

**SPEECH DELIVERED BY HON MISA TELEFONI**  
**GUEST LECTURER AT THE**  
**ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON MEMORIAL SERVICE**  
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I feel like Mark Antony – do I bury Caesar, or do I praise him? Or, do I in fact find occasion to praise Caesar in the guise of burying him? While I appreciate this invitation from the Robert Louis Stevenson Museum Trustees to address you on this important occasion, the now annual commemorations of Robert Louis Stevenson's (Tusitala) passing, I am burdened by my personal and emotional connections to my topic. HJ Moors was my great-grandfather, his son, the equally famous Uncle Harry Moors, was my favourite grand-uncle. My topic is the relationship between HJ Moors and Tusitala, and how this important friendship played a significant role in the history of Samoa. The irony of my dilemma – to try and achieve objectivity in such an intimate subject to me personally.

Let me flatter myself at the outset by stating I believe I have achieved my objective – and I do so because so much was written about this relationship, and all that was written, confirms my overwhelming conclusion that there was a deep, emotional bond and friendship (if not in fact, love) between Tusitala and HJ Moors. I shall henceforth refer to him as HJ, as he was affectionately known to his family and friends.

I especially appreciate this opportunity to address you in these beautiful, scenic surroundings of Tusitala's home. This land was acquired for Tusitala at HJ Moors' recommendation, and HJ arranged the financing of the purchase and supervised the construction of the homestead. We all immediately become an important part of the legacy of their friendship, when we walk on these grounds, and sit in this building, and indeed, breathe the air in this place!

We look up Mount Vaea, and we immediately are personal witnesses to the love of our Samoan people for Tusitala, for they fulfilled his dying wish and hacked a path up

this mountain, and buried their beloved Tusitala on the top – with a panoramic view of Apia and all her surroundings. This path to this day is known as the Path of the Loving Hearts, reflecting the love of the Samoan people for their beloved Tusitala.

I wish to make a definitive statement here. I do not care how many Scottish journalists and literatis try to dispute this fact. Up on that mountain the “sailor is home from the sea” and the “hunter, home from the hill”, and Tusitala rests peacefully “where he longs to be”. These are his own words, from his poem “Requiem” which are written on his tombstone.

The people of Hawaii allowed Father Damien to be dug up and taken to his so-called home in Belgium, and they have regretted that to this day! The people of Scotland, and Tusitala fans throughout the world take note – the people of Samoa WILL NEVER ALLOW anyone or any government – to remove Tusitala from his final peaceful resting place on the top of this mountain.

In his famous opening lines of the “Tale of Two Cities” – Charles Dickens talked about pre-Revolution France “as being both the best and worst of times”. It was a matter of perception – and perception in the Samoan context was made famous by another Harry Jay Moors great grand-son – Tuiatua Tupua Tamasese Efi – who talks about the different perspectives of the eagle in the mountain top, and the rat at ground level. So, if you were a noble, pre-Revolution France was the best of times, if you were poor, it was the worst of times. It is also a matter for history to judge whether Tusitala’s time in Samoa with his friend HJ, was a time when Samoa and her people came of age politically. We know historians agree that the two friends played their own distinct but important roles in that process.

We know that like all friends, they had their disagreements. However, while Tusitala was already an established Man of Letters, he made a writer, or more correctly, a biographer, out of Harry Jay Moors. After Tusitala passed away, he published his book, “With Stevenson in Samoa”. My father was browsing many years ago in an antique book

shop in Honolulu, and bought me a copy. I am proud to own it, and I can say that it is well written and eminently readable.

Tusitala and HJ were friends, in spite of their differences, for HJ was a man we can describe amicably and kindly in Samoan as “faa-teine gofie”. I prefer that description to womanizer although Moors men in the past have been described as “magnets”, not so much because of their good looks, but they were famous for their tremendous charm and wit. If you look at the Moors descendents now, you might well wonder out loud to yourself – what happened? The Moors descendants here present will freely admit that not a single one of us has inherited the great magnetic charm of either HJ Moors or indeed Uncle Harry. But I, digress. What did Tusitala’s biographers think of HJ. Here’s a quote from J C Furnas, who wrote:

**“He was not a petty swindler of savages on a remote island, but owner of a chain of outlying trading posts, and perforce, banker, benefactor, import agent, and local politician. No mouse squeaked or plot hatched without his getting some inkling”**

Let me repeat – “no mouse squeaked or plot hatched without his (HJ) getting some inkling.” So we know these friends were bound by an intellectual curiosity and that they enjoyed each others’ talents and especially each others’ wit.

