

## CHAPTER 6

### Thomas Alexander

#### IN WESTERN SAMOA, 1952-1959



Fou Frost - Mum's friend

In April, 1952 Mum, Leo, Lilian and I moved to Western Samoa on the ship "Tofua." None of us kids could speak Samoan. We moved because the damp, cold climate of Wanganui was detrimental to Leo's health and doctors recommended moving to a warmer climate where he could fare much better. We were all sea sick aboard the vessel.

Upon arrival in the capital, Apia, we went to the village of Lotopa and stayed with uncle Joe Crichton and aunty Vai. It was there that I became acquainted with children similar in age as myself – Feleki, Ekefa, Neil and Dorothy Annandale, Vena, Luki Ni or Rodney. At the back were older women Fialupe, Losivale and Eileen. They were all my relatives. Down the road in Pesega, opposite the L.D.S. church, dwelled Keve (David) Crichton and his wife Lily and family. One of their sons was Oli Crichton who was an excellent rugby player. This was the David Crichton whom mum resided with when she was

nineteen or twenty, who beat her because she wouldn't marry the blacksmith who had cows, thus denying the family a source for free meat.

Ekefa and Dorothy would arise early before the sun arose and make Kopai (flour dumplings with coconut cream) or Koko rice or sua rice. This was the daily breakfast. On occasion we would have bread with Samoan coconut jam and drink laumoli (orange leaves in hot water) or koko Samoa.

Feleki would practice his English on me and was constantly saying "registration minter," which meant absolutely nothing. We would go in the bush behind the family property and set traps to catch ve'a, a bird the size of a small chicken. We caught nothing.

Feleki and Neil took me to scouts. They were learning how to tie knots. I remember one knot was called sheepshank. Two American missionaries were there. One was teaching the scouts how to tie knots. He spoke in Samoan. The other apparently couldn't speak Samoan very well and sat and watched.

After attending scouts about three times, and not being interested in tying various knots, I went over and sat next to this missionary. It seemed he never said a word and I felt sorry for him. So I said, "Would you baptize me?" I was probably the easiest baptism he ever got in his whole mission. He didn't have to friendship, fellowship or teach the gospel. All he had to say was, "yes," which he did. I was baptized in a font outside in Pesega. I am probably one of the very few in the L.D.S. church who asked to be baptized out of sympathy for a missionary.

Mum needed a source of income. Dad was still in New Zealand working and trying to sell our house. She decided to try fishing and went to the village of Fagaloa and set up a pa i'a or chicken wire fish trap. We went and stayed in Fagaloa providing a wonderful feast for mosquitoes. We had mosquito bites and sores all over. An old lady gave us pieces of coconut husk to scratch with. This was not a pleasant experience for us three children.

The fishing endeavor didn't work well. So mum abandoned it and we went to stay with her sister Nora and husband Aiono Luki in Fasito'outa, up in the bush in Lepale. They had a big plantation with a lot of laborers. Aiono had a couple of yellow trucks and a contract to supply taros and green bananas to the hospital in Moto'otua in Apia. I would accompany my aunt Nora in the trucks when deliveries were made. One of the drivers was named Mau whose eyes were rather blood shot and he seemed to be falling asleep at the wheel. Several times I would go to grab the wheel thinking he had fallen asleep and my aunty Nora would laugh. Mau had a brother named Esela who would pound on the roof of the truck to stop so he could go fight someone who swore at us as we passed by.

Mum had decided I would go to school at Apia Primary located in the village of Leifiifi. Being Fasito'outa was far from town she needed a place for me to live close to school. It was arranged that I would stay with Vena and Mary Ah Ching in Pesega. They lived in a store owned by Vena's mother Kelaise. They had a bakery in the back of the store and baked pies with pineapple filling and pagi popo or coconut buns which I liked. I stayed with them for one year.

The Ah Ching family and I went to get kapok off a kapok tree. Kapok is like cotton and is used to fill pillows. The trunk of this type of tree has big thorns protruding around it. I was standing on a lower branch trying to poke cotton pods off the tree with a stick (lo) when the branch broke and I fell scraping the thigh of my left leg down the tree trunk. An area over one foot long and three inches wide was slashed by the thorns. They took me to the hospital. This was the most serious injury I had living in Samoa, other than being hospitalized once for pneumonia and being stationed next to a boy my age who had been kicked in the head by a horse.

I walked to and from Apia Primary each day. I was in Standard 5 also known as Form 1. Our teacher was Miss Enari who was a nice Samoan lady. I was the youngest kid in the class at age eleven with students age 12-15. I was the only white kid in the class.

My first day at school Samoan boys came over and pulled my ear and said “E te ula?” meaning do you want trouble. I didn’t know what “E te ula?” meant and couldn’t understand why they were pulling my ear. The class befriended me and some of the boys said, “Would you like to learn a Samoan song?” I thought this was a neat idea so I said yes. So I began to learn “Tui, tui ma sogi, sogi.” which I had no idea what it meant.

It was customary to have a “fia fia” once a week meaning time for performing – singing, dancing, reciting. I had been practicing diligently my Samoan song at recess. Otto Wendt, John Schwenke, Carl Schuster and other Samoan boys would tutor me with enthusiasm always smiling and encouraging me. Soon I had the whole song memorized.

The day arrived for the fia fia. The class began clapping, singing and dancing. Students rotated to the front of the class performing. Then Miss Enari said, “Tommy, would like to sing a song for us?” She had never called upon me before. I guess she didn’t want me to feel left out so I said “Yes. I have a Samoan song I will sing.” “Good,” said Miss Enari, “Come up front.” As I went up front one of the boys who had taught me the song looked at me quite apprehensively.

So I went up in front of the class with enthusiasm and pride ready to show off the song I had learned. I had sung in front of groups of people before when I was with the Salvation Army Church in New Zealand so I wasn’t shy or scared.

