

Terrence Moorhouse Leach (1948-2007)
(Jampa Tashi)

On the twenty-eight of February 2007, the world lost not only a fine geologist and petrologist, but also an outstanding human being.

Since August 2006, Terry had to deal with an invasive and aggressive cancer which began as a tumour in the throat, but which rapidly spread throughout the body. An initial operation to remove the tumour and post operative pneumonia almost took him then, however he fought back only to finally succumb to the ravages of the cancer.

I was privileged to have spent precious moments with Terry on the previous Saturday; although weak and quite gaunt, the spark that is the lifeblood of Terry was still in those eyes and his infectious smile still appeared as we shared past experiences we had had together. I now know what volumes can be spoken between two souls without a word being uttered. Terry and I were brothers in spirit and have a bond that transcends the flesh. I shall miss you my dear friend, but we will be together again at sometime, at some place somehow.

I first met the young Terry, when he had come to Auckland to begin an MSc degree in Geology. Our first encounter was my nearly being knocked over by this long haired dishevelled young man chasing a scantily dressed nubile maiden through the old geology department student's quarters, both giggling and screaming with squeals of delight. Such was the free spirit of Terry Leach.

I was soon to learn that this was the young Terry Leach, fresh from a life of fun and debauchery in Europe coming to NZ, following his parents, to pursue an interest in rocks and nature. During that first year I knew him whilst we were all doing honours papers, I scarcely knew him lucid, and he once told me that it was a marvel that he passed at all let alone get A grades considering the lifestyle he was then leading.

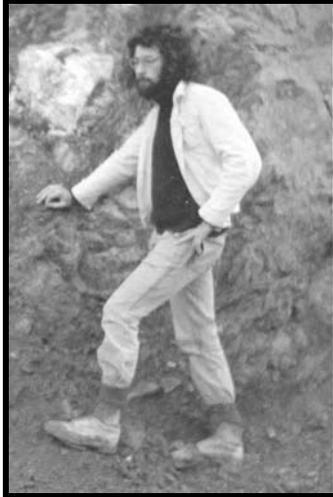
Terry was born in England of a Welsh father Lewis and his wife from Yorkshire. He had one brother, Colin. The family immigrated to Canada in the 1960s when Terry's dad, who was also an outstanding artist, worked for the Canadian Inland Revenue. Terry attended school in Ottawa and was an outstanding tennis player representing Canada in age group tournaments even having played on the sacred Wimbledon. He even made the Canadian Davis Cup squad at one stage. After completing his bachelors degree, he took time out and taught tennis professionally in Spain, to idle rich women mostly at large hotel and sports complexes. After tiring of this, he had a stint in Paris when his job was driving a bread delivery van through the narrow streets of the city at night. Seeking more adventure and probably low on cash Terry followed his folks to Auckland where his folks lived on Waiheke Island.

During a chaotic year doing his masters papers, Terry worked for a while in the frozen alluvial goldfields of Central Otago for a group of suspect American entrepreneurs. I met up with him in the Ranfurly hotel where Terry seemed to have a reputation with narrow scrapes with large locals. We spent a joyful day together breaking ice off streams so that we could pan the gravels for gold.

After divine guidance carried Terry through his masters papers he embarked upon on a thesis topic concerning chemical changes in a serpentinite body exposed near Te Kuiti. It was during this year that he and I became very close and spent many hours discussing philosophy, theosophy and religions. We even skipped lectures to extend our discussions at the nearby Intercontinental hotel! Terry was forever searching for that something in life and he knew it was not to be found through drugs and wild living.

During this year, Terry played his part in the infamous geology department soccer team, the "trouser snakes" and was our celebrated centre forward (the only co-ordinated one amongst us); I was goalie and we sloshed around in the mud of the university playing fields on wet Wednesday afternoons and invariably we missed afternoon lectures as thirst would get the better of us!

Terry was an outstanding researcher and produced a groundbreaking thesis on minerals with unpronounceable names. He naturally got first class honours (bright cookie). However his yearning for the deeper aspects of life remained and ultimately drove him on a quest for a guru in India. His stay was curtailed by news that Naomi (then Sue) was pregnant with Tam.



Wild man Terry at his thesis area in 1974

He returned to Auckland but I lost track of him for a while. He settled down with Sue and spent time working with the Alex Harvey Industry exploration group in the Buller on NZ's South Island West Coast with some university compatriots and also worked off and on for the Geology Department finally gaining a tenure as a junior lecturer in the Geothermal Institute. At some stage in this period, Terry found the one thing his soul has yearned for: a peace that came to him via Buddhism. He changed markedly as though he had finally come home. The wild spirit had been tamed and he even bought a house!

From his experience with the Geothermal Institute under his belt, Terry secured a position with the then NZ based but world famous KRTA consulting firm in their geothermal division.

He and the family were posted to the Philippines where the company was then doing large contracts with the Philippine Government. It was on a trip back that I got a call out of the blue from Terry. He suggested I make a move from working with Amoco to join the KRTA team. This I duly did (I owe much to Terry for this opportunity) and I opened a very successful minerals division for them. During this time Terry remained in the Philippines until 1984-85 when he returned home.

He had looked at a large number of thermal areas in Philippines and Canada and had started putting together new ideas on how these hot water moving (and mineral moving) systems operate. This was his insight into mineral deposits.

This background was his entrée into consulting work and, initially alone but soon with other likeminded geologists he formed CMS Ltd a group specialising in understanding gold and copper mineralising systems. This was an exciting time for Terry. His genius came to the fore and he developed a knack of having petrology (the study of rocks down a microscope) come alive and somehow the rocks would speak to him about how a particular prospect area had evolved. From this he was able to advise clients as to where to look for best returns. Such was his genius.

