

OAA North American Group Hosts a Unique Gathering

A visit to Washington, DC, by the OAA President, the Hon. Shane Stone, AC, PGDK, QC, during June 2011 — his first visit there since the creation of the North American Regional Group of the Association — was the excuse for the regional group to host a special gathering to honour their visitor.

“It was our first chance for a full dress parade,” said North American Group chair Gregory Copley, AM, “and we wanted to make it a special occasion for Shane, his wife, Mrs (Josephine) Stone, AM, and their son and daughter, Jack and Madeleine.”

The North American Group is the largest geographic region for The Order of Australia Association, but has the fewest members, with most of them scattered across an area which includes the US, Canada, Mexico, and the Caribbean. As a result, getting a gathering of OAA members together is difficult, and it is especially so in the Summer months when Washington, DC, is often a relatively deserted city.

Nonetheless, Gregory Copley and his wife, Pamela, were delighted to host a reception on July 29, 2011, in the Gold Room at the prestigious Cosmos Club on Washington’s Embassy Row, and North American Group Vice-Patron His Excellency, the Hon. Kim Beazley, AC (the Governor-General acts as Patron of the Group) joined the reception to welcome the Stones, and several other special guests.

Former Prime Minister the Hon. John Howard, AC, and his wife Janette, joined the gathering, and representatives of two other distinguished chivalric orders also participated to welcome the Stones: His Imperial Highness Prince Ermias Sahle-Selassie Haile-Selassie, the Sovereign Grand Master of the Imperial Ethiopian Orders, attended, with his wife, Lady Saba Kebede. So, too, did Lord (Michael) Ashcroft, KCMG, from the United Kingdom. Baron Ashcroft was recently tasked by UK Prime Minister David Cameron with heading a formal inquiry into Britain’s Sovereign Bases in Cyprus, a function which would have him in contact with former Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer, who is the United Nations Secretary-General’s Special Advisor on Cyprus.

As well, the chair of the Queensland branch of the OAA, Dr A.J. (Tony) Webber, AM, was visiting Washington, DC, at the time, and honored the North American Regional Group with his presence at the Cosmos Club gathering.

Among the North American members of the OAA who participated in the event was the first Australian astronaut, the renowned scientist and oceanographer Dr Paul Scully-Power, AM, DSM, NSM, FRAeS, FAICD, and his wife, Frannie; and the newly-minted OAM from the Australian Embassy in Washington, DC: Tom Corcoran. Tom, a US citizen, has, for many years, headed the department at the Embassy which handles visits to the US by Australian leaders.

“This was truly an historic gathering,” said Copley. “It saw a meeting of three amazing Australian political leaders from a very significant time in our history — a former Prime Minister, a former Deputy Prime Minister (and possibly the most renowned Australian Defence Minister), and a former Chief Minister of the Northern Territory — gathered together outside the country.”

Greg added: “It was also a great opportunity for the Association to engage in a little diplomacy in this most diplomatic of cities. President Stone noted that he was particularly honored to have Prince Ermias and Lady Saba present, given that most Australians had learned so much of Ethiopia because of the stand taken by Prince Ermias’ grandfather, HIM Emperor Haile Selassie I, against colonialism.”

“As well, it is an understatement to say how much our North American Group values to interest and contribution of its Vice-Patron, Kim Beazley, who truly understands that the Order’s recipients, when they travel or live abroad, work assiduously to project Australian values and interests. Similarly, the interaction which the Association has with foreign recipients of various grades of the Order of Australia, means that the friendships between societies become more profoundly important.”

“In this regard, we were delighted to pay tribute to the fact that Gen. David Petraeus, AO (Hon.), was, in July 2011, confirmed by the US Senate as the new Director of US Central Intelligence. He had, from his post as Commander of US and NATO forces in Afghanistan, written to the North American Group saying how much he valued his friendship with, and support from, the Australian forces fighting in that war.”

Attached photographs:

NthAmJul2911-1: Former Prime Minister the Hon. John Howard, AC (left), OAA President the Hon. Shane Stone, AC, PDGK, QC (centre), and OAA North American Group chair Gregory Copley, AM (right) at the North American Group’s reception in Washington, DC, on July 29, 2011, to honour Mr Stone.

NthAmJul2911-2: Queensland OAA Chair Dr Tony Webber, AM (left), Tom Corcoran, OAM (centre), and Frannie Scully-Power.

NthAmJul2911-3: Gregory Copley, AM (left), the Hon. Shane Stone, AC, and Dr Tony Webber, AM.

NthAmJul2911-4: Order holders at the reception in The Cosmos Club’s Gold Room (from left): Tom Corcoran, OAM; HE the Hon. Kim Beazley, AC; Gregory Copley, AM; Josephine Stone, AM; the Hon. Shane Stone, AC; Dr Tony Webber, AM; the Hon. John Howard, AC; and Dr Paul Scully-Power, AM.

NthAmJul2911-5: (from left) Kim Beazley, AC; Dr Paul Scully-Power, AM; HIH Prince Ermias Selassie; Gregory Copley, AM.

NthAmJul2911-6: (from left, front group) The Hon. John Howard, AC; the Hon. Shane Stone, AC; HIH Prince Ermias; Gregory Copley, AM. In the background, left, Lord Ashcroft and Dr Paul Scully-Power, AM, engage in discussions.