

A TALE OF TONGA 1923 -31

To

TOM

PETER

JOHN

MICHAEL

without whose insistence
this tale would never
have been written.

Gweneth H. Moore
1988

CHAPTER 1

It was in 1922 that this story really began. Early in that year I had heard a visiting minister deliver an impressive address stressing the urgent need for teachers in the Pacific Islands.

After 7 years teaching in various schools for the Education Department in South Australia, it seemed to me that there was no reason why I should not answer that call. It was near the end of 1922, however, before I told the family of my plans, and remember very well my father's reaction when I did tell him:-

"You put that right out of your head my girl."

By that time I had already been in touch with the Foreign Mission Department of the Methodist Church in Sydney, offering my services, so obviously I continued with my preparations. It was December before I was actually acquiring my passport and taking leave of many people whom I didn't expect to see again for a very long time.

I had been closely connected with the Malvern Methodist Church for many years and a number of the congregation and other friends had prepared a lovely surprise for me. Before I left Adelaide on January 24, 1923, they had presented me with a packet of 35 letters, with instructions that I open one each day when I had boarded the boat enroute to Tonga, where I had been appointed.

1923

Mother and two of her good friends accompanied me to Sydney and after a few days staying with relatives there, half a dozen well-wishers were at the wharf when I finally boarded the S.S. Suva February 14, 1923. We were assured by a number of people that the "Suva" went under water at Sydney and came up in Fiji - I for one could easily believe it!



The S. S. Suva

It was my first experience on a passenger boat, and a thoroughly miserable one it was! Both sea-sick and home-sick, I opened the first of my 35 letters - a lovely one - and wept over it. Then, with complete disregard of instructions, opened the whole lot, one after the other to the very end! It probably did me a world of good at the time, and anyway, they were all there for a second reading later on.

After 6 days of extreme discomfort, we arrived in Suva (capital of Fiji) only to find that the connecting boat, "S.S. Tofua" would not arrive from New Zealand for a few days. I was met by Rev. A.J. Small and his wife - Mr. Small was a fine old man, at that time President of the Fiji Methodist Church.

The Indian work was in charge of Rev. & Mrs. Weavers, an American couple living in the Mission House at Toorak (as suburb of Suva). A teacher in a small Indian girl's school, had left on sick leave, and to my amazement, Mr. Small asked me whether I would postpone my Tongan appointment and take over that school for a month. Of course, I could not give a positive answer without the permission of Rev. Rodger Page, who was expecting me in Tonga in a couple of days. A cable was sent to him requesting that I be "lent" to the Indian work for a month. As it happened, I was to be there (after negotiations) for nearly 3 months.

CHAPTER 2.

On receipt of a favourable reply from Tonga, I found myself living with Mr. & Mrs. Weavers at the Mission House in Toorak and almost at once began teaching about 25 Indian girls aged about 12-14 years.

At that time (in the early twenties) the girls all wore their saris to school and most of them could speak English. They were all very shy at first but as the days went by, more girls joined the class. From time to time I went to Suva and visited Mr. & Mrs. Small - going with them to the Fijian Church for services, which of course were very different from the Indian Hindustani ones. The Fijian singing was sometimes in their own language and occasionally in English and always on a grand scale.

The Indians on the other hand sang in Hindustani and their hymns were to my mind very monotonous, although I did get to enjoy them after a while.

After school hours I visited quite a few of the Indian families and on one evening, was invited to the home of an Indian couple for dinner, Mr. & Mrs. Sutchitt and their two children. They served 5 courses at that meal - one of them the hottest curry I have ever tasted. Mr. Sutchitt was very amused when I grabbed for a glass of water, and promptly showed me that he could chew a couple of chillies and enjoy them.

During my stay in Fiji I was able to visit Davuilevu - the Fijian College - and Dilkusha - the Indian College. Both of them were boarding schools and had a much higher standard of Education than the village schools.

The Botanical Gardens in Suva were beautiful: so many tropical plants that were quite new to me. Several times I took my little school girls there for a picnic.