HJ’s influence on Tusitala is clearly illustrated in Tusitala’s important treatise known to us now as “A Footnote in History”. Tusitala’s first hand knowledge of Samoan politics is clearly illustrated in that treatise. We also know his favourite gathering place for that knowledge, was HJ’s verandah. What a lovely colonial word – verandah. Before his home was built in Vailima, Tusitala rented a home in Tanugamanono, but spent most of his time in HJ’s verandah. They shared many stimulating intellectual conversations there, trying to satisfy Tusitala’s lust for Samoan folklore, Samoan politics and culture. Like a chameleon, Tusitala strove to become one with his new home, learning to live in harmony with Samoa by respecting its people, its culture and traditions, and becoming a

part of its heritage. Colonial masters would do well to learn from Tusitala – how to live with and support, rather than rule, a colony.

We can also learn more about this special relationship by the impact on the women in their lives. Male bonding, inevitably, can cause female resentment. We know that Fanny Stevenson did not much like the “faateine gofie” HJ Moors. We know Tusitala was tubercular and could never physically aspire to HJ’s prowess, however Tusitala admired his friend’s popularity with women and Fanny resented this.

Tusitala and Fanny had some well documented altercations, but on most occasions, it was the intellectual type “simmering”. Fanny would often drag Tusitala home from HJ’s dining table, as she was want to do, because “too much talk is not good for Louis”. Fanny and HJ were both American (Detroit and Monterey), and probably understood each other much better than the frail ultra – sensitive teller or tales ever could. We also know HJ’s wife, Nimo, was a strong-willed aristocratic Samoan lady from Safata (the “Ama” clan), but she would never presume to intrude on his choice of friends, and she would never have been able to provide HJ with the kind of intellectual stimulation that his insatiable wit would have been crying out for. Fanny was always wise enough to know that she and HJ held different niches in Tusitala’s psyche and for this reason there was a mutual, if reluctant, respect between them.

It is interesting that we now celebrate each year on December 3, the anniversary of Tusitala’s passing. However, it is from a book about his relationship with HJ Moors, written by HJ years after Tusitala died, that we get an excellent summary of not only their special bond, but Tusitala’s life in Samoa. The following is a rather lengthy extract from “With Stevenson in Samoa” – which I now repeat:

*“Well I do remember my first meeting with R.L.S in Samoa. I had met Joe Strong who told me in a letter to watch for Stevenson in Samoa. He said that he was the author of “Dr Jekyll and My Hyde”, but beyond all that, he is a charming fellow. I had been looking for him for six or seven months when he finally arrived. He*

*appeared to be about thirty years of age, although nine years older. He wore a slight, scraggy moustache and his hair hung down about his neck after the fashion of artists. This was R.L.S – the best beloved initials in recent literature.*

*We introduced ourselves and became friendly at once. Stevenson was charmed with Samoa and he babbled over with delight as one enchanted. “It’s Grand!”. Of all the islands he visited, he learned to love Samoa best. In time to come, even as he loved Samoa, Stevenson drew her people lovingly around him. And Tusitala is a name esteemed and revered today by all Samoans who knew him.*

*Many a day and many a night did Stevenson spend with me. Time and again, when he felt played-out and written-out, he would come down to be cheered up. Though he would come to me full of all sorts of troubles, he rarely uttered a word of complaint concerning his bodily ailments; indeed, for a man who suffered so much, he was one of the most resigned and uncomplaining men I ever met.*

*When in rage, he was a study! Once excited, you had another Stevenson. I have seen him in all moods. I have seen him sitting on my table, dangling his bony legs into the air, chatting away in the calmest manner possible. I have seen him become suddenly agitated, jump from that table and stalk to and fro like some wild forest animal. His face would glow and his eyes would flash, hypnotizing you with their brilliance and the fires burning within.*

*As I write, my friend stands clear-cut before me. I see his face again, I hear his voice. Stevenson’s sojourn in Samoa with the happy companionship it brought me, is one of the pleasantest memories of my life. I remember well the little adventures we had, but most of all do I like to recall the quiet evenings we spent together, exchanging stories and talking about books and their writers. All reserve was thrown aside. We talked to each other as man-to-man and friend-to-friend. Most of what he wrote in Samoa, I had the privilege of reading in the*

