in full swing. She has left a big void for not only entire family members but also those who are working in the field of Human Ecology.

All the members of this Department deeply mourn her sad demise and pray to God to give courage to her family members to bear this irreparable loss, and give peace to the departed soul.

**From Professor R. P. Misra, Honorary Director, International Center for Gandhi & Peace, New Delhi, India**

We, the associates of the Commonwealth Human Ecology Council in India are sad to hear that Mrs. Zena Daysh, the 'ever young' human ecologist passed away at 96. We had the opportunity to work with her both at London and Jaipur. She was a remarkable person thoroughly committed to the Council and its programmes. May God Almighty grant her soul eternal peace. That is our wish and prayer.

**From Apurva Narain**

Zena defied age in the most natural and gentle of ways, something one admired her for and associated her with. She was simple and disciplined in her routine, and easy and nurturing in her life. She was tireless and egalitarian and giving too, in her ways. And these were quite the ways that not just made her synonymous with the Commonwealth Human Ecology Council – the organisation so dear to her that she devoted her life to – but also epitomised what indeed may be thought of as some of the lived ethos behind the aims of the 'Commonwealth', behind the philosophy of 'sustainability', and most of all behind 'human ecology' itself.

The first meeting with her, in late 1998, was memorable. Eva Ekehorn was with her that day and we met in the corner room of the CHEC office in Church House, London. Well into her mid-eighties by then, she looked rebelliously young... bubbling with an energy and enthusiasm that was immediate and infectious. I had no idea of her age at the time and she was never really keen to reveal it anyway; dismissive of it till the end. But something about her instantly made her lovable, and this feeling remained... despite the time, the quirks, and the distance... just as her energy and enthusiasm remained. She sometimes said that she was a New Zealander in her relation to nature, an Indian in her relation to spirituality, and British by way of her situation. And indeed it was a mysterious human combination of the natural and the spiritual with the science and the economics of human ecology that she came to symbolise for me in the years to come.

To Zena I owe my interests in development, ecology and the social sector, as she was the one to introduce me to this world.

**From Colin Fudge, Australia**

I have been thinking about Zena for a while now and her infectious spirit, energy and commitment. She has had a remarkable life and made an enormous contribution and I am sure it is lasting and will be continued by all of us touched by her presence.

Sadly I cannot be at the funeral living for the moment closer to Zena's original home albeit across the Tasman. From Melbourne I send my condolences and will be thinking of all of you on the day of the funeral.

**From Mohan Prabhu, Canada**

I am indeed greatly saddened to hear that my dear friend Zena is no more. May her soul rest in eternal peace and be raised one day into the heavenly kingdom for ever!

As you may know, I came to know Zena for the first time over 18 years ago and she was instrumental in persuading me to found the Canadian chapter of CHEC. In recent years I have had to step down due to my own advancing age and other frailties, but I always admired how, despite being over fifteen years older than I she continued at the helm of CHEC affairs. Her steadfast devotion to the cause of human ecology will be her lasting legacy to humankind. Again, I will pray for Zena's eternal Peace!

**From Lee-in Chen-Chiu, Taiwan, ROC.**

This notification of Zena's death is so sorrowful and astonished to me. I was not able to respond in the very first time. After attending the annual General Assembly of Universal Peace Federation - Taiwan Chapter today, I feel the great contribution of Zena towards Taiwan's UN NGO participation in past decade. I have been one of Zena's closest friends, especially among Chinese. I have been most grateful for her generous help in Taiwan's participation in various UN Summits during 2000 to 2005. I met Zena at the 1996 UN HABITAT II Summit in Johannesburg. There were so many side events going. I selected one room and sat down. Zena was the chair of the CHEC meeting with member states who were asking about budget distribution. I vaguely remember I made some comments. After the meeting was closed, we had a personal chat. I asked her why call it HABITAT II? when was HABITAT I? She laughed and told me proudly that she was the founder of CHEC and one of the key initiators of UN HABITAT. To me, she was like a God fairy for the poor, especially for Africa. So, I respect her very much.

She kindly invited me to attend 1997 CHEC pre-CHOGM forum in Edinburgh. That year we had longer talk that turned into close friendship. I especially remember the photo we took together shows the same vision direction. I feel so imitate to her for she seldom writes to me. When she writes, she always called me "My dear Lee-in". I read about her life story in CHEC Points. I respect her more.

She had tried very hard to establish possible country chapters for Taiwan. However Taiwan soon had its first governing party change on May 2000. She seems to feel helpless in getting Taiwan into formal relationship with CHEC. However we began to communicate via e-mails after 2001. Fortunately we had Professor Ian Douglas' professional participation in the 2001 Istanbul+5 NGO forum and book editing of CIER's UN NGO Policy Series (please refer to <http://ngo.cier.edu.tw/>).

I met with Zena in Nairobi, New York and Johannesburg for the PrepCom of the 2001 Istanbul+5 and 2002 WSSD. Ms. Narelle Townsend in New York (CHEC's representative to UN Headquarters) became one of my best UN friends at that time. She taught me that the Church Center can be used for NGO meetings. My government began to utilize such advantage. It is really very grateful for having helpful UN friends like this.

