

SPEECH DELIVERED BY HON MISA TELEFONI AT THE 50TH

ANNIVERSARY OF SAMOA COLLEGE

11 December 2003

“When Samoa College was opened in 1953, it was a critical part of an overall strategy by Government to prepare the people of Samoa for political independence. Education was recognized as pivotal to the development of great leaders and skilful people to take over the reigns of government from colonial administrations, in the independent state of Samoa.”

His Highness the Head of State, Susuga Malietoa Tanumafili II’s Message which opens the newly published “History of Samoa College – 50 years of service to Samoa”.

Three Tama Aiga were included in the mission which traveled to the United Nations seeking independence, on behalf of Samoa’s Fono a Faipule: Susuga Malietoa Tanumafili II, Afioga Tupua Tamasese Meaole, and Afioga Mataafa Fiamē Mulinuu II.

On the long voyage back to Samoa, it must have been as an echo, ringing in their ears, the United Nations’ response: Education before Independence (Aoaoina muamua, ona Tutoatasi lea).

It was to be on that long voyage back that the seeds for the implementation of this vision were planted. Samoa must found a School to educate future leaders of Samoa, to enable Samoans themselves to fulfill the promises and more importantly, meet the challenges, of Independence.

Samoa College is now 50 years old. It was born in 1953, out of the vision of three leaders, and the challenge from the United Nations: “Education before Independence”.

We could now ask, with the wisdom of hindsight, so why did the United Nations not stick to this wise formular. All the political and economic strife in Africa, Asia and the World,

are caused by countries grabbing at Independence, with only an educated elite. This elite was very much in the minority, and only too tempted to use their superior intellect, to abuse and pillage their peoples. Lord Acton warned: “Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely”

Education is now taken for granted as a basic human right. The vision behind Samoa College was to be expanded 25 years later, in 1978. At its Silver Jubilee Celebrations, Hon Tupuola Efi (as he then was, and Prime Minister) stated that the College’s challenge was not just to educate Samoans, but to allow educated Samoans to take over senior positions from expatriates. “O le Kolisi o le mapuea o Samoa. Na ea mai loa i le Puleesea ae loa ma le taofi ia faatuina le aoga leni e faailoa atu ai i le atunuu faapea ai ma tagata i fafo le agaga naunautai, ia aua nei toe puleesea Samoa.”

It is deemed preferable to experience difficulties that arise from Samoans assuming control of Samoa’s affairs, than the relatively shallow peace brought about by expatriates continuing to control Samoa’s political and economic resources.

This was also the motto flying in the Mau Movement’s flag: “Samoa mo Samoa”

His Highness Malietoa’s opening message continues:

“Fifty years later that ambition has been largely realized with men and women who had gone through Samoa College working as leaders and as the mainstay in organisations, churches, government departments, villages and in all walks of life. It has contributed to the achievement of a generally educated people in Samoa. This is great service indeed.”

I can completely confirm Malietoa’s statement. Let us review the achievements of SCOPA (Samoa College Old Students) in the last 50 years.

1. SERVICE TO THE CHURCH

- General Secretary - Congregational Christian Church of Samoa
- Tofi Toeaina, Faifeau – various denominations throughout Samoa.
- Anglican Bishop of the Pacific Diocese (based in Suva)
- Anglican Observer to the United Nations (New York)

2. SERVICE TO GOVERNMENT

- Leader of the Opposition
- Ministers of State (currently include SCOPA's Patron, and a former Head Boy, today's Acting Education Minister)
- Speakers of Parliament (includes current SCOPA President)
- Members of Parliament (including a serving Lady MP, and a medical doctor)
- Diplomatic Service – Ambassadors, High Commissioners, Consuls,
- Heads of Government Departments and Corporations.
- Senior Positions throughout the Public Service

3. SERVICE THROUGH THE MEDIA

- President of PINA
- Senior Editor of the Observer – Winner of various Press Freedom Awards (Commonwealth and World wide)
- Editors/Founders media Organisations
- Journalists of Note, including the School's first Head Boy

4. SERVICE TO EDUCATION

- Professor of English. Award winning author, and the first Samoan Principal of Samoa College
- Vice Chancellor USP – Person who held this position was also a Principal of Samoa College
- Professors, Lecturers, in USP and many universities world wide
- UNESCO Regional Head – Asia/Pacific, based in Bangkok, former University Professor

- Teaching in Colleges and Schools throughout Samoa and the World

5. SERVICE AS LAWYERS, TO THE LAW

- Judge of the International Court of Criminal Justice (Hague)
He was the fourth Head Boy and wrote a Foreword for the History
- Judge of the High Court of New Zealand (First Samoan to hold such position)
- Tama Aiga – Afioga Tuimalealiifano, a law graduate from ANU in Canberra
- Head of Pacific Island Affairs Department in New Zealand – First Samoan to hold such a position
- Working as lawyers through the community in Samoa, and the World