Smiling, with great enthusiasm, just as I had been tutored by the boys, I started singing, “Tui, tui ma sogi sogi, e a e a. E manaia tele le manogi, e a e a.” The class started laughing which made me sing all the louder and with greater enthusiasm. I could see they really liked my song. What I didn’t know was that I was singing, “Stick your finger up your butt, e a e a, pull it out and sniff, sniff, it smells so beautiful, so good, e a e a.”

Well, I didn’t get to finish the song. Miss Enari interrupted me and started speaking to the class in Samoan. Then she said to me, “Tommy, who taught you that song?” So I happily announced the names of the boys who had tutored me. By now they had become my good friends. The next thing I knew they were in front of the class bending over and getting belted. Miss Enari was wielding a big belt, the kind

the barber uses to sharpen his razor, and whipping their butts with all her strength. That was my introduction to singing a solo in Samoan before a live audience.

Although Apia Primary was a government school and not a religious founded school, we had prayer every morning in Miss Enari's class. We would stand behind our desks and sing the Lord's Prayer in Samoan. Then sit down and class work for the day would begin. In Standard 6 or Form 2 our teacher was Miss House, an older lady from New Zealand who gave the strap regularly to boys and girls alike for any misbehavior. Offenders would put out a hand and she would take the barber's belt and give the "cuts" as we called it. The maximum was 6 straps on the hands – 3 per hand.

Once a week the whole school would assemble and the headmaster would address us. At one of these gatherings the headmaster gave a lecture on text books. He basically said that text books were to be revered and respected as they contained valuable knowledge. There were students in other countries who did not have text books, whereas, we did. Then he said, "Clement, come forward." Clement was a classmate of mine and was a tough kid. "Clement, demonstrate to the school what you were doing to your textbook as I passed you on the road yesterday after school." The headmaster handed Clement his textbook. Clement took it and threw it on the floor, then with each step kicked it and continued kicking it across the ground. Then picked it up, threw it on the ground, and continued kicking.

The head master told Clement to bring him the text book. Holding the text book above his head he said, "Students, you must always take good care of your textbooks and treat them with utmost respect. Clement, bend over and touch your toes." Clement bent over. The headmaster took his cane and hit Clement six times across his butt. Clement cried grabbing his butt with two hands. I believe this was a great lesson the entire school learned that day. I never saw anyone ever mistreat text books from that day on. Throughout my teaching career, I have always told my students this story and to treat their text books with the greatest respect.

In New Zealand I was a fast kid. I could run. I was one of the fastest in my class and I played rugby. I did well in all the running games at school. At Apia Primary we would have organized sports including racing. The first day we had racing I was placed in a race with only girls. I couldn't understand why I was racing against girls and not racing with the boys. I figured I would win easily. To my surprise some girls beat me. I couldn't believe it. Later on I would understand. In New Zealand my classmates and I were all the same age. In Samoa I was racing against girls 3-4 years older than me.

From Apia Primary I went to Samoa College (1954-58). I enjoyed playing rugby, Samoan cricket, running events, the high jump and long jump. Unlike high school football in America where players on a team could range from 140 lbs to 330 lbs, teams in Western Samoa were formed according to weight. Example: boys 120 lbs – 140 lbs played in one division; 140-160 lbs played in another division; 160 lbs-180 lbs formed yet another division, etc. At recess there was no rugby ball available so the boys played rugby using a coconut husk as the ball. It was a free for all game with players wrestling and fighting for possession of the coconut husk.

The high school was divided into four teams – red, white, blue and green. I was on the blue team. We would have team sports and it was lots of fun. Once a year we would have a big sports day with all manner of games including competition in coconut tree climbing, making fire by rubbing two sticks together and placing embers into a coconut husk and blowing on it until it burst into flames.

Once a year, the school would go on a picnic around the island in buses. All students on each bus would start singing the moment we left school until we reached our destination. Imagine eight buses in a row passing you on a road with everyone singing. It was quite impressive.

My first taste of acting was at Samoa College. I was in a one-act play with some class mates. Later the high school would put on a variety show. There were two narrators: Fiafia from Savaii narrated in Samoan. I narrated in English. One of the acts featured a boy smoking a cigarette on stage and blowing smoke out one ear. He had a busted ear drum. My third acting experience was at Pesega at the Church College of Western Samoa. I was cast as Dr. Engel in the operetta, "The Student Prince." Via Skippis and Sipuao Matuaauto were the leads as the prince and Kathy.

At one rehearsal the cast was singing "Go to sleep, sleep, sleep." One by one they all dropped on the stage sleeping. As the last student dropped to the floor he let out a loud taipu (fart). The sleeping cast burst into laughter. Sister Barker, the director, didn't know why the cast was laughing and kept saying, "Cast, stop laughing and go to sleep. Ssh, go to sleep" Each time she would say, "Ssh." someone else would fart. It took some time before the cast could control themselves and rehearsal could continue. From this experience I learned the discipline to always stay in character.

Some of my class mates at Apia Primary and Samoa college were Albert Wendt, Mataio Fiamalua, Ioane Alama, Vaega Simeona, Louis Crawley, Faleniu Asaua, Lua Lepaio, Leataiolo Lepaio, Oscar Stunzler, Richard Luma Williams, Max Reid, Earnest Beatham, Carl Schuster, John Schwenke, Hugo Spearman, Bedevere Eves, Tile Imo, Clement or Kelemene, Saofaiga, Tia, Malama, Konolio, Toalagi, Ronnie Dunn who lived next to the Seven Day Adventist church in Lalovaea, Maima Te'o, Sieni To'o, Mary, Tina Fruean, Toia Fiti, Tele Frost, Maeva, Angie Rivers, Laupepa Malietoa, and Fuatai Malietoa. My best friend was Situfu Tanielu, son of the LMS pastor in Vaiala. In Form 6 were Eileen Rivers and Vio Annandale. In the class below me were Fa'avae, Fiafia, Aiken Fruean, Ata Matatumua, Dawn Rasmussen, and Tiavolo Tialavea and Keli Te'o, two of the fastest guys in the school. Also Siliga, an excellent rugby player whom Mr. Lorimar, our geography teacher and rugby coach termed, "A very tough boy." Two classes below me were Lopati, who the kids referred to as "ulu lapo'a," (Big head) and the twins Okesaita and Okesene (Oxygen), Douglas Slade, Ituau, Silotoa. Three classes below me was a girl named Sa and Feleni Auva'a. Feleni's father was SMP Auva'a (Samoan Medical Practitioner) and a friend of the Aiono Luki family. In Form 2 was my relative Nifo Saifoloi Mauigoa. The grounds man who cut the lawn with horse and mower was named Toa from the Tokelau Islands.