UN friends normally meet in summit or forum venues. I had a chance to visit CHEC Headquarters in Feb. 2004 when my government (Ministry of National Defence) invited me to make a presentation on cross-strait economic relationships. I made a personal visit to the CHEC office. Zena kindly arranged for me to attend a luncheon meeting with the Commonwealth Secretariat. She was very happy to show me her flat near Buckingham Palace and to explain how nice the British social welfare package for the aged is. She is very loyal to H.M. Queen Elizabeth d. She has been the executive vice chair of CHEC for more than three decades. Such firm and loyal position is almost impossible in a democracy society. However she put herself only in executive vice chair so that other prominent professors can seat the chair. I think this is something Taiwan can learn for international NGOs.

Before her wrist was broken, she once told me on the phone that her bed is full of books. She reads hard every day. I told her: you are too old to read. Just let the younger ones read, you listen to their reports and make decision. She laughed. This is how cute she is. When she came out of hospital, I was not able to visit her in person. I therefore asked my good Japanese friend Motoo Kusakabe (former VP of the World Bank and living in London) and his wife to visit her on behalf of my humble self. From telephone talk, I can feel she was very happy.

She always told me thinking about the globe. Climate change is harmful to the globe. We all need to work together to alleviate the crisis. For me, she is not just a "champion". She is more like a miracle in my life and a model to learn. I truly hope I can pay my last respects to her in person at her life farewell party.

**From Eleanor Morris, Scotland**

Keith Thompson's comment on Zena Daysh: "A single encounter with Zena and I was duly organised" was exactly what happened to me. I came from Scotland to David Fryer's Memorial Service in the crypt of St. Paul's Cathedral, as he, as Secretary-General of the Royal Town Planning Institute, had been so helpful when I had been the first female Chairman of the Royal Town Planning Institute of Scotland. (1986-87). His widow held a ceileigh in one of the Livery Company halls after the Service, and there amidst the jazz, the drums, and the dancing came Zena straight at me! "You are from Edinburgh University and I need you as liaison for our next pre-CHOGM Meeting in Edinburgh 1997". Then and there I was organised helping Zena run one of the most successful Pre-CHOGM Conferences of the Commonwealth Human Ecology Council. I was hooked and worked with her to her end.

Zena was strikingly good-looking, with brilliant blue eyes, lovely skin and always glamorous well into her nineties. She had charisma and a direct way of speaking which I understood and valued.

Zena promoted the idea of human ecology before anyone else, always preaching an holistic point of view. She would write and rewrite her statements to the Ministers with outstanding care. She was most successful in promoting the Habitat Agenda, not only originally in Istanbul, but also at the UN General Assembly in New York where she got the General Assembly to agree to a communiqué supporting the Habitat Agenda.

She regularly attended the bi-annual CHOGM Meetings, organising a Pre-CHOGM Conferences in Edinburgh, Durban and Abuja, Nigeria. She regularly participated in the UN Habitat meetings in Nairobi. One of her great legacies was the creation of the Commonwealth Consultative Group on Human Settlements for producing advice to Ministers and setting up a management Group, ComHabitat. Despite various ups and downs, ComHabitat is flourishing today, in no small measure due to her creativity and leadership.

We will all miss Zena

**From Marthe Kiley-Worthington**

I am sorry to hear of Zena's death, and do hope that her energy and enthusiasm for CHEC will continue. My father, Dr E B Worthington, was, I believe, instrumental in setting up CHEC and appointed Zena as the activator when ever it began, but I did not meet her until around 10 years ago, when she then asked me to attend and give a talk at the CHEC meeting at CHOGM in Abuja in 2003. I enjoyed the meeting, and hope that some of the ideas about ecological agriculture were taken up and developed as it is becoming increasingly necessary. We moved to France and I lost touch with Zena, but you have all my sympathies.

**From Michael Alpers**

Thank you for sending this important and sad news. Just this last weekend I was explaining to a friend about CHEC and waxed lyrical about Zena and her dynamic personality, which she used so creatively. My condolences to everyone who worked closely with her. I shall grieve quietly and remember her in this corner of the earth.

The notice below appeared in Nigeria thanks to Chief (Mrs) Chinyere Ukpai Asika and the Hon. Levi Oguike



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## Obituary

We mourn the death of Dr. (Dame) ZENA DAYSH CNZM, who passed on gracefully in London on Wednesday 23rd March 2011; aged 97years.

*A Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit for "services to the human ecology" and Habitat Scroll of Honor Laureate.*

**D**ame Zena Daysh was born in New Zealand on 30th April 1914; an ICON in the Human Ecology and Habitat Community world-wide; very highly revered and an enduring symbol of the Commonwealth. Zena was awarded an Honorary- Doctorate by the University of Waikato New Zealand.

Zena served as the Executive Vice Chairman of Commonwealth Human Ecology Council in the United Kingdom (UK).

She was the first "Non-State Actor" to gain accreditation to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) the exclusive meeting of Prime Ministers and Presidents of member countries in the Commonwealth held every two years.

She was also at the 2003 CHOGM in Nigeria, where CHEC-Nigeria was formally inaugurated and Coordinated a seminar on Human Ecology by the Built Environment Professionals in the Commonwealth (BEPIC).

She will be buried in London on Wednesday 6th April 2011; after a funeral Service at St. Paul's Bayswater United Reform Church, Newton Road, Bayswater London W.2 UK. CHEC-Nigeria will be duly represented at the funeral. As tributes pour in from all over the world, Zena will be sorely missed.

**Dr. ZENA  
DAYSH**  
(1914 - 2011)

Her Excellency Chief (Mrs) Chinyere Ukpabi Asika  
Chairman- Board of Trustees CHEC-Nigeria.

Sir Levi Oguike, FNIQS, FRICS.  
Hon. President Commonwealth Human Ecology Council- UK.  
International Headquarters



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