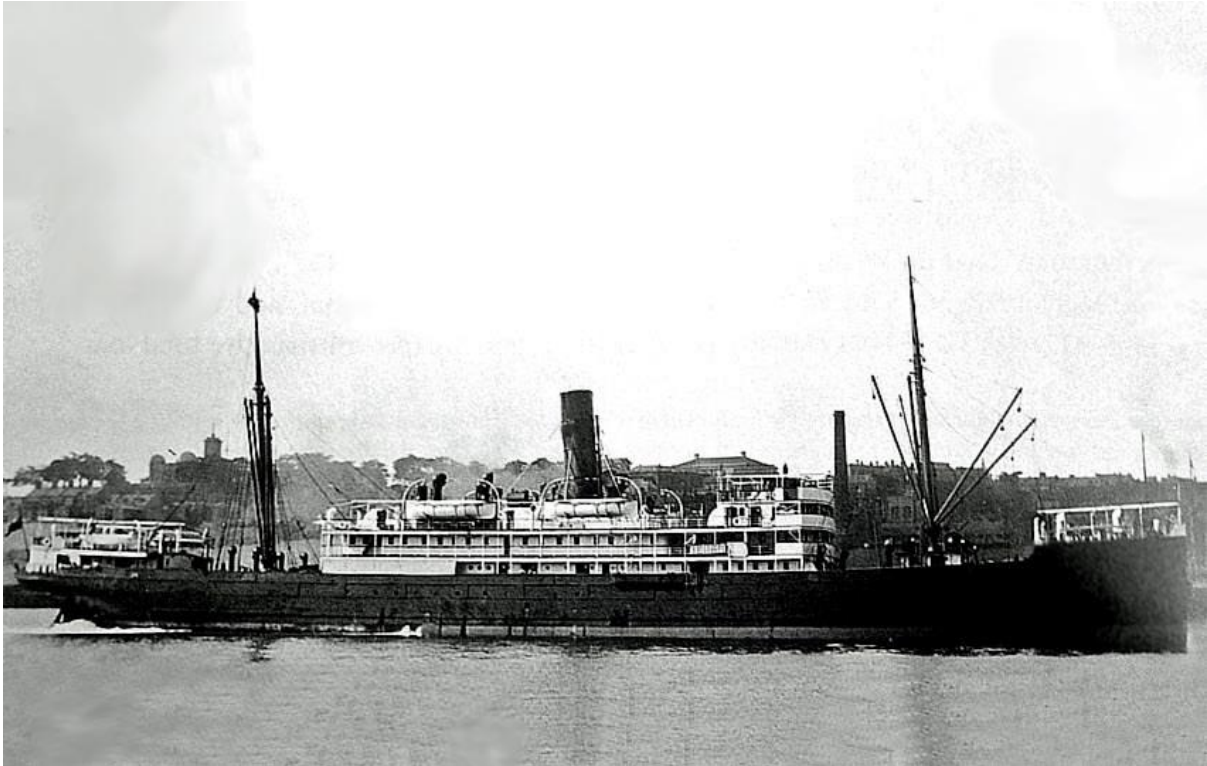
Increasing my time in Suva from one month to almost three, gave me the opportunity of learning more of that country.

The Fijians and the Indians had very little contact with each other and never once did I see any evidence of intermarriage between them.

I had become very fond of the girls and found it no hardship to stay for the extended time allowed me by Mr. Page. Mr. & Mrs. Weavers had been remarkably kind to me and when the message came from Tonga, "Send Cole next Tofua" it was to be the end of a very happy time - not only with the girls but with the group of older boys with whom I had spent time teaching them to sing during the evenings.

They gave me a grand party before I left on May 4. Down to the wharf we went - quite a bevy of friends and pupils to see me on my way to my original destination - Tonga.

I was genuinely sorry to leave these young people.



The S. S. Tofua

CHAPTER 3.

The "Tofua" left for Tonga about 5 p.m. on May 4, 1923. Travelling on the same boat, and also bound for Tonge was a young minister, who having seen me farewelled by a Mission staff, apparently thought it was his duty to talk to "that girl" when we went aboard. How I wished he wouldn't! I knew I would be sea-sick and of course my worst fears were realised within half an hour, when I managed to make good my escape to the cabin. Fortunately, the trip took only 2 days and on May 6, 1923, we landed at Nukualofa - the capital of Tonga's largest island, Tongatabu.

The first week after my arrival was a time for meeting my colleagues and other folk - mostly Tongans.

There were 2 other teachers at the Girl's School - Birdie Curwood and Doris Smith. Rev. Rodger & Mrs. Page and their only son Rodger, aged 7, made me very welcome and also the "young minister" who was to live with them at the Mission House for 2 months, in order to learn as much of the Tongan language as possible in so short a time. He had been appointed as the only European minister to the Ha'apai group, 90 miles North of Nukualofa, and very few of them could then speak English. The two girls with whom I shared the teaching, taught at the College, but I was given a class at Tabou College a very large, beautifully Tongan-built building - made, so they told me, without a single nail.