Another good friend who attended the Catholic Marist Brothers School was Samu whose brothers Pasitale and Leui'i were champion boxers. Samu was a brave boy. We went out in a canoe together and started paddling toward the reef. The sea was about waist deep when five baby sharks appeared alongside the canoe. Samu said, "Sharks!" and jumped out and tried to scoop them into the canoe with

his hands. The sharks swam off in a hurry. Samu was one fearless Samoan boy. He had hoped to scoop them into the canoe for food to eat.

Teachers at Samoa College were mainly from New Zealand: Mr. Smith (Algebra, Geometry, Trigonometry), Mr. Lorimar (Geography & History), Mrs. Lorimar (English), Mr. White (Chemistry), Mr. Bachelor from the USA (Biology, Physics), Mr. Barrett from the USA (English), and Mrs. Robinson (English) and Mr. Robinson. There were others whose names I don't remember. Mr. Glen was the headmaster. The wife of prime minister, Fiame Mataafa, taught English. Her name was Fetai Matatumua. The entire education system was based upon that of New Zealand.

The prime minister would bring Fetai to school in the morning in his convertible with radio blaring. He liked to play pool (billiards) at the fale o Tome (Tome's bakery). He often played with Bobby (Popi) who had a band in Apia. Bobby was a good guitar player. Tome's bakery was the pickup site each Friday for Leo, Lilian and I. That's where we bought our bread. Walter Jahnke would pick us up in his pickup truck and take us home to Fasito'outa up in the plantation. We rode with the Jahnke children – Theodore, Ferdinand and Rosita. Sometimes a lady named Louisa and her daughter Virginia would ride with us and a girl named Ethel. Once in a while Flora Jahnke's mother rode with us, Malaea, who lived in Aleisa. The Jahnke's had a house girl named Alofa and a one-armed boy named Ala who worked for them. It was amazing to see him husk coconuts with one hand and he was fast. They also had a worker named Louie.

When dad came to Samoa he leased 45 acres of jungle from the Crown Estates and we started a plantation. Part of the bush was cut down and we planted bananas, taro, and cacao. We lived in a Samoan fale (house) with a roof of thatched coconut leaves. There were plenty of birds in the bush and Leo and I loved to shoot birds with our fagameme'i or shanghais as they were called (catapults). There were lupe, manuma, fiaui, manutagi, fuia, ma'oma'o, toalai, iao, kukumalili, segasegama'u, segavao, se'u, miki, ti'otala, lulu, pe'a pe'a, tava'e, nonu, ve'a, and flying foxes (pe'a). We had a 12 gauge shot gun that we used to shoot pigeons and flying foxes. These were fun times for Leo and I. Sometimes we would go hunting for wild pigs though we never shot one. Our favorite activity was to go hunting for wild chickens – roosters and hens.

We would take one of our tame roosters from home and head up Mount Malioka. We would have a long piece of string attached to a leg. We would throw our rooster into the air so his wings would flap and then hide behind a big tree. Our hope was a wild rooster would hear and come and fight, get tangled in the string, and we would capture him. It was better still when our rooster crowed. The wild rooster would crow in response then come to fight and I would shoot him with the shot gun. We would do this often until one day, a hunter shot our rooster thinking it was a wild one. It was lucky we were hidden behind a big tree or pellets may have hit us.

We had a cook whose name was Noela from the village of Pu'epa'a. She later would hook up with our neighbor Tasi. Whenever I ran into Tasi in Apia he would give me a shilling for ice cream. Tasi was a nice man. He had a white dog named Snow. I regret throwing rocks with Livi at his rooster and killing it. Sometimes when you are a teenager you do stupid things. Livi was about my age and came from Sasina.

He lived with us for about a year; also, Saina from Lefagaoali'i. He stayed with us for at least two years and a girl named Sala who also stayed with us for two years. They did family chores and worked on the plantation.

We had several dogs over the years: Binkie, a puppy whose eye was pecked out by a rooster; Billy, Granger, Micky and others. We had a lot of chickens running around – regular types with a single comb, others that had the tauluga valu type of comb, plus save'u or silkies and bantams. We had a rhode - island red rooster that dad named Herbert. This rooster would attack visitors when they approached the house. Sometimes a woman would call out, "Bella, stop your rooster I'm coming to your house." We fed the chickens with scraped coconut (pegu).

A chief from Fasito'outa named Pulu would come and work for us on the plantation. He had a son named Perefoti who also worked for us at times. Also a daughter named Kise. Wild pigs had been eating our taros and had worn a trail to the taro patch. Mum complained to Pulu about the wild pigs. So Pulu went to the trail and dug a deep hole and covered it with branches, twigs, and dried banana leaves. The hope was that a wild pig would come down the trail to eat taro and fall into the pit.

Two months later Pulu came and asked for work. Mum told him to take a ladder and go throughout the plantation spraying bananas. We always did this to prevent the bananas from getting the bunchy top disease. So Pulu went. Later he returned clutching his bleeding head. Mum asked him, "What happened Pulu?" He said, "I forgot where the hole was I dug for the wild pigs and fell into my own pit. My head hit a rock." So mum patched up his bleeding head. Mum always enjoyed telling and re-telling this story. In Samoa there is this fast spreading grass like a net that can quickly cover everything on the ground. It's called mile-a-minute (fue saina). This is what happened to the pig pit. In two months it was totally covered by this grass and Pulu couldn't see the trap.