6. SERVICE IN THE PROFESSIONS, DOCTORS, AUDITORS, ENGINEERS, AND OTHER VARIOUS PROFESSIONS

- Auditor, winner of the International Freedom Award
- Working as distinguished professionals in Samoa and world-wide

7. SERVICE THROUGH MUSIC AND THE ARTS, SPORTS

- Composer of “We are Samoa”
- Composers, Musicians, various musical talents
- Manu Samoa players, other fields of sport
- Decathlon Star from New Zealand
- Many distinguished Sports participants

8. SERVICE TO BUSINESS, VARIOUS POSITIONS THROUGHOUT THE PRIVATE SECTOR.

- Captain of the Forum Samoa (2nd Head Boy)
- Heads of Businesses, various endeavours
- Different leadership positions in the Private Sector

His Highness has correctly noted that this “ambition has been largely realized.” This is an impressive list of achievements by many SCOPA throughout the globe. It is the realization of the School motto “Atamai e tautua mo Samoa” – Wisdom to Serve Samoa.

I said last evening at the launch of the School’s Fifty Year History that “**The History of Samoa College is the history of Samoa**” This is a fundamental truth!

I wish to publicly thank again, those of who whose dedication and hard work made this book a reality:

Afioga Aiono Sia

Masiofo Filifilia Imo Tamasese

Afioga Leatuaolevao Ruby Vaa

Gatoloi Tili Peseta

Mataina Tuatagaloa Te’o

Ruta Fiti Sinclair

This work is your labour of love, and it is your plaque of remembrance. This work immortalises not only the history of Samoa College. It also immortalises those who wrote it, and indeed the many of you, who made contributions to this history.

In her testimony in this History, Afioga Lauulu Fetauimalemau Mataafa, pays tribute to the three women, who with her were the four original local staff of Samoa College in 1953. She says this was an honour in her own life, and she feels it more keenly now, as the College’s 50 Year’s Anniversary is being celebrated. The other three women are Lisi Vaai, Meipo Fesolai and Eva Taylor.

It is a real honour for SCOPA and Government, that you, Afioga Lauulu Fetauimalemau Mataafa, are able to join us this morning, despite your ill health, to cut the 50th Anniversary Cake, for the College.

The Samoan saying describes this situation best – “*E au le inailau a Tina*”. Ladies authored the history, the first Samoan teachers at Samoa College, were also ladies!

The first Head Boy of Samoa College, Afemata Apelu Aiavao, called the college, in Samoan, o le “**aoga na afuafua mai i le Tunufai ma le peepee na fai i le pa povi vaofefea**”.

Afioga Tuiatua Tupua Tamasese Efi also testified that his late father, Afioga Tupua Tamasese Meaole, contracted foot poisoning from the “vao fefe” after an inspection there with His Highness Head of State Susuga Malietoa Tanumafili II.

It is appropriate that we honour, in a moment of silence all those who served this College, who were responsible for its founding, and all SCOPA, who have passed away.

Kindly RISE in a moment’s silence in their honour.

I also wish to pay tribute to and honour, all SCOPA who have traveled from so far, to be with us today. From Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia, Tutuila & Manua, Hawaii and the World.

Before I conclude, I did ask your present SCOPA President, Afioga Leota Leuluaialii Ituau Ale, what “matupalapala” Government could offer SCOPA, on this the 50th Anniversary of Samoa College.

He did not hesitate. He asked that Government consider rebuilding the famous West Wing of Samoa College. He said that all SCOPA had a strong emotional bond to this famous “West Wing”

This is the same West Wing, Savea Sano Malifa, wrote a famous ode to.

Government will consider this request through the Education Department. It warrants careful study. I can tell you, with the South Pacific Games coming to Apia in 2007, the Samoa College Hostel is to be completely renovated and refurbished, as part of the Games Village for athletes.

The West Wing could be put to our aid partners, or even considered in the current ADB Project, which is responsible for reconstructing all the secondary schools, throughout Samoa, at present.

For myself personally, I do consider, after its proud 50 Year History, Samoa College should have a brass band. Music is the universal language. No matter what you race or creed.

It is always a disappointment at Independence, to see only one secondary school with a brass band, Church College of Samoa, the School of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.

Today, I would like to start a fund, which requires 100 persons or firms to donate \$1000 or more, each, to fund a brass band for Samoa College. Rev Kenape Faletose has kindly agreed to donate the second \$1000. Now there is a third \$1000 from Fatima and Agnes Strickland, in honour of their late sister Telesia Strickland Annandale, who was very proud to be a former teacher at Samoa College. Our ambition is that by Independence 2004, a brass band from Samoa College, will perform at Tiafau.

Our government has contributed \$70,000 to these Celebrations. A sum of \$20,000 given directly to SCOPA, and \$50,000 to the Education Department, to fund this week's events.

May God continue to bless this nation, its people and government. May Samoa College continue to provide leadership to build a better Samoa, for our children. May God bless our Prime Minister in his official travels abroad. May God bless all of you with a peaceful Christmas and a happy New Year.

Misa Telefoni

ACTING PRIME MINISTER