

## **Presentation to 2019 Distinguished Alumni Awards Dinner (Victoria University Wellington) 14 November 2019**

**Venue: TSB, Queens Wharf, Wellington CBD**

### **Tagaloatele Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop**

**Oute fa'atalofa atu i** lau susuga le fa'afeagaiga Senetenari faapea le mamalu ua aofia, Chancellor Neil Paviour-Smith, VC Guilford, Luamanuvao Winnie; Hon Fiame Naomi Mataafa, Deputy PM Samoa, Honourable Aupito, VUW alumni, colleagues and friends. Faafetai. It is an honour and privilege to receive this award.

In all ways, this is a family award. VUW has played a great part in our family lives since our parents migrated to New Zealand with 5 children in the 1940s and my sister and I were born here. Our first family home was in Kilbirnie up on the hills (which is still in our family) and in all ways our family are natives of Kilbirnie and a little bit of Newtown. When we were young we swam in Evans Bay, at the old 'current' (the hot water from the Electricity Department) our brothers went bottle fishing in the bay and dad walked the shore every morning picking up firewood

**A first step for our parents in New Zealand** was to find a place of worship – Salvation Army was our church and still is – together with the PIC which opened in Newtown and then the EFKS on Owen Street. Faafetai lou susuga le faafeaigaga Senetenari lupeli ma lou faletua for joining us tonight.

**Then School.** Our father always said 'get a good education, that is something no-one can take away from you.' Dad migrated to New Zealand and then Samoa from the Goebbels of Glasgow, following the path of Robert Louis Stevenson. Our Mum, Emele-Moa, was born at Mulinuu (Samoa's seat of Government), daughter of Te'o Tuvale, Chief Justice and Secretary to the Government of Samoa during the Colonial Administration and author of the first history of Samoa which is in the Mitchell library Sydney. When Te'o Tuvale passed away suddenly after the Talune epidemic, in the Samoan way, Mums mother returned back to their natural village – Tanugamanono. Mum's formal education stopped and she took a job to support the family.

**Arriving in Wellington,** mum and dad had absolutely no expectations / aspirations to a university education or to enter VUW's majestic educational towers up on the Kelburn hills. Until, one day Teo Ian's teacher said he wanted to come to our house and talk to our parents. Our immediate thoughts were fearful 'what has Ian done, why is a teacher coming? The teacher was Max Riske, the brilliant maths teacher from Wellington Tec. He said: 'why are you taking Ian out of school? He's a clever student and could go much further' That was the changing point in our family. Mum and dad worked a bit harder – and our older brother Te'o Ian enrolled in VUW, got a scholarship to the USA then to Canberra where he gained his Ph.D. and was the first Pacific economist.

**That one visit by a teacher set a new educational pattern for our family** – my brothers and sisters all came to VUW, and our children and now I have two grandchildren studying at Vic. But not only us – this small step opened University education as a possibility for all our cousins and other aiga who came to live at our little house (11 Lonsdale Crescent) and their children... a truly spiralling effect. And always in our minds were our parents' messages that:

- we were the privileged (our aiga in Samoa (and NZ) were watching us and,
- *the spirit of tautua* – our education was not for ourselves or personal gain but to serve the good of our aiga, our country, others

**1960s How would I describe our schooling at that time? With the words, ‘there is only one deck on this ship’ These are the rules, regulations, this is the knowledge... just do it. And we did**

However, in my time at university and the following years in my teaching - mainly in Maori and Porirua schools - I came to understand that the school knowledge we were learning so well, was not ‘my story’. Was not ‘our story’. Later when I returned to Samoa in the 1980s with Jim and our five daughters, I was recruited as the ‘Samoa/ Pacific counterpart’ on numerous consultancies, the aims of each were to ensure relevant development policies by ‘asking the people’. I soon found that none of what the people I talked to had to say ever figured in final consultant reports.

I will never forget the response by a young mother when I asked the ‘required’ survey questions e.g. ‘have you got a tractor, weed eater, what chemicals do you use, where do you sell your goods’. She said ‘Look Peggy. All I’ve got is my hammer, my bush knife and my hands!’ And, whatever was produced in that family farm unit was for family use, informal sales when school fees were needed, and as contribution to faaSamoa family exchange networks and ceremonials. Families were not producing large scale for the commercial market. That was their reality! The realities of their lives.

Coming back to academia in 2006 - at VUW and then AUT – my role was very clear – to get as many Pacific students into high level decision making places – so that our knowledge, truths and experience would be heard and taken account of. To that end, at VUW and then AUT we introduced courses which focussed for example on Pacific epistemology, pedagogy and research methodologies.