The girls College was an attractive European building and each of us had a bedroom to ourselves; in addition to the usual amenities. Most of the pupils were boarders and had dormitories: there were a number of islands belonging to the Togatabu group and quite a large proportion of the girls came from distant islands.

Within a few days we newcomers had frequent visits from different villages, with gifts of yams and fowls and most important of all - Kava root.

Both Charles Moore and I began teaching without delay: both of us had classes in the same big building - he at one end and I at the other.

Being a fully accredited Infant Teacher, I had naturally expected to have a class of small children. Imagine my astonishment when I faced a class of young men in their late teens and early twenties. Only one or two of them had a smattering of English and of course I knew not a word of Tongan, so we started with an English "First Primer".

I was curious to know why one of the class stood all the time by one of the huge supporting pillars of the building, with note book and pencil in his hand, and to discover later that he was there in a disciplinary capacity, to write down the name of any scholar who (in his opinion) gave any trouble, with the result that the offender had to do an hour's work after school, usually

cutting the grass around the compound with a huge knife¹. As a matter of fact, I doubt whether there was ever a culprit.

School began at 8 a.m. and finished at 1 p.m. In the afternoons the boys went to their plantations to grow their food - yams, kumala, taro, vegetables and of course, coconuts and breadfruit. Consequently, we were usually free for an hour or two after lunch. Charles Moore was the fourth European minister to join the staff. Rev. Collocott a brilliant man with a fine sense of humour had charge of a large boy's college at Nafualu - Rev. Sanders was stationed at Vava'u, 200 miles north of Nuku'alofa. The four of them were a well-adjusted, close-knit quartet and always called each other "Brer". Brer Page was a marvellous administrator, and from the first day we began teaching, he would suggest that Charles Moore and I should go for a walk or play tennis after school, in fact with his usual far sightedness, had done his level best to ensure that we spent every spare minute in each other's company. Mrs. Page was one of the finest women I have ever known, and in her own unobtrusive way, made her home a place of welcome for everyone. During Charles Moore's stay with them I think I spent as many meals there as I did at the College.

Needless to say it was no time before we were on a "first-name" basis and found that we had very much in common.

Every Friday evening Mrs. Page had a social gathering - mostly Europeans - in her lounge. There was singing - Charl was an excellent accompanist - several indoor games and of course, supper. Once in a while Queen Salote would join us - she was very shy at that time, and seemed to find it very difficult to know just when to return to the Palace. In the meantime, all the others had sung their songs and played their games, but protocol demanded that nobody could leave until the Queen had gone, so we were a weary lot at the end of the evening.

One very interesting thing always happened on such occasions. A big, burly Tongan chief always came with Salote, but at supper time he was not allowed to eat in the presence of the Queen, so he was dispatched to Brer Page's study with a supply of the good things to eat that we enjoyed. Ata (the chief) was a sort of aide de camp to the Queen.

On another day the Queen had invited the mission staff to a picnic at a nearby village: she wore casual clothes and was bare footed, and sat with the rest of us on the grass, evidently enjoying herself as much as we did.

In complete contrast came the day when the Queen opened Parliament - a most regal event, with Her Majesty wearing her robes of state - her crown and attended by two young boys also in uniform, bearing her train.

Instead of providing new uniforms for the boys each year, it was the custom to find two boys

¹ This practice may be seen between 59 and 1 minute 16 seconds into the video available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TNq1V2_Ytvk.

of the right size to wear the existing ones!!

There was always a brass band in attendance and rows of uniformed soldiers standing rigidly at attention.

Apart from occasional special days, the usual routine of ordinary work proceeded. Music is the great love of Tongans and we took delight in introducing new items to their already very extensive repertoire.

Some of the early missionaries to Tonga, last century, had taught the native people Handel's "Messiah". I have heard the Hallelujah Chorus sung four times in one evening by four different choirs! To hear hundreds of voices sing it in their inimitable way (as I did) with never a note of music, is something one could never forget.

CHAPTER 4.

1923

It was June 1st when one of Brer Page's dreams came true. Charl and I had walked that afternoon to a lovely lagoon, and were resting a while on the beach, when Charl asked me to marry him. Certainly it was less than a month since we had met on the wharf in Suva -- Charl, originally from England, and I from South Australia, and here we were in Tonga, deciding to spend the rest of our lives together - surely a Divine providence guided us.

It only remained now to go and tell Brer that his efforts were rewarded. Of course at that time it was always necessary to have the permission of one's parents before making any definite plans. I was not prepared to marry any *man* who had not seen and been accepted by my family, so we decided to take a short furlough at the end of that year and be married in Malvern Church.