*manuscript; indeed, I supplied him with some of the material for his stories. As to A FOOTNOTE TO HISTORY, the greater part was written in my house. Ah! If he had only lived to continue the history! For stranger and more monstrous things were done after his death than ever were dreamed of before it. More reputations were wrecked, more lives lost, and much more property destroyed in the short space of four months, than during the whole period of Stevenson's residence. If only his graphic pen could have written the final footnote.*

*The number of books written about this man and his writing is remarkable. His life in Samoa was full of interest, full of incident; history was blended with romance. If I cannot explain him – for in many things he was a man of mystery – I may, perhaps, be able to throw some further light on his picture.”*

It is interesting – HJ describes Tusitala as a “man of mystery”... that he could never ever fully “explain.” He also describes his gutsy, cheerful determination, in the face of his affliction. He may flatter himself by taking credit for having “supplied him with some of the material for his stories,” but what is obvious is the great respect and regard with which he held his famous friend.

It is often said that a man who does not know and appreciate his past, can have no future. The comment may seem trite, but it means no more, and no less, than that history has invaluable lessons for us all. We all accept the fact that only fools do not learn from their mistakes! What I have tried to achieve in this speech, is to establish that the friendship of HJ and Tusitala was pivotal in Tusitala's decision to live and ultimately die in Samoa. They also contributed in their own way, to help shape the destiny of Samoa. Although Tusitala originally was wary of HJ - writing from Sydney to a friend Charles Baxter that HJ was a “curious being, not of the best character” he would learn to trust him and be “not the least bit alarmed” about his new friend.

HJ was a true friend not only to Tusitala but to all his fellowmen. We have determined that his early work as an immigration agent was undertaken with a great

compassion for the workers – for whom he was a fierce advocate. He was honored for this work by the Hawaiian Evangelical Association.

HJ was an enigma. He became an extremely successful businessman and plantation developer. He first visited Samoa as a young 21 year old in 1875 from his home in Detroit in the United States. We learn of HJ's life and times from the respected "Cyclopedia of Samoa" published in 1907. We know he brought the first commercial motor boat to Samoa, with Captain Froelich, the "M.V.Pat". We know he pioneered the tourist industry (TIVOLI HOTEL) and set up trading posts throughout Samoa. We know he had two sons born on the same day from different mothers; Mark Moors in Savaii, and our more well known Uncle Harry (Afoafouvale) in Upolu.

Uncle Harry his son became a prominent Member of Parliament and Samoa's first Director General of the South Pacific Commission in Noumea. Mark Moors became a war hero in the United States Army and settled and died peacefully in Oakland California. We know that HJ trusted the business instincts of his son-in-law O. F Nelson, and merged their business interests.

HJ Moors was a man who lived life to the fullest, and it is easy to understand how he could have been an exciting contrast to the frail and dying tubercular author of "Treasure Island" and "Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde." However, we can imagine Tusitala sailing into Apia Harbour on the "Equator" – with the wrecks of "Adler" and "Trenton" in the harbour. We can understand why his imagination would compare Samoa to a Greek Island, as the excited islanders in their paopaos paddled up to the "Equator".

There to welcome him with open arms was HJ Moors, with his Tivoli Hotel and his special brand of home hospitality. We know HJ worked hard at being a great host to all his guests, including Tusitala. We know HJ's zest for hospitality was inherited by Uncle Harry, who became just as famous, or "infamous", for his great social gatherings, depending on your perception.

Now I draw my formal Speech to a close, as I started, reflecting on perception. Unlike Mark Antony, I have to admit my hosts never insisted that I praise HJ Moors, rather discuss his special relationship with Tusitala.

We the great grandchildren of HJ Moors, are proud to be descendants of such a great and courteous man. Flawed, no doubt about that, HJ was flawed, but these weaknesses added a grandeur to his life, and made him an altogether more human person. This has allowed us, his “flawed” descendants, to relate to him even more!

I am privileged for this opportunity to share and fellowship with you today. History has been kind to Tusitala, HJ, and of course Samoa. Tusitala with his fame as a Man of Letters. Samoa as his chosen final resting place. HJ Moors as his chosen friend and mentor. All of us here, who share in the inheritance of this famous legacy, can only be grateful to God that such men lived in our land.

I would conclude by saying “Tusitala and HJ Moors were better people for having known each other intimately, and Samoa is a better place from having had them live in our land.”

We await the anniversary of the birth of the Christ child, and as we wait on the 2000<sup>th</sup> anniversary of His birth, we all thank God to be here in Samoa, in this historic site, to celebrate a great event and a great friendship.

Soifua and God Bless

Misa Telefoni Retzlaff

Great Grand-Son of HJ Moors

*3 December 1998*