

THE OFA 89TH ANNUAL DINNER
In conjunction with
THE PENANG FREE SCHOOL 196TH ANNIVERSARY
[21ST OCTOBER 2012]

Dr P.P. Shah, the patron of OFA,

Yang Berbahagia, Dato' Haji Abdul Rafique bin Abdul Karim, the chairman of Penang Free School Board of Governors and the patron of OFA,

Yang Berbahagia, Dato' Peter Vanasingham, the trustee of OFA,

Yang Berbahagia, Dato' Seri Eric Lim Ewe Chye, the trustee of OFA and the past president of OFA,

Distinguished past presidents, Mr Andrew Lim Tatt Keong, Mr Nehru, Mr Johnny Ooi and Mr Lim Chien Aun,

The organizing chairman for the 89th annual OFA dinner, Mr Robert Ong,

My Fellow Old Frees,

Invited Guests

Members of the press

ladies and gentlemen

A very good evening and welcome to The Old Frees' Association's 89th Annual
Dinner in conjunction with the Penang Free School's 196th Anniversary.

It is a great honour to have the presence our highly respected and distinguished
patrons, trustees and past presidents for our dinner.

It is also a great pleasure to see that alumni from St George's Girls School, Convent Green Lane, Saint Xavier's Institution, Methodist Boys School and Chung Ling High School are also here with us to celebrate OFA 89th Annual Dinner.

Ladies and gentlemen,

For the past one year, the management committee has carried out various projects, activities, events, gatherings and games to foster a strong relationship among the OFA fraternity.

Without going into lengthy details, I would just like to mention some of them here:

- The replacement of roofing tiles at the main building in Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah and the resurfacing of the car park;
- The purchase of two new tournament-grade snooker tables for the Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah clubhouse and a pool table for the Bay Avenue clubhouse;
- Our annual durian pilgrimage to Balik Pulau on the 24th of June;
- Regular dancing, karaoke and sing-along activities at both clubhouses;
- A talk on travel photography at the Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah clubhouse on the 14th of July;
- A Nintendo Wii competition at the Bay Avenue clubhouse on the 15th of July;
- A member's night of food and music on the 30th of August;
- Annual games with the present Free School boys on the 22nd of September.
- And lastly, we had a golf tournament that was played just yesterday.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Many of you will know that one of our big achievements this year was the launching of FIDELIS, the commemorative book of The Old Frees' Association, by our Royal Patron, The Raja of Perlis, Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin Ibni Almahrum Tuanku Syed Putra Jamalullail in March.

Seven months have passed since the launch but we are still feeling the excitement over it. Every time I open the book, I am reminded of the fine traditions of our Alma Mater and the contributions of Great Old Frees who had given to society in their own special ways. Our association has come a long way and we now have a publication that recorded our history and our activities in the past 88 years.

Personally, I think the book is timely because if we had waited longer to produce this book, chances will be that much of the information will be lost forever.

For your information, our editorial team has already commenced work on the 2nd print of FIDELIS which we shall then offer for sale to the general public. Through this move, we shall hope to reconnect with the multitudes of Old Frees out there.

As such, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the editorial team, Mr David Hwang Hong Shi, Mr Quah Seng Sun, Ms Molly Ooi and Mr William Tan for all their contributions and effort.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The next time, you are passing through the expressway beside the Queensbay Mall, please do make it a point to detour and drop by our association's newest attraction, the OFA Bay Avenue. Yes, we now have two clubhouses to serve our members and we guarantee you will like this one.

The OFA Bay Avenue was officially opened to members on the 1st of April 2012 and it nicely complements our Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah "mother" clubhouse. The facilities there are wide-ranging to cater for members of all ages and gender, although I must admit that we lack a tennis court. For that, I suppose our members must still come down to the "mother" clubhouse.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to share with members that Mr Yeoh Keng Lock has taken up the responsibility to revamp the entire Rules of The Old Frees' Association, also known as the OFA Constitution. He has already submitted his proposed amendments to us and we are now studying them closely. I would like to say "thank you" for all his effort.

Next, in order to reach out to our members and the Old Frees who have yet to become members, we have come up with various plans and projects to increase the membership. For instance, we now connect with a new generation of Old Frees via Google Group, Facebook, the OFA Website and what you see before you, the new OFA Newsletter which we are also calling FIDELIS.

There's also the new OFA Tie which all the Management Committee members are wearing today that is part of our rebranding exercise for the OFA. Many thanks to the Communication, Multi-media and Membership sub-committees for making these initiatives happen. Oh, by the way, Thursday is now our official OFA Tie Day. Many of us have made it a point to wear the OFA Tie to work on Thursday. Do join us to celebrate OFA Tie Day, wherever you may be working.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The fact may not have escaped you that our Alma Mater will be celebrating her 200th anniversary in four years' time. Four years may seem very far away but actually, the PFS Bicentenary is fast approaching. Through the PFS Bicentenary Committee, the OFA shall play our part in ensuring this occasion will be well celebrated and well remembered.

I wasn't around yet when the Penang Free School celebrated its Sesquicentenary in 1966. However, you can be sure that I shall make it a big point to join in celebrating her Bicentenary.

One good news to share with you, in case you are not aware, the Penang Free School now has a headmaster, Mr Jalil Saad, who is an Old Free. It wasn't by accident that we now have an Old Free helming the school. The OFA had been working very hard to bring in an Old Free to become the headmaster and now that this has happened, we hope that the fine traditions and past glories of Free School will be revived.

We hope that the new headmaster, being an Old Free, will strive hard to bring the necessary changes to the school. I would also like to assure him that The Old Frees' Association shall stand behind him in implementing these changes if they are for the School's best interest.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As an example, you may be interested to know that in a recent PFS Foundation committee meeting, we in the OFA had stressed the importance of preserving the heritage of the Penang Free School as we are the oldest English school in South East Asia. Unfortunately, our heritage is not reflected at the entrance of the school.

I am glad to share with you that the OFA Penang, the OFA Singapore, the PFS Foundation and the Headmaster of the Penang Free School have agreed in principle to move the Jawi wordings to the inner wall of the Free School main gate.

This is only one instance of change that we can expect. In order for other changes to happen, the OFA must take the lead and transform the school to reach greater heights. We therefore need the support and solidarity from Old Frees around the world, not just from this country or even Penang alone. It is my fervent hope that Old Frees will come forward to help their Alma Mater improve academically and physically.

Still on the school, I am also pleased to share with you that the Penang Free School will be receiving a sum of RM 3 million from the Ministry of Education to refurbish and renovate the school as part of the preparations for the Bicentenary.

Last but not least, I wish to take this opportunity to thank the Organising Chairman, Mr Robert Ong, who had worked very hard for the last three months with his sub-committee members and the OFA management staff – Ms Winnie, Ms Amy and Ms Sharon – to make this annual dinner a successful and meaningful one.

I also like to thank all the contributors for their generousities in contributing to the OFA Newsletter and for the lucky draws.

Fortis Atque Fidelis, for the Brave and For the True

Thank you.