I have mentioned before that Brer Page was renowned for his characteristic laugh. I wish you could have heard him when we told him our news. It always began with a very small chuckle that gradually increased in volume, until his great laugh could be heard all over the house.

There was no doubt that he was immensely pleased and thought that we would probably stay longer in Tongan work than we might otherwise have done.

A month later, Charl had completed his 2 months' "stop over" in Nuku'alofa, and at 7.30 one morning in July, he sailed for Ha'apai 100 miles North of Tongatabu. It was to be a solitary existence for him, for the remainder of the year.

Fortunately for him, there was a remarkable woman - Rachel Tonga - living in Ha'apai, who spoke English quite well. When Queen Salote was sent to New Zealand to school she was placed in the care of Rachel and it was largely due to her that Salote became such a fine Christian woman. Rachel helped Charl in a wonderful way for the next 6 months. She sent his mid-day meal to the mission house every day and was invaluable in assisting him to preach on Sundays. Charl would write his sermons in English on one line in a note book and Rachel would write the Tongan equivalent on the next line. For some time he read his sermons in Tongan, until finally he could manage it himself and Rachel would check the completed job.

In the meantime, I continued teaching the boys in the morning and had singing sessions with the College girls in the evenings.

There was time to visit places of interest from time to time and to learn more and more about the Tongan life-style. The few months in Nukualofa were a wonderful preparation for the work that Charl and I were to undertake during the next few years.

CHAPTER 5.

December 1923 was a very busy month. Usual school work continued, interspersed with packing goods to be sent to Ha'apai in advance. Farewells from friends - both Tongan and English. The Tongan folk gave me a number of native mats that were to be much appreciated in the Ha'apai Mission House.

The "Tofua" sailed about 4.30 p.m. on Dec. 29th, arriving in Ha'apai at 8 a.m. next morning. We had breakfast with Rachel and were guests at a Tongan "faka'afe" (feast) to farewell Charl. Rachel came to her gate to say goodbye with many tears she grasped my hand very firmly and said "Oh! be good to him".

We spent the next morning with Brer Sanders and his wife in Vava'u and set sail again for Apia - the capital of Samoa - landing there 3 days later after having spent Christmas Day on board in delightful weather. Charl spent the next morning climbing the steep hill to Vailima where Robert Louis Stevenson's grave is (where as the poet himself had written) "Here he lies where he longed to be". At the same time I had driven to Stevenson's home with some friends to see where he had spent the last years of his life. He had exerted a tremendous influence for good on the Samoan people during a most difficult time in their history.

1924

After our brief stay in Samoa we were on our way back to Suva where we had to wait for several days for the arrival of S.S. Suva on which we were to complete our trip to Sydney - a journey that I for one, anticipated with most uneasy feelings. The weather had changed and my worst fears were realised - it was a nightmare passage and the sound of smashing crockery from the dining saloon did little to improve matters.

It was very late when we berthed at Sydney and by the time we reached the home of Charl's parents, it was well past midnight. A few days spent with them and we boarded the train for Adelaide, finally reaching my parent's home after what had been a very complicated return after barely 12 month's absence.

It was Charl's first visit to South Australia, but he was so much occupied that the time sped all too quickly. We bought (of all things) an empty piano case which we named "Hamlet", and it was amazing what we managed to pack into it. To my father's horror, it included glassware, crockery, linen, books, garden tools, kitchen utensils, a small hand-sewing machine, and anything else that we were likely to need for the next few years. Father was quite sure that it would reach its destination with much of the contents smashed beyond repair, especially when we reported later that we had seen "Hamlet" at one port of call on the way back, hanging by one chain from a cargo boat.

The days passed so quickly that February seemed to come upon us with more than ordinary speed. We had arranged that we would be married on 20th of the month - on my youngest

sister Ruth's tenth birthday, much to her delight. So we were wed. It was a lovely moonlight evening for the ceremony in the Malvern Church.

Following a family celebration at "Barnsdale", we left for Stirling in the Mt. Lofty Hills for a brief 4 days honeymoon.

Much too soon it seemed, we were packing yet again; this time for our new home in Ha'apai. We were very fortunate that after a short stay with Charl's parents at Fairfield to bring them up-to-date with both the past few weeks and the future plans, we were able to travel via New Zealand on a much larger boat - the "Ulimaroa". A three weeks' strike of ship owners delayed us, and then another delay when we reached Suva, waiting for the "Tofua" which at long last took us to Ha'apai. There is no wharf there, owing to dangerous reefs, so passengers and cargo alike had to be unloaded on to a barge to complete what had been a momentous journey.