Speaking of accidents, when we first started cutting down the bush we had a gang of laborers come from Lalomanu one of whom was a man named Vaivai. When the laborers went home at the end of the week, he stayed on working alone for a few weeks. One day we went to Apia leaving him to work all by himself on the plantation. While we were gone he was cutting down small trees when a sapling he was cutting, that had a real sharp point, fell perpendicular to the ground piercing his foot and embedding itself into the ground. Vaivai was pinned to the ground helpless in a standing position.

Due to the weight of the sapling, the angle and position he was in, and the density of the immediate surrounding bush, he could not lift the sapling from off his pierced foot. So he got the machete and cut the side of his foot and pulled his foot out and away from the sapling which was embedded into the ground. He got his freedom at the expense of cutting his own foot. I have always marveled at the bravery of this man. He was a true warrior. His name Vaivai meant "weak." He was anything but weak.

Once a year our family would go "Ka Palolo" at the beach in Lefaga. We went with the Jahnke and Dr. Thieme families. We had small hand nets which we used to scoop up the tiny sea creatures that only appeared once a year and in accordance with a full moon. These little creatures were good to eat. It was an enjoyable annual activity. Dr. Thieme had a sister named Mutsi in her thirties. The doctor worked at the Moto'otua hospital.

Christmas 1956, Leo and I went to Savaii to spend the Christmas holidays with relatives. We stayed at the house of Malie and Tu and son Pe'a. Nearby was the house of Pepe Maneta, the family chief. Upon the aniani, (hill top) lived a cousin named Taesolo (Horse shit. Yes, this was his name. No kidding). At Christmas time Samoans like to let off fireworks. While Pepe was sleeping with his head on an ali, (a wooden sleeping pillow), Leo lit a fire cracker and let it off near Pepe's ear. The old man sat up immediately. Upon seeing Leo was the one who lit the fire cracker, he smiled.

I had brought our 12 gauge shot gun with me to shoot pigeons. A man came to the house and asked if I would shoot a pig in his sty. It was to be cooked for his daughter's birthday. I obliged and shot the pig between the eyes. Later, the man sent someone to get me to attend the birthday party. I was a guest because I had shot the pig. After the party I was given a piece of pork to take home.

Leo and I went with some of the boys in the village up inland to shoot pigeons. They said it was far away. We walked for some time and the sun was hot so we sat down and one of the boys climbed a coconut palm to get us some coconuts. He reached up to grab a coconut and instead grabbed a snake and threw it down. The boys killed the snake. Instead of continuing inland, we decided to return to the village. Leo dragged the snake back to the village.

On Christmas eve and New Year's eve we took turns blowing on the faga ofe which was a piece of thick bamboo with a hole on the surface of it. Kerosene was poured into the bamboo, you would blow into the hole, then pass a flame over the hole. The faga ofe would then fire making a noise like the firing of a shot gun. If you blew too often you would get a head ache. It was an enjoyable Christmas vacation other than getting sea sick on the kerosene boat the "Sulimoni" that took us from Apia to the coast of Sataua, and return. Another boat that was used was the "Gaumata'u."

In Apia we would eat ice cream at "Ie fale o Emelio." It was a favorite place to go. They also had pagi popo (coconut buns) and bottles of soda pop. We went to town with the Jahnke's one day and stopped at Emilio's. Saina was with us. Saina was fifteen years old and had never tasted soda pop in his life. Mum bought him an ice cream cone and a bottle of orangeade. He lifted the bottle to his lips and drank. Suddenly, he coughed and spluttered. Orangeade came running out of his nostrils and his eyes became teary eyed. The fizz had gotten to him. Tasting something for the first time can be an interesting experience and it certainly was for Saina. (Saina means "China." That was his name. China)

At the end of the school year at Samoa College, 1956 or 1957, Situfu Tanielu, Bedevere Eves and I were told by Mr. White, our chemistry teacher, to clean a room in the science lab. The science lab was on the second floor of the building. We finished the job so Sitifu layed down and went to sleep. On a counter was the bucket full of water that we had been using to soak rags and wipe shelves. Bedevere and I just hung around talking waiting for Mr. White to return and inspect our job.

About 10 minutes later Bedevere and I were looking down out the window when one of our classmates rounded the corner and was walking in the direction that would take him directly beneath our window. Bedevere, who was a mischievous kid, said, "Quick, let's pour the bucket of water on him!" We both rushed for the bucket. Bedevere got it first and then we ran to the window and without looking, Bedevere poured the bucket of water out the window. We looked down laughing and

to our surprise saw Mr. White completely soaked. He had rounded the corner behind our classmate who had passed beneath the window and was walking on completely dry. Bedevere, laughing, immediately took off running out of the room. Mr. White looked up and seeing me pointed his finger and said, "You stay right there Stokoe!"

I woke up Situfu and told him what had happened. Mr. White stormed in with Mr. Glen the headmaster. "Stokoe, did you pour that bucket of water on me?" "No, Mr. White." I replied. Now a little more menacing, "Stokoe, did you pour that bucket of water on me?" "No, Mr. White. I did not." Turning to Situfu he said, "Did you Situfu pour that bucket of water on me?" "No, Mr. White." "Obviously, someone in this room is lying. I will ask you both one more time. Stokoe did you pour that bucket of water?" "No, Mr. White, I did not." "Situfu, did you pour that bucket of water?" "No Mr. White." One thing about friends – you don't rat on one another and so we never mentioned Bedevere and they never asked if someone else was in the room.

