

SPEECH DELIVERED BY MISA TELEFONI FOR THE NAMING CEREMONY

TUPUA TAMASESE MEAOLE HOSPITAL FRIDAY 18 DECEMBER 1998

It is a real privilege and honour for me to speak on this most important ceremony in the history of our hospital in Motootua. Rev Elder Tautiaga Senara in his opening prayer confirmed the biblical statement that a good name is worth more than any riches. A good name, respected by peers and contemporaries, must then stand the test of time and history. History may judge harshly a good name to contemporaries. We gather today to name our hospital, with a name that is as respected in 1998, as it was in 1963 when Tupua Tamasese Meaole passed away.

Upon his passing away in 1963, Professor J W Davidson wrote in Pacific Islands Monthly that Samoa had lost a person who, "both as a man and as a statesman, will be numbered amongst the greatest sons of his country". Professor J W Davidson had worked closely with Tupua Tamasese Meaole, Malietoa Tanumafili II, and Mataafa Fiame Faumuina Mulinu II, and the other members of the Constitutional Convention that led to Samoa's Independence. Professor Davidson was in an excellent position to make this observation about

Tupua Tamasese Meaole: “He, more than any other man, was the creator of its (Samoa’s) independence, and the firm and sensitive guide who enabled it to advance towards that end with such unusual smoothness”.

This naming ceremony is more to honour this hospital than it is to honour Tupua Tamasese Meaole. We name this hospital after a dedicated and selfless leader and founding father of our country. He led our country’s delegation to the United Nations in New York in 1958 to make our case for Independence. In 1950 he led the delegation to the first South Pacific Conference in Fiji. In 1938 he and Malietoa Tanumafili II were appointed Fautua (they were joined by Mataafa Mulinuu II in 1943) and in 1954 the two of them became Co-Chairman of the Fono Faufautua a Faipule.

Tupua Tamasese Meaole was not originally planning on acquiring the Paramount Chief’s title held by his relatively young older brother, who was already displaying greatness, in his leadership of both SaTupua and the country. Everything changed when tragically on 29 December 1929, his brother Tupua Tamasese Lealofi III, was shot and killed while leading a peaceful march. His dying call for peace was to mark him as one of Samoa’s greatest heroes.

At the tender age of 27, Meaole acquired the Tama a Aiga title Tupua Tamasese in 1930. Thrust into this leadership role of both SaTupua, and Samoa,

he had the daunting task of trying to live up to his heroic older brother. He was soon to display a calm but resolute firmness that was to justify the great praises that Professor Davidson would later speak in tribute to this, one of the greatest of Samoa's leaders.

That briefly, is the history of the man, the man who in 1962, when Samoa acquired Independence, became His Highness Tupua Tamasese Meaole, Joint Head of State with His Highness Malietoa Tanumafili II. The man who married Taisi O F Nelson's eldest daughter Noue (my mother Piliopo's eldest sister), and is survived by their four children: Tuiatua Tupua Tamasese Efi, Tusi Tamasese, Fialauia Tamasese and Piliopo Maiai. The man who is behind the name which Government has decided in its wisdom to name this hospital.

That man will be an inspiration for every person who works in this hospital. His humility, his dedicated and selfless service, his honesty and integrity, his hard work and pursuit of all that is good for his people. He was also dedicated and faithful to his Lord and Saviour, and to his Roman Catholic Church. These are all qualities that every patient who visits this hospital for help and healing should expect from every doctor, every nurse, and indeed every staff member of this hospital that is now named as a perpetual Memorial to Tupua Tamasese Meaole.

It is as well that we today celebrate this naming ceremony, and remind the staff, many of whom were not even born when Tupua Tamasese Meaole passed away in 1963, of the man in whose memory we now proudly name this hospital.

For me personally, as Minister of Health, this has been a very special event. My weekly visits to this hospital somehow mean much more now. Even the patients I visit are aware of a new sense of awe, renewed sense of dedication, which has permeated this hospital since Cabinet made the decision to name it after Tupua Tamasese Meaole. We must now all capture that spirit. Let the spirit of the man, the spirit of his name, become the spirit that guides all who work in this hospital.

Today we celebrate not only Tupua Tamasese Meaole's life, we celebrate not only his name, but we celebrate every doctor, nurse and staff member who has worked in the past, who is working now, and who will work in the future in this great hospital.

We thank God for all your dedicated service, just as we thank God for the dedicated life of service of Tupua Tamasese Meaole.

It is now my honour to show our respect for all those dedicated nurses, both past and present, who have served Samoa. I now call upon your President Faamanatu Nielsen, to unveil Tupua Tamasese Meaole's plaque.

God Bless all who will serve and be cared for in this great hospital.

God Bless Samoa.

Misa Telefoni

MINISTER OF HEALTH