The S. S. Ulimaroa

CHAPTER 6.

1924

Of course, our first job on arrival was to unpack Hamlet and much to our relief, there was not even a crack anywhere, although I must confess that I dropped a small jug and broke it.

With barely a week at the Mission House, Charl had to return to Nukualofa for the Annual Conference. I didn't go, but spent the time making and hanging curtains with Rachel's very welcome help.

Many Tongans came with the usual gifts of mats and food, both of which were certainly appreciated. I preferred to do my own cooking, but alas we had no meat, no eggs, no butter, no milk, all of which we could order from New Zealand when the boat paid its monthly visit. On the day of its coming we could have a leg of lamb - butter and other perishable items. What we didn't manage to eat in a couple of days was not fit for consumption, as we had no refrigeration and no electricity. The butter would be rancid in no time. So it was a case of making the best of tinned meat, powdered milk, powdered eggs and tinned butter. There were plenty of stringy fowls about - one cut in halves would do the two of us for one tough meal. Things gradually improved after the first twelve months, when we were able to purchase "Angelina" a poor old cow that had had 13 calves during her long life. The eggs were a problem indeed. A native Tongan would come to see Charl - very often wanting some new part for the village boat or quite often wanting to borrow money. On such occasions they would go to the study and immediately sit on the floor - it was very wrong in their eyes to stand when talking to the Minister. After a while they would produce a fine gift for me - maybe a dozen eggs, but I very soon realised that it was wise to give them to the kitchen boy to take out to the wood heap and break them one by one. It was very rarely that he ever brought a good one back - the donor had probably found a nest of eggs somewhere-age unknown. The kitchen boy was also a problem. The first one I had didn't have any idea where to put the fire to heat the stove - he seemed to think that the best place would be in the oven! As well as the boy, I had a girl - a different one every week - and they were also as ignorant as the boy when it came to house keeping. Some of them became quite efficient in time and I am sure that they enjoyed our home.

There were two most important activities in the Tongan life - Kava rings and native feasts, both of which were in evidence on every possible occasion. We shared in many of them during our three years in Ha'apai - the first one at Lifuka² (capital of Ha'apai) took place very soon after arrival and others at nearby villages - a gesture of welcome from each place.

The Kava-making dated back to last century if not long before that, and was accompanied by a great deal of ritual. The Kava root was shredded into a huge wooden Kava bowl - carved out of

² Lifuka is the island on which the capital or administrative centre of Ha'apai is located. The town is called Pangai.

a single large log. Water was added gradually and the whole mixture strained, then the maker of the brew would call in a loud voice, "The Kava is ready!". The drinking cups were, without exception, halves of dried coconut shells. The man in charge would then call (again loudly) the name of the person who was to receive the first cup, which was filled from the bowl. From the time long before Tonga ever had a king, the highest chief in the seated ring would always have the third Kava, lest by any chance there was anything wrong with the brew!

At my first Kava, the caller must have been very proud of being able to speak English, and called "The Ha'apai woman" when it came to my turn for the cup. After a number of these ceremonies, the Tongans realised that I was not very fond of Kava, and with a smile would pour half of my share back into the bowl.

The Tongan faka'afe (feast) was also quite a complicated affair. A hole would be dug in the ground, red hot coals made by burning dried coconut husks, would be put in the hole. All the different foods were wrapped severally in banana leaves - pork, fowl, yam, kumala, taro and bread fruit flavoured in some way with coconut. The bread fruit was delicious cooked in that way, but I could never make mine half as nice. The banana wrapped parcels were then put on top of the hot coals and the whole lot covered over with banana leaves and earth.

The oven, called the "umu", would be left unattended for 2 or 3 hours before being lifted and each parcel opened. Of course, we all - Tongans and Europeans - sat on the ground and ate with our fingers³. At the end of the meal a native would bring a bowl of water and a piece of tapa cloth for a towel, so that we could wash our hands. I was always very relieved to have the first wash.

As early as 1826, a Mission House was built in Ha'apai, and whether it was the same one that we occupied, I am unable to say, although the condition of it during our stay 1923-6, would suggest that it was 100 years old. At the time it was built, however, the plan of it was most suitable for the tropics. The building was only one room wide, with every room having French windows opening on to a wide veranda at both front and back⁴. The island was only 7 miles long and 1/2 mile wide, so that sea breezes could reach into every room in the house. There was no running water, and the toilet was a primitive one built outside. The kitchen was a separate room apart from the house, with a dreadful fuel stove that filled the room with smoke each and every day.