The headmaster and Mr. White agreed that we were lying and both should be punished. The cane was brought forth. Situfu was to be caned first. As Situfu was about to bend over and be caned the headmaster noticed his eyes red from sleeping and said, "Just a minute, Mr. White, this boy's eyes are all red. Are you feeling sick Situfu?" It's a given fact that a Samoan who has been sleeping upon waking usually has red eyes. Situfu, doing his best acting, put a sick look on his face and weakly replied, "Yes." "Let's not cane this boy. He is sick. Stokoe, bend over." So I was caned. The next few days the story was told and re-told among our classmates who just roared with laughter, Bedevere laughing the most. Samoans enjoy a funny story. That was a fun school year.

When God Created man he did so by stirring up a large batch of cookies each shaped in the figure of a man. So goes an old Samoan legend. He put the first batch into the oven, set the temperature at low then settled back to relax. When he removed them, he discovered that the cookies were pale and white. "Ah, undercooked," he said thus creating the first white men. "I'll try again." So he made another batch and this time set the temperature gauge at high then took a nap. However, he over slept and awoke to the smell of something burning. Opening the oven he discovered that these cookies were black and too crisp. "Overdone," he muttered thus creating the first black men.

"This time I'll get it right." He meticulously stirred the clay, molded it into figures of men, and carefully placed them in the oven setting the temperature gauge at medium. Then he retired beneath a coconut palm. Soon the air filled with a beautiful aroma. He opened the oven and lo and behold he saw the most beautiful brown cookies the eye could ever behold. "Just right!" he said. Thus God created the most beautiful, handsome men of all – the Polynesian. Ever since that day the white man has always envied the brown skinned man. That's why he puts on sun tan lotion and lays out in the sun – to become brown like the Polynesian.

**TOM:** I was neither totally white nor totally brown but more white skinned than brown. I had the dark hair of my mother, her oval brown eyes and light olive complexion, my features resembled those of my English father. A faint red streak in my dark hair was visible in the brilliant sunshine, a genetic token from William Crichton, my Scottish great grandfather. I found comparing myself to my Samoan cousins

a painful exercise. They were big, tough and husky. I was built slight, to the point of being skinny. I was so skinny that girls called me "worm." (anufe) "Come walk with us worm," they called out as they walked to school. I went bare foot in Samoa 1953-1958. I wore shoes the first year I arrived in Samoa (1952), and the last year I lived in Samoa (1959) when I attended the Church College of Western Samoa.

I went to school in town. When I returned to the plantation on weekends, I lived with the family in an open Samoan house (fale) thatched with coconut leaves along with mosquitoes and lizards. I remember shooting lizards off the ceiling with elastic bands and hearing the rats scurrying in the adjacent corn patch at night while the family slept. Everyone slept under mosquito nets which provided only limited protection against the pesky insects. Each morning I discovered several mosquitoes laden with my blood inside the net. One morning I awoke to find the sore on my bandaged foot had been nibbled at by a rat which had gnawed its way through the mosquito net.

The family always had plenty of bananas and taro to eat. Also chickens, eggs, cans of herring, sardines and New Zealand corned beef. Although we were better off in comparison to the Samoans, providing a living was a constant struggle as we were totally dependent on the success of our plantation. There were three meals a day in the Stokoe home whereas the Samoans usually ate two. Often one can of corn beef with rice, onion and water provided the Sunday soup for the family along with baked or boiled green bananas or taro with coconut cream (pe'epe'e).

Mum enjoyed sea food so on Fridays she would purchase fish products at the market in front of the Tivoli theatre to take home to the plantation. This might include fagu sea (bottle filled with innids of sea creatures), gao, fuga fuga, faiai fe'e (octopus with coconut cream), Limu (seaweed), loli, tui tui (sea urchins), tugane (clams), and fish. Some of this was rough on the stomach until you became used to eating it.

Because I was white and my English father was an employer of Samoan laborers, I was considered someone sort of higher class in society. I received some benefits because of this status. I was never asked to help cook when I lived away from home. Usually, Samoan teen age boys and girls helped prepare the meals. Nor to cut grass with a machete or rake leaves. Being the son of an Englishman, I did not totally fit into the Samoan society, but as a half-caste, and after living there for eight years, I considered myself one of them and I was accepted as a local boy."

The plantation was some twenty-five miles from school in Apia, so I lived with Samoan families during the school year and returned to the plantation on weekends. In 1952 I lived with the Ah Ching family in Pesega, 1953-55 with the Sala Aki family in Togafu'afu'a, 1956 with aunt Lily in Vaiala at the Nora and Aiono Luki residence, and 1957-59 with the Vili and Tipesa Nun Yan family in Lalovaea.

The members of the Ah Ching family when I stayed with them included grandma Kelaise, son Vena and wife Mele; their children Arthur and Rosita, and two grown-up boys who were relatives, Tome and Kamaki.

The Sala Aki family consisted of the mother Sala, the old man Aki from China who lived in his small sewing shop next to the Retzlaff store in Apia, sons Tom and Murphy, Sala's brother Enesa, a

cousin from Savai'i named Olataga who came and went and was the middleweight boxing champion of Savaii; cousin Vili Nun Yan and wife Tipesa, older girls Peka and Logise, and a girl about my age named Pule (Rudy Misiluki Mathis' sister). From time to time a female cousin from Savaii named Moli would live with us and a girl named Lucy. Also living with us was Eliu Ieremia. For a while Laiuni Saifoloi Mauigoa stayed with us. Downstairs lived Amoa Tausilia, who was the Speaker of the House in the Samoan Parliament, and his wife Samoe who was a daughter of Aki, and children Ielome, Lope and Leilani. Relatives would come and stay with them for a while then return home such as a teenage boy named Leo.

The neighbor family on our left was the Lope Crichton family of which Peter Crichton was a member. On our right was the Nauer family with Segia and Vaileki. Across the street lived Sophie and her family. Behind them was the Tufuga Crichton family with Phillip, Elizabeth and Katie who attended Samoa College. These Crichtons were my cousins but we did not know that at the time.

