



## ***IT'S "E NOHO RĀ, AOTEAROA"***



As our time in New Zealand rapidly comes to a close, Gail and I would like to sincerely thank you all for the kindness, hospitality and friendship which we have enjoyed here.

Our time has been productive and, frankly, enjoyable. There is much to celebrate. The U.S.-N.Z. relationship is the best it's been in decades and during my time our countries have mounted a shared effort to deepen our existing level of teamwork. Together we have focused on areas of cooperation and collaborative ways in which we can make a positive difference to the N.Z.-U.S. relationship locally, regionally and globally.

As Ambassador I have been fortunate to have a front-row seat and will take home some indelible memories - each of which speaks to something about friendship, cooperation and the sharing of cultures.

My time in Antarctica with Sir Edmund Hillary was a lifetime highlight. It was an immense privilege to accompany Sir Ed, Prime Minister Helen Clark, and Assistant Secretary Claudia McMurray to the Ice to commemorate 50 years of bilateral cooperation in Antarctica. As a staunch environmentalist, I remain a firm advocate for the essential science that is undertaken on the subcontinent and strongly support the ongoing U.S. commitment to this vital work. This science is critical in addressing the challenges presented by global warming and climate change. Our countries have a shared commitment to the good stewardship of our planet, and perhaps nowhere is this more clearly illustrated than on the Ice.

I was also so very proud to be a part of the historic visit of Condoleezza Rice to Auckland in July - the first visit by a Secretary of State in a decade. At Government House, I listened while works by the famous N.Z. composer John Psathas were performed for Secretary Rice. I remembered then, as now, how I had hosted a wrap-up party when American saxophonist Joshua Redman was here to record Psathas' CD. I recalled also that the PM had given Secretary Rice a copy of that CD on her 2006 visit to Washington. I was also lucky enough to be there for that too, and to bear witness to Prime Minister Clark's visit to the White House. The spontaneous and relaxed conversation over lunch between Prime Minister and President is something I will not forget.

Our partnership in the Pacific is a central element of our vibrant relationship, and I've been privileged to be accredited to Samoa and the Cook Islands. Gail and I have visited both several times.

When I accompanied Secretary Rice to Samoa to meet with the Pacific Foreign Ministers, we acquired first-hand knowledge from Pacific leaders as to how they view the region's prospects, challenges and opportunities. We sought their guidance on ways we might be able to contribute.

They identified climate change, energy independence, and managing natural resources as priorities. These make a lot of sense to me. For example, my background in the seafood business helps me understand the importance of resource management with regard to fish stocks globally. The U.S. seeks to help with these priorities where possible.





In the South Pacific, the U.S. has a lot to learn from New Zealand. We continue to draw on your country's depth of knowledge and unique perspective. As we do so, we strengthen our bilateral friendship.

When N.Z. Navy medics traveled aboard the USS Peleliu and USNS Mercy, New Zealand and the United States worked together to build hospitals and schools, teach preventive medicine, and provide medical and dental assistance in the Pacific. Such instances continue to demonstrate that we can accomplish so much more working together than we can alone. As we look to address the priorities identified at that regional meeting in Samoa, we will need to continue working together.

During my three-year term as Ambassador, I have travelled to towns and cities from Waitangi to Invercargill, speaking at service clubs, Chambers of Commerce, and to regional economic and local government development organizations. Gail and I have visited so many schools and learning institutions that I have long since lost count! We have enjoyed returning that hospitality to the thousands of visitors we had through our residence, *Camperdown*. We had the pleasure of hosting former N.Z. Ambassadors to Washington, members of the media, astronauts, parliamentarians of all stripes, scientific and cultural experts - the list seems endless.

A very special exhibition has been on display in our home, which we have delighted in showing to our guests at dinners, receptions and events. Gail and I are passionate about the arts and culture and have embraced Maori culture in creating an exhibition of Maori and Native American art at *Camperdown*. That exhibit reminds us all of the cultural riches we have received from our indigenous peoples. Special acknowledgement must go to the Portland Art Museum, Darcy and Ann Nicholas, and the folks from Pataka for loaning works and curating the exhibition.

We have also extended our hospitality into the community with events such as the Thanksgiving dinner at the Downtown Community Ministry, a worthwhile effort which I hope will continue for years to come.

Another project I was delighted to be involved in celebrates the long history of our bilateral relationship. On Memorial Day 2007, His Excellency the Governor-General, then-Prime Minister Clark, and I opened an exhibition at Old St. Paul's in Wellington. Called *A Friend in Need*, it is itself a cooperative endeavor, showcasing our shared cooperation and interactions during WWII. The U.S. State Department provided seed-funding and the New Zealand Historic Places Trust (NZHPT) took the project on with gusto. Taking the initiative one step further, NZHPT has produced a kit to help teachers cover this chapter in our shared history, within the school curriculum. The coming year sees the project go virtual, with a website currently under development.

During the *Friend in Need* project, I also came to know a remarkable author, Joan Ellis. Joan has written a book of the stories of US Marines in New Zealand during WWII. Among others, it recounts Sheila Roberson's story:

*Prior to World War II my family had an American friend, a rare breed in our part of the world at that time. Each year our friend threw an Independence Day party and after each one my parents arrived home with a pocket-sized version of the Stars and Stripes to add to a growing collection. We learned about America's love affair with apple pie from my mother. When I took my first Marine date home to dinner, my mother baked an apple pie. The weather was chilly, and despite the fact that coal was rationed, my father lit a fire. There on the mantle-piece in the glow of the firelight, waiting to greet the young Marine stood the ten little American flags. Such a sight so far from home moved him.*



Such moments have moved us too. The personal friendships that Gail and I have made here echo the broader bilateral friendship: past, present and future. We have been privileged to be welcomed as friends by New Zealanders, just as the U.S. welcomes New Zealand's friendship.

And so, as we go, there is one thing we will remember most about New Zealand –

He tangata, He tangata, He tangata. It is people, it is people, it is people.

"Arohanui"

*William Peltzman*



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