In spite of all the difficulties, we had a very happy term in Ha'apai.

³ A feast may be seen between 11 minutes 19 seconds and 11 minutes 24 seconds into the video available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TNq1V2_Ytvk.

⁴ The back of the house may be seen between 6 minutes 53 seconds and 6 minute 55 seconds into the video available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TNq1V2_Ytvk. The front with the wooden shutters may be seen in the background between 10 minutes 48 and 10 minute 49 seconds into the video

CHAPTER 7.

1924

The Church work was very rewarding. By far more services than we had in Australia, and the Church was filled to capacity most every time⁵. One such service was held one night for a special reason. Three of the Tongans - good men and true - were to be ordained. Charl would conduct the ordination, but a remarkable old man "Mesui" was to begin the service with prayer and Scripture reading. The lighting on the pulpit was provided by an "alladin lamp". All went well until the mantle in the lamp broke, and old Mesui was left in the dark. Immediately, a Tongan rushed to the pulpit with a hurricane lamp - a poor substitute for the efficient Alladin - but Mesui managed to finish his part of the service.

Charl was then to conduct the communion part of the service. The three men knelt at the altar and Charl administered the Bread, when suddenly there was a deal of whispering between one of the three and a member of the congregation. We heard him say "Where is the Wine?" and the answer came "Over at Talakai's house", whereupon the Church member sped off to Talakai's house, leaving the three men still kneeling at the altar. He returned surprisingly quickly and put the wine on the communion table. The container was a large bottle, labelled "XXX"! I have no doubt that some of the Fathers of the Church in Sydney would regard that as irreverent or even blasphemous, but I assure you it was most reverent and dignified. The three Ordinees rose to their feet as fully accredited Ministers.

There are about 40 islands in the Ha'apai group, although many of them are uninhabited. It was part of Charl's work to visit the ones that were occupied, and poor sailor though he was, the only means of transport was by sea. Each village had its own cutter - ours was the "Fetu'aho"⁶. On the occasions that he was on one of these trips, it often happened that Charl would need to spend the night at the village, sleeping on a pile of tapa cloth on the floor, with no protection from the ubiquitous mosquito, and it was then that he contracted filaria, a mosquito-borne disease, which, if it persisted, became the dreaded elephantiasis. Fortunately, Charl had only occasional attacks for our first few years. As I never went away from home, and had access to mosquito nets on the beds, and screened windows and doors, I had no trouble on that score. When the time came that I expected his return, I would go down to the shore, and watch for a sail - sometimes in vain, if the weather had been adverse.

Washing-day was quite hilarious. Three old women came each week to do the washing and ironing. One then had two good eyes, the second had only one, and the third was blind. They

⁵ This church in Ha'apai may be seen between 1 minute 53 and 1 minute 56 seconds into the video available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TNq1V2_Ytvk.

⁶ The Fetu'aho may be seen between 29 and 38 seconds into the video available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TNq1V2_Ytvk. Cutters from other islands may be seen between 1 minute 28 seconds and 1 minute 51 seconds into the video.

used a large round galvanised iron tub and sat on the grass beside it⁷. They thoroughly enjoyed that day and used to put a cake of soap and a shirt into poor, blind Ana's hands and she washed as well as any of them. Time was no object.

The ironing was a different matter with the same three women. They used what was known as a "box iron". A large iron thing that was heated by filling the box with red-hot coals, and how they managed the clumsy things so expertly was always a mystery to me. The European ministers all wore white suits⁸, so there were usually about 7 pairs of trousers and 3 or 4 coats to be ironed, and they really looked good. Only once we had trouble; they very foolishly let Ana (the blind one) iron one of Brer Page's shirts (he was staying with us). It was scorched all over, and I upbraided the older one who had given her the job. I told her that I couldn't possibly give it back to Misa Beji (Mr. Page) like that, and she would have to do something about it. To my amazement she did! She came next morning early and washed it - drying was no problem - then she washed it again and repeated the washing and drying of that one shirt until late afternoon and returned it to me snow-white! I doubt whether it could have been done in any place but the tropics.

So our first year passed. Always busy and always interesting.

⁷ This practice can be seen between 2 minutes 39 and 2 minutes 43 seconds into the video available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TNg1V2_Ytvk.

⁸ The white suits worn by ministers can be seen between 6 minutes 27 and 6 minutes 33 seconds into the video available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TNg1V2_Ytvk.

CHAPTER 8

1925

The year was a memorable one in many respects. Our first child was due. in February, so preparations were made for his birth. We were most fortunate that Dr. Andrews, a likeable and efficient man, was then resident in Ha'apai, and a capable though extremely old-fashioned nurse also lived there with her two sisters.