We young boys could hardly wait for Tom, Murphy, Enesa and Vili to come home from work so we could play marbles. This was a big thing to us and we would play almost daily until it started to get dark except for time to do chores. This was a lot of fun. There were all kinds of rules: saita (shoot marbles in circle), no saita (no shoot marbles in circle), si'i (lift hand above ground to shoot), no si'i (no lift hand above ground to shoot), penisi (practice shot), no penisi (no practice shot), venkusi (Shoot from the line), no venkusi (no shooting from line.) We really enjoyed our game of marbles. When we didn't have marbles we played using lama (nuts).

1957-59 I stayed with Vili and wife Tipesa, children Hugo and Jacob, relative Tiavolo, and Kapaki who had a wooden leg and was Vili's uncle. He walked like Long John Silver in Robert Louis Stevenson's "Treasure Island." On occasion Vili's mother Pologa and father Sao would visit us. Pologa was the sister of Sala Aki. Also visiting was Tipesa's mother also named Sao, Tipesa's muscular brother named Vaikanuku and sister Vaitapu. Vaikanuku later died from cancer. It was pitiful to see his muscular body reduced to skin and bones just prior to his death.

Vili worked at Retzlaffs. When Keil, the manager of Retzlaff's store, asked Vili and Tipesa to move to an outlying village to run a store, Penukoko and his wife came to live in the house in Lalovaea with Tiavolo, Kapati and myself. Penukoko had no nose, only two holes where the nose should be. Behind us lived Viko and wife Logise and a woman named Pelekika.

The Sala Aki home in Togafu'afu'a was on land belonging to the Catholic Church. The Church wanted the Sala Aki family to move so they moved to Lalovaea and built a Samoan fale (house) about forty yards away from Vili's house. Living in their house was Sala, Enesa and his wife, and a young man named Alavini who had a deformed leg and limped, plus Nifo, Emeline Matua and Suitiu.

We had no water or electricity in our area of Lalovaea which was the valley just beneath the hospital as Moto'otua. Each Family had an out-house. There was no toilet paper. Instead dry banana leaves were used. You just ripped some off a banana tree enroute to the out-house. If you had some newspaper you were lucky. Only two families in the area had a water pipe so local families had to use these pipes to shower and obtain drinking and cooking water. For light we used kerosene lamps. To

cook our food we gathered fire wood from the mountainside behind us (Mount Vaea) and cooked over a couple of rocks with two metal bars lying atop. We also had a kerosene primus. The water pipe we went to was at Alosina's place. The other family with a water pipe had a fierce dog named Blue which bit me. (I still have the scar today, 57 years later). So I preferred going to Alosina's pipe to shower.

A neighbor to us was "le au Tokelau", a family from the Tokelau Islands. Two of the daughters were named Vise and Va'a and a young man named Maeli. They were a nice family and always called out hello when I passed by. Va'a once came and asked Tipesa if she could wash my clothes. I guess she liked me. SMP Auva'a had a young daughter, Makelita about 3 years younger than me, who would come to the edge of the hill at Moto'otua hospital overlooking the valley below and call my name. She would call my name out loud for 10 minutes. She did that on a fairly regular basis. I guess she liked me. I never once responded or went to see her. I thought it was embarrassing and wished she wouldn't do that. Besides, I hardly knew her.

On Sunday's, when I would return to Lalovaea from the plantation on Walter Jahnke's truck, I would bring a big burlap sack full of green bananas and a basket of taro; once in a while a ta'amu (similar to taro but longer). Vili and I would wheel the goods up to the house on top of bicycles so we wouldn't have to carry them.

There was an old man named Sekue who lived further up the hill than us closer towards the hospital. It's a Samoan custom when someone walks by your house and the family is eating that you invite them to come and eat with you. The Phrase is "Tommy, sau e ai." or "Tommy, come and eat." If one is hungry the offer is accepted. Otherwise it is politely declined. Whenever Alavini was eating with us and Seque would pass by Alavini would shout out in quick Samoan, "Seque, go and eat." Seque, thinking that he was being invited to come and eat would reply, "No thank you. I appreciate your hospitality but I need to journey up the road." Alavini always got a kick out of doing that.

One night we were coming home from a movie at the Tivoli theatre—Tiavolo, Nifo, Alavini, Maeli, Enesa and I. It had been raining hard and we knew that the road opposite the Seven Day Adventist church leading up to our homes would be muddy and the stream we would have to cross could be gushing. If we continued up the tar sealed road toward the hospital and then dropped down the slope to behind Enesa's house we would avoid the mud and there was a log over which we could walk and cross the stream. We reached the Malifa crossroads where the decision had to be made as to what route to take. Maeli wanted one way and Alavini the other. They argued and suddenly started fighting really going at it punching each other big time. Enesa broke them up. Maeli and Tiavolo went one way Alavini, Enesa, Nifo and I went the other way. Alavini had a big swollen eye that soon turned into a bruise.

The next day Alavini went to the "Au Tokelau" house and called upon the chief of their family to send Maeli to him so they could continue their fight. The chief spoke calmly of using common sense and loving thy neighbor as thyself. Anyway, through custom and reason amends were made, Maeli and Alavini shook hands, and that was that.

While I was living at Togafu'afua with the Aki family, a big boxing match was announced throughout Samoa. Henry Bray, the heavyweight champion of Fiji was coming to Samoa to fight the Samoan heavyweight champion Suivai. This was eagerly anticipated with much enthusiasm throughout all of Samoa and was constantly announced over the 2AP radio station. The great day arrived. I went down to the Tivoli with Tom, Murphy and Enesa to get tickets to see the fight but it was sold out. A lot of fans couldn't get in. So we went home to listen on the radio.

As the radio announcer announced the fight with enthusiasm he would constantly say "and the stones keep falling on the roof as the unhappy fans who couldn't get into the fight continue to pound the Tivoli with stones." This was pretty much the case throughout the fight. Henry Bray won but it was the stones falling on the roof that I remember the most vividly over the radio.

