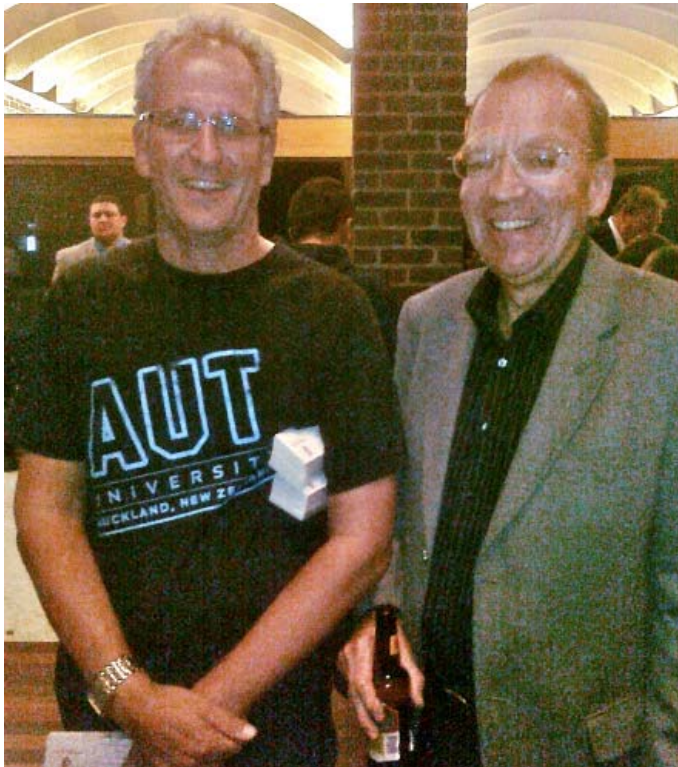


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## Rugby and Revelry at the Embassy of New Zealand

November 16, 2009, 10:10 am by Christina Wilkie



The 13th annual Ambassador's Shield rugby tournament took place on Sunday, followed by a reception and dinner at the Embassy of New Zealand for more than 250 people.

The day-long competition was held on the campus of Trinity College in Northeast D.C., and began with a women's match at 9 a.m., followed by three amateur adult match-ups. The afternoon line-up featured a rousing junior match pitting students at Hyde School, a public charter high school, against the team from Gallaudet University, the nation's premier deaf college. The day culminated in a match between members of the Mid-Atlantic Rugby Football Union and a squad comprised of expat New Zealanders, some of whom

traveled from as far away as Hawaii to participate in the tournament. The Kiwis beat the "Yankees," 22-5.

Following the rugby, **New Zealand Ambassador Roy Ferguson** hosted a party at the Embassy. The vibe was relaxed and the crowd was notably friendly. Players who came directly from the match showered in the Embassy locker room before joining the fun.

"I'll probably be skewered by my fellow countrymen for saying this," Ambassador Ferguson joked with ITK, "but my favorite match of the day was the Hyde school Gallaudet game. Those kids have so much heart, and we're so proud to support Hyde's rugby program."

The Embassy sponsors two Hyde School rugby students each year on a six-week trip to New Zealand, part of a program the Ambassador hopes to expand soon to include Gallauet rugby players.

There was a second reason to celebrate: **President Barack Obama** recently expressed interest in expanding the Trans Pacific Partnership trade treaty, fueling hopes of an eventual free-trade agreement between the U.S. and New Zealand.

In the crowd: Senate Foreign Relations Committee staffers **Andrew Keller** and **David Wilkie**, Auckland University advancement director **Chris Klaassen** over from New Zealand (pictured here in

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black with Ambassador Ferguson), Hyde School rugby coach **Tal Bayer**, and USA Rugby board members **Bill Middleton** and **Jen Joyce**.

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