Thomas arrived in February 28, and his coming coincided with one of the worst thunder storms I can remember. Both Charl and I were delighted with our new son and so were the Tongan people. Soon after Tom's arrival they came in quite large numbers, bringing gifts. Coo Baker - the nurse - ruled the place during her short stay with me, and when Tongan visitors came, she would form them into a queue - I was still in bed, and they filed through the front French doors, passed by the foot of the bed, dropped their gifts as they went, and continued their march out the doors at the back. One of the gifts was a small bag of onions! They were a loving and joyful crowd.

In due course, the Christening was to be in the Lifuka Church, and to his tremendous gratification, old Mesui was asked by Charl to conduct the service. Over and over I heard members of the congregation saying, "Isn't the baby white?" We installed a nice young girl whose sole job was to tend the baby's needs. She certainly loved her job and without my watchful, eye would have spoilt him properly. As a matter of fact, no Tongan can bear to hear a baby cry.

One of the five white women on the island was a Mrs. Pyne, wife of the postmaster. They were a most congenial couple and both Charl and I found their friendship very welcome. On a day after the Tofua had made it monthly visit, Mr. Pyne asked us in to the Post Office⁹ to see the Manifest that came to him monthly with a list of the passengers and cargo. A most unusual item was "one case of corpse". It was the body of Shirley Baker, son of the infamous Rev. Shirley Baker. The son had died in New Zealand 2 years before, but his sisters, Alice, Coo and Lottie, had somehow scraped together enough money to have him disinterred, put in a lead coffin and sent to Ha'apai - paying double saloon fares for the coffin. They kept him on a shelf at their home for a few days and then had him buried in a huge tomb built by his father, with a special place inside for each member of the family, with instructions that they all returned to die in Ha'apai and be buried in their own special niche. One came from America and one from New Zealand and were safely interred (after we had left Ha'apai).

I have never heard whether the other sisters managed it, but they were still alive in Lifuka when we left. Baker also had a 9 ft. statue of himself made in Italy, which was long afterwards to stand

⁹ The Post Office may be seen between 24 seconds and 28 seconds into the video available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TNq1V2_Ytvk.

on top of his monumental tomb.¹⁰

The story of Baker's inauguration of a secessionist Church has been told by many able writers. Suffice it to say here, that he died in 1903 - just 3 years after the birth of Queen Salote. The secession took place in 1885, but it was not until 1925 that union of the two churches was achieved.

1926

Although Queen Salote and Brer Page had been working for a very long time to bring about this union, it was by no means a success until 1926, when it became a fully united union.

One evening on 16th January, 1926, Charl and I were sitting in the Mission House when a horseman came galloping up to the door, calling urgently for Charl. He came from a small village called Koula, about 2 miles away. "Come quickly", he said, "We can't stop the prayer meeting". It was then near 8 o'clock and the meeting had begun at 6 p.m. It was the commencement of a strange religious fervour to which the Tongans gave a name - "The love has fallen". The Koula people were exhausted and hysterical until Charl managed to quieten them. Even though it began in Koula, it spread with unbelievable rapidity throughout the whole Tongan group Tongatabu - Ha'apai – Vava'u and all the numerous small island in the Kingdom. It was an emotional happening certainly, but there was no doubt that it did cement the union of the two churches. Up until then, the members of our own Wesleyan Church sat on one side of the aisle, and the Free Church people sat the other side. When Charl announced a hymn from our hymn book, the other side were tight-lipped and didn't sing a note, and vice-versa, our lot were silent when a hymn from the Free Church book was chosen, but after this Spirit of Revival moved them it was different.

During one service a Tongan on the Free Church side of the congregation rose from his seat and walked out into the aisle. Another Tongan seated on the Wesleyan side did likewise. They met in the aisle and embraced each other after what had been a lifetime of enmity between them. It was actions like that which really cemented the union of the two churches and made a tremendous difference in the congregations everywhere. Instead of being in the minority, the Wesleyans gained greatly in numbers and were glad to follow the lead of their Queen in abandoning the "Baker" regime and rejoining their original church.

With the death of the only white minister of the Free Church, Jabez Bunting Watkin, then 88 years old, their church had no leader and there was no Tongan among their ranks able to fill the position, so even though there is still a small remnant of dissenters, they have made no headway, and gradually it became possible for all congregations to use the original hymn book and Bible, and they *all* sang.