With cousin Olataga as the middleweight champion of Savaii and Murphy Aki as a boxer, the Aki family was naturally interested in boxing. In the early evening we would have boxing practice in the back yard. A punching bag was hung on a guava tree. Tom and Murphy being half Samoan and half Chinese had slanted oriental eyes, especially Murphy. One night Murphy was going to fight in the ring at the Tivoli so Tom and I went to watch. The bout got under way and Tom was shouting encouragement to Murphy. A guy near where we were sitting was rooting for the other boxer, a full blooded Samoan. He kept shouting, "Kill the China; knock him out. Kill the China!" Tom said to him, "E, you shut up! Shut up your mouth!" Tom and he started arguing. The other guy said, "Do you want trouble? Let's go outside and I'll give you trouble." Tom said to me, "Tommy, you sit here. I'll go take care of this guy and I'll be right back." They left.

Murphy's fight ended and there was no sign of Tom. The boxing evening came to a close and the spectators started leaving. I looked for Tom but couldn't find him so I walked home. Upon arriving I asked Sara if she had seen Tom. She said, "He came home in a taxi; someone beat him up." I went upstairs and there lay Tom on a mat under a mosquito net." I said, "Tom, what happened? I waited for you and you never returned." Tom replied, "The guy, he beat me up. He cracked my head with a stone and then knocked me out. Someone put me in a taxi to come home." Attending a boxing event in Samoa was interesting. It seemed there was never a dull moment, inside or outside the ring.

I often attended the Tivoli theatre to see movies. Normally I attended afternoon matinees with school kids, which was really a unique experience. We saw films with the Marx Brothers, the Three Stooges, Harold Lloyd, Charlie Chaplin, Abbot and Costello, Tarzan, Hopalong Cassidy, the Lone Ranger, Tom Mix, and assorted cowboy and action films. The kids, even adults, would talk to the actors on stage, shout out advice, denounce the villain, cheer the hero, yell, scream, and laugh. The theatre would rock. Often I could hear the roar at the movie theatre from where I lived in Togafu'afu'a, some 400 yards away.

At school everybody wore uniforms. For Samoa College it was a yellow shirt with a badge on the pocket and short tan pants. The badge read, "Through knowledge To Achievement." Some boys wore lava-lavas. It was a disgrace if the clothes were wrinkled. The student was sent home from school. The British system practiced corporal punishment and students were strapped on the hands with a thick

barber's belt, or caned with a stick on the butt if they broke one or more rules, or failed to show proper respect for their teachers.

### **Becoming a Performer**

My English teacher, Mrs. Lorimer, had required my class to write essays. I worked hard on these assignments, but failed to receive a mark better than 2 out of a possible 10, or 3 out of 10, on my essays. Determined to get a high mark, I wrote what I considered a masterpiece. Then I penned at the end of the essay, "Are you satisfied?" When the teacher read the remark, she thought I was insolent and sent me to her husband to be caned. "Mr. Lorimer, your wife sent me to you to be caned." "With pleasure," he replied, "Step this way." I bent over and received two whacks with a meter yard stick held on edge. I later viewed my butt in a mirror and saw two bruise lines. Interestingly, from that day on my essays never received anything less than 7 out of 10.

By the time I was sixteen I was made a prefect (school officer). Every second Friday, the school had an assembly. Samoans loved skits, especially comedy that was bilingual. The entire school would assemble for the programs. The classes marched to the assembly hall in platoons like in the army and if anyone was out of step or talked in rank they were disciplined. Students marched into the hall and stood at attention until the head master entered. "Good morning, Mr. Glen," the students would chant together." "Good morning students. Be seated," he would respond. Students then sat cross-legged on the concrete floor.

It was customary to begin every assembly by reading a few passages from the bible. The prefects took turns reading at the assemblies. I will never forget the first day it was my turn to read. I spoke both English and Samoan. For some reason, by speaking both, I was inclined to read in a halting, stammering manner. I stumbled and stuttered over words and didn't have a big voice.

Coming off the stage where I had stood and read, my Geography teacher, who was a very good teacher, sort of half smiling called to me, "Stokoe, come here. Before you have the audacity to insult the good Lord's book again, learn how to read!" "Yes, Mr. Lorimer," I replied. I half chuckled, but I knew he was right. I decided from that day forward no one would ever say that to me again, that I would become a good reader. Thus the seed was sown to participate in Drama.

Ten years later, upon leaving the Utah Shakespearean Festival after a summer of acting and going immediately to Southern Illinois University for graduate school, I would audition for a play. With over 200 students auditioning the director, Professor Williams a retired Broadway actress, would say to me, "I want you to play the lead in this play." "But Professor Williams, you still have more students to audition," I said. Then she would pay me the greatest compliment I could receive, the antithesis of Mr. Lorimer's comment. "I know an excellent reader when I hear one and one who is an excellent leading man. I want you to play the lead role." It was like going from rags to riches as a reader. Desire, determination, hard work and experience make a difference in this world.



*Church College of Western Samoa (an LDS high school) presents "The Student Prince," June 18 & 19, 1959. I played Dr. Engel. Via Skippis was Prince Karl Franz and Sipuao Matuauto played Kathie.*

At Samoa College the school performed a cutting from "Hamlet." I was not invited to participate. My next opportunity came when the school needed two emcees for a variety show, one to speak in Samoan and the other in English. I was chosen for English. The Samoans didn't think much of my scripted jokes but in the audience was the crew of a U.S. Naval ship. The Americans laughed so this was a good experience.

Despite my interest in performing, I was shy and self-conscious because I was so skinny. Although I was 5' 11" tall, I weighed only 156 pounds. Each quarter the entire school went on a picnic. Everyone sang, danced or played the guitar or ukulele. "It was a disgrace if we didn't know how to sing or dance. I didn't know how to dance so I learned to be a musician so I wouldn't have to dance." Every evening I would sit among the banana trees and practice the guitar. My folks told me to practice outside as they got tired of hearing me play the same tunes over and over. The mosquitoes were numerous so I

had to work fast. I played a few chords and then stopped to slap mosquitoes. It was a repetitive process.