**2000s - my mantra**

**... to produce post graduates who can sit with confidence at village fono as well as global decision making processes.**

**That while there may be one deck on the education ship – there are two sails on the vaatele - ‘palagi’ knowledge and, Pacific / indigenous values, knowledges and beliefs. That is our compass going forward**

**Or, as put so beautifully said by All Black Ardie Savea when describing his experience as a rugby player: ‘For years we’ve just been fitting in .... but we’re more than that!’**

**Part two**

Many friends and colleagues have been part of my educational journeying. As in the Samoan saying... *o le tele o sulu e maua ai figota, e mama se avega pe a galulue faatasi*- the more torches used, the more and more beautiful the catch.

**Briefly:** I entered Vic and Wellington Teachers college straight from the 6<sup>th</sup> form at Wellington Tec. My day began with an 8am lecture -English one (many law students in that class) a quick dash over the hill to Kelburn Teachers’ college for lectures and then back to VUW for a 4pm Education lecture and then home. There were some Pacific scholarship students at Vic at the time, but I will always remember the warm words of encouragement by Whetu Tirikatene (Sullivan) when we met in the Vic corridors. In honours history there were lecturers who challenged you to ‘look ‘outside the box’ Mary Boyd (West Africa History) John Barrington (who I did my masters with... a pioneer scholar in Samoa / Maori Education) both welcomed other knowledges into formal education. A history (hons) course I will never forget was ‘anti-intellectualism and the American mind’. Phyllida Bunkel

and Jock Phillips just back from the US, were the lecturers in this mind-blowing course and the readings, debates, new vocabulary (and jargon) learnt were just what a university should be. The course had an interesting grading system whereby class members graded each other's tutorials. As I recall, we weren't very good at that – we all got as!

To conclude, I have been totally blessed - spiritually, culturally, socially and academically - by the alofa and support of some of the best educators / role models in the world. I acknowledge some now very briefly.

- First, to the memory of Laulu Fetauimalemau Mataafa, who is a Vic Graduate and was awarded an Honorary Ph D from Victoria in the 1970s. Laulu Fetau was MP for Lotofaga, and President of the National Council of Women for many years. She was a strong and dignified leader, gracious, strategic and caring.
- Hon Fiame Naomi, daughter of Laulu Fetau and [Fiame Mata'afa Faumuina Mulinu'u II](#) the first PM of Samoa. Honourable Fiame is the deputy Prime Minister (Samoa) and longest serving female MP. She has a strong Pacific and global reputation in her own right particularly on social issues and empowerment and many social reforms. Faafetai for joining this celebration Fiame.

### ***In New Zealand***

- I acknowledge - Prof Hon Luamanuvao Winnie Laban, Assistant Vice-Chancellor (Pasifika) VUW, the first Samoan women MP, who unfortunately cannot be here tonight. And, Honourable Aupito William Sua (now 11 years in government) still walking the hard yards. Fa'afetai
- Members of PACIFICA Inc- the national NGO for Pacific women and families. I acknowledge Tofilau Bernadette, the current president and Malia Tua'i Manuleleua (National Executive) and Repeka Lelaulu, Auckland branch Acting President and, goal keep in the National Samoa netball team, which I coached.
- Professor Marilyn Waring –my trusted friend and colleague. We first met in international and Pacific workshops in the 1990s. Marilyn's book **Counting for Nothing** challenged economic models and opened the door to thinking about other knowledges and in academic institutions.
- When I came to Victoria as Director of the Va'aomanu in 2006 and then moved to AUT in 2009 I realised very quickly the urgency in building a strong cohort of Pacific post graduates - and, to passing the baton on.

Faafetai to all my excellent post graduates and to those (over 600) who joined our Talanoa each year by access grid first and then by Zoom. Faafetai for your joy, friendship, the comedy alongside your 'going for gold'.

**Our Pacific grads are transforming the spaces they are in. I mention three who completed their masters at VUW and then came to AUT for doctoral study - Dr Salainaoloa Wilson – Uili is now a leading researcher in the sustaining of indigenous languages in diaspora communities; Dr Jeff Samasoni, Engineering – housing construction’ - who is here tonight - and Dr Odette Frost Kruse.**

Finally, to my husband Jim and our five daughters Rochelle, Gabrielle, Mele, Amanda and Emma. You have supported all the hopes and dreams of my educational journeying and you are now pursuing your own. Ia manuia.

Faafetai