¹⁰ Rev. Shirley Baker's statue and tomb may be seen between 2 minutes 27 seconds and 2 minutes 37 seconds into the video available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TNg1V2_Ytk.

It was a wonderful achievement by the Queen and Brer Page that the 50 years breach had been healed to such an extent; it certainly made our work so much easier and more effective.

CHAPTER 9

1926-1927

Towards the latter end of 1926 our second child was due. It had been a very difficult time for the few months prior to her birth, and when on October 18, she was borne, both Charl and I were heart-broken that she lived only 1 hour and to add to my sorrow, I did not even see her. Our little Elizabeth Mary was the only daughter that we were ever to have, and the empty cot was a constant reminder of our loss. About three weeks later, Charl was informed that the wife of one of the traders a Mrs. Brown (of mixed German and Samoan descent) had a baby son only a few weeks old and the mother was very ill with breast fever. The Tongan helpers in her house seemed to have little or no knowledge of baby care, and were feeding the infant on yam and coconut milk, with dire consequences. I went with Charl to see her and told her that I would take the babe home with me, and keep him until she had recovered. As it happened, I had little Neil for 4 months and never once did Mrs. Brown ask for him. At the same time she helped as much as possible by sending a lass every day to collect his washing and spared no effort to make things easy for me. She was most appreciative too, but I could never understand why she did not claim Neil sooner. It was wonderful for me to have a baby in that empty cot and of course, I became very fond of him.

At the end of the year we were informed of our transfer to Vava'u - 100 miles North of Ha'apai - in the New Year, so had to part not only with Neil, but also our many Tongan friends of the last three years.

1927

Mrs. M. E. Tompson had been appointed to the Queen Salote Girl's College in Nukualofa but was transferred to the Siuilikutapu College at Vava'u about the same time as we were, and under her direction the school grew to 700 in numbers and produced some fine students: among others, Sau Faubula, who achieved the degree of L.Th. - the first Tongan to do so. He had gone from Siuilikutapu to the Theological College in Nafualu, where he was under the care of Brer Collocott and finally entered the ministry. He was well-known in Sydney, where he came on deputation work and during one of his visits, collapsed and died. His was an irreparable loss to Tonga.

Mrs. Thompson and I became firm friends. The college was just across the road from the Mission House and there were many times when we were glad to be of help to each other. Tom was 2 years old and was unable to say "Thompson" and he called her "Tomfa". From that time on, she was "Tomfa" to all her friends until her death.

The Mission House at Neiafu, the capital of Vava'u, was a great improvement on the one we had left at Ha'apai. A much newer building with more conveniences. Although the food problem was still difficult, we had at last access to milk, meat and eggs, with a vastly improved kitchen. Charl's work was also made easier for him with considerably less sea-travelling, due to the fact that many of the villages could be reached by land, as the island of Vava'u was so much larger. Even

when it became necessary to use a cutter, it was more of a pleasure than a penance, because of the truly lovely harbour, which to my mind rivalled Sydney Harbour with its unspoiled beauty and no concrete jungle near it. Even I enjoyed occasional trips without fear of sea sickness.

On one occasion, both Tomfa and I, with a boat-load of her senior college girls, went with Charl to an uninhabited island called "Nuia", for a picnic. The boat was anchored about 100 yards from shore, and during the day the Tongan girls would swim out to the boat and race each other back. Tom watched them for some time and then decided that he would do it too - he'd have been about 3 years old then. Charl and a Tongan teacher were standing on the shore when suddenly they saw Tom a few yards out, waving his arms frantically. The teacher (a male) lost no time but plunged into the water and reached Tom none too soon. He was blue with cold and very full of water. Fortunately for us he recovered quickly, but you may be sure it never happened again.

We had a large and beautiful garden at the Mission House, thanks to our predecessor, Brer Sanders. Amongst other trees was a huge mango tree that kept us supplied with all the mangoes we could possibly use. The back veranda had a trellis built along it, on which climbed a "granadilla". We had never seen one anywhere else, but it was a joy. The fruit was about 6" long and 3" wide with a soft green cover. The inside of the fruit was full of passion fruit - exactly the same as our small, round ones, which the children called "shutty doors" because the covers were so hard that the only way to open them was to put them in the hinge of a door and shut it. One granadilla would fill a dessert dish with passion fruit, and eaten with coconut milk, was indeed a treat.

Attached to the house was a small room which the Tongans called "the yam house". It contained nothing else than yams, some of them a yard long. We were never without them, as the people from out-lying villages would bring them as gifts. Except on feast days, yam was the staple diet of the Tongan folk.

The Church Conference was held every year in Nukualofa, and near the end of