At the Church College of Western Samoa in 1959 President Hanks was my band teacher and I played the clarinet. He also helped mum, Leo and Lilian in their preparations for coming to Hawaii. Many years later the Hanks would be in the same ward as us and neighbors just down the street in Sandy, Utah.



President Hanks has served four missions in Samoa, one as a young missionary, another as mission president, a third as Director of Church Education, and the fourth as president of the Samoa temple. Here we are with the Hanks at the Samoan Missionary Reunion April 4, 2014. Diane and I are wearing our Utah Polynesian Choir uniforms as the choir provided the music that evening. The Hanks now reside in Lehi.

### **Plantation Neighbors**

Up on the plantation in Lepale above Fasito'outa we had neighbors. Up the hill above us was the plantation of uncle Aiono Luki and aunty Nora. This was one of the biggest plantations on the island of Upolu. We lived with them for about three months. In the evenings we would ride horses and circle the plantation looking for thieves. There would be a group of us: Rudy, Piula, Setu, Vaikanuku the hunchback, Leo and I and others. We would race the horses. It was fun. We never did come across any thieves. If anything, the noise of approaching horses probably frightened them away.

Just below Block 1 of Aiono Luki's plantation boundary was the small plantation of Ioane and his two sons Lafaele and Fa'ataui. Below this property was the plantation of Felavai. One day while we were packing banana cases on the road, Felavai appeared in full pursuit of his son-in-law who was running for his life. Felavai picked up a stone and threw it at him conking him on the head thirty yards down the road. As the son-in-law turned his head to look behind at Felavai, smack, the stone hit him. It was kind of funny in a way. The son-in-law stumbled but kept on running. In Samoa, never antagonize your father-in-law.

Opposite Fela vai on our side of the road was the small plantation of Tasi and Noela. Behind Tasi and Noela was our Stokoe forty five acre plantation, and at the back of us was the large plantation of Walter and Flora Jahnke that produced mainly coffee and cacao. Below this one was the small plantation of the Chinaman Ah Pingi.

Down the road from the Stokoe's was the property of a family that had a son named Keiki, (that Leo and I tied to a tree up in the bush, threatened to abandon and made him cry), and a daughter named Lima Ono who had six fingers on either hand. Slightly further down the road was Peleligi, the name of the plantation owned by Niutapua'i, father of Aiono Luki. This plantation was run by Ofisa who had a young son named Viliamu. Also, a cousin named Tafia lived there. Ofisa's wife, Fa'ato'a who was deceased, was the daughter of Niutapua'i. This plantation had several orange and lemon trees that dad often picked and along the bordering road were trees (ngatai) that were attractive to birds which Leo and I shot at with our catapults.

Below Niutapua'i was the plantation of Lu'ulau. Further down the road was the plantation of To'o and Segia and daughter Uku. West of To'o and Segia was the plantation of Henry Krone who later sold it to the Chinaman Ah Hangi. Below Segia and To'o was the plantation of Tafi and Vaigafoa and daughter Kueka.

East of Tafi and Vaigafoa was the plantation of Faima and Sivao, (who used to bring their youngest two kids to church in a bath tub on top of a horse), and below them was Etisone and Vaipuga. Further east was the property of Aiono Voi, the father of Fotu Aiono who has been a friend of mine ever since 1959 when we attended the Church college of Hawaii together.

We had a horse named Winkie that carried loads for us. Mum rode it down to the coast when going to town if she couldn't catch a ride with the Jahnke's. The bush was quiet except for the chirping of birds during the day and the crickets at night. There was no piped water. All plantation families had drums with corrugated iron on a slant to catch rain water, or a water tank catching rain water off a roof made of corrugated iron. We all used kerosene lamps. Whenever the kingfisher (ti'otala) chirped we knew it was going to rain so we would gather the cacao beans drying in the sun on flax mats and take them inside. The kingfisher was never wrong. It only chirped when it was going to rain.

On top of Mount Vaea is buried the famous Scottish author, Robert Louis Stevenson (born Nov. 13, 1850. Died December 3, 1894). He settled in Samoa for health reasons and to find solitude for writing. He liked Samoa. There is a tall slab of cement that marks his grave. I lived at the base of the mountain in Lalovaea (meaning beneath Mount Vaea), on occasion I would climb to the top of the mountain and play on his grave. The mountain is covered with all manner of trees and shrubbery and is a quiet place except for the chirping of birds. The view is excellent and the Apia harbor is clearly visible plus the downtown area and nearby villages. I would stand on Robert Louis Stevenson's grave and give improvised speeches and read aloud the engraved inscription on his tomb, "Requiem."

Under the wide and starry sky,  
Dig the grave and let me lie.

Glad did I live and gladly die,  
And laid me down with a will.

This be the verse you grave for me:  
Here he lies where he longed to be;  
Home is the sailor, home from sea,  
And the hunter home from the hill.

I believe my great grandfather, William Crichton from Scotland, who is the founding father of the Crichton line in Samoa, knew Robert Louis Stevenson and they were friends. In Miss Enari's class we would stand by our desks and sing "Requiem" in English. The Samoans had penned a tune to the poem. Stevenson was highly revered by the Samoans who called him "Tusi Tala" meaning "Teller of Tales." I think my playing on his grave and singing "Requiem" in Miss Enari's class, spurred my interest in poetry as well as an English class at Samoa College. My interest in Shakespeare was spurred by a teacher in Standard 4 at Tawhero school in New Zealand who would read Shakespeare aloud to us. He was very impressive.

I lived in Samoa from April 1952-August 1959 and through an opportunity provided by LDS missionary Sister Shimoda and principal, Heber Barker of the Church College of Western Samoa, I was able to go to Hawaii and attend the Church College of Hawaii.