He travelled extensively, in every instance gaining more experience and there was always time to take in a temple or two or to do the odd retreat. A UN consulting job in Vietnam offered yet another new experience. Terry saw opportunities to help the poor locals by developing mineral resources he saw there on his travels. In 1986 he and his co-workers formed Asian Mineral Resources and staked a claim on a nickel – copper-cobalt deposit, which, although they made little from, was a winner and is coming into production this year.

In the early 1990's Terry stepped into international limelight when he and Australian friend and colleague Dr Greg Corbett formulated the idea of presenting seminars and teaching courses for mining companies and universities. They complemented each other nicely and by this stage Terry was in amongst the top handful of experts in hydrothermal systems and ore deposition. The course was presented in excess of 30 times in 12 countries and was overwhelmingly successful. Terry's approach to the science was pragmatic but flairful and he drew his conclusions from his microscopic observations not from academic theory and supposition. This drew criticism from the entrenched theorists and although a highly prestigious course manual was published by the Society of Economic Geologists in a special publication, the volume and its authors were somewhat snubbed by academia.

I linked up again with Terry in late 1995, and from then until he scaled back his business in 2001, we shared some great times both professionally and spiritually. I was to discover through all his years of working, that much of his money was supporting the Mahamudra Buddhist Centre in the Coromandel Peninsula on NZ. He tirelessly worked the building up of the centre and its day to day operation whilst heading a highly successful business.

During this phase Terry went through a period of intense emotional turmoil and his union of over 25 years to Naomi (Sue) broke up. I had been through similar times and we spent many hours in deep and profound commiseration and discussion. Around this time Terry, in only Terry's way got embroiled in what was to be the mining hoax of the century. He and Greg were called in to consult on the then famous Busang Gold Deposit in Kalimantan Indonesia. The Deposit was a hoax that cost the world 6 billion dollars Canadian. The geologist in charge, John Felderhof was left holding the baby and the wrath of some very sore investors. Terry believed in John and offered to help defend him despite a howl of anguish from his colleagues. This speaks volumes of Terry's belief in the basic good in man and despite the sarcasm of his peers, he represented John in court.

His father Lewis, a man of limitless energy and positivity passed away in the early 2000's; Terry's marriage had folded, his father passed on so he closed the Auckland office of Terry Leach & Co, and moved to Hamilton; as this move did not work out for him, he sold up and built a house for him and his mother in Coromandel.

This brought him closer to his beloved centre to which he could devote more time. He was able to be selective with clients and work he took on and still travelled regularly to sites to collect rocks for study. He told me often that it was his aim to retire and live a life of meditation, that of a monk.

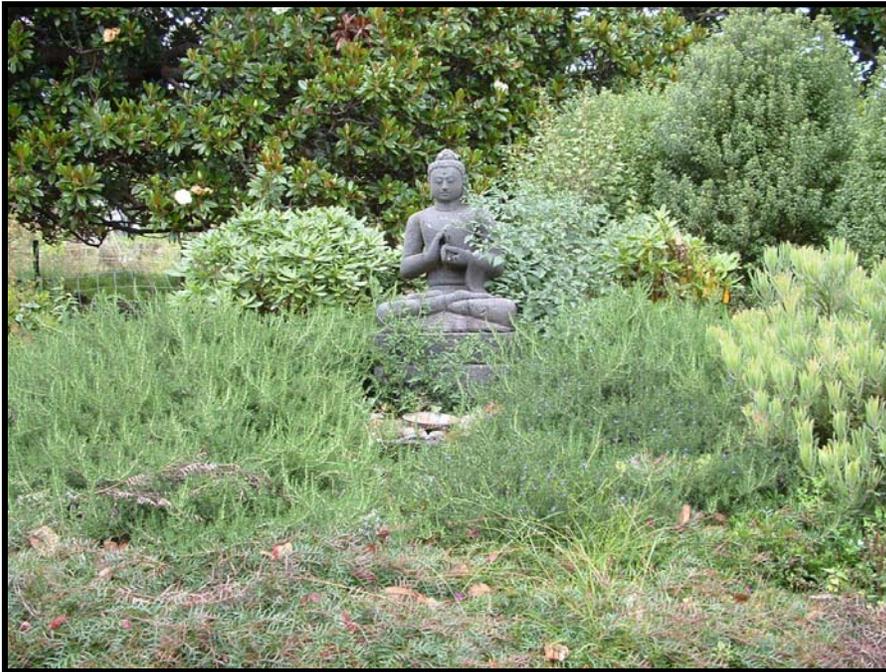
It came as a shock to all of us when, what began as a scratchy throat ended so tragically. He did however get his wish in his closing days of becoming a monk and spending his last weeks in meditation.

Terry will be remembered as a cheerful fellow who only complained about his sore knee! He loved to see the best in people and was forever telling us to look for the cause of our trials and tribulations within ourselves. I still hear him chanting to me: cheer up Ray, you created the cause for your own problems! (...then.... I would grit my teeth!)

He was geologist of great flair, brilliant in observation, insightful in interpretation and with strength of resolve(yes, stubborn too). Terry had the ability to quickly see through data, to think laterally and yet flexible enough to adjust his geological models if the data showed otherwise. He was one of the finest geologists I have ever had the privilege to work with. To all of us he was a great teacher.

But more, Terry was, to me, a spiritual giant among men. He was kind, generous to a fault but most of all a teacher to all of us in a myriad of different ways. He touched so many souls along his path and set many of us thinking beyond our petty worlds of trivia. Sure he was human and had a lot of human desires, but he recognised these and worked within their bounds, rarely letting them to the fore. Terry, you helped so many on your path but remained so humble. I wonder if the Buddha's will let you play centre forward in their team.

Terry my friend, till we meet again; I love you as a brother and miss you dearly.



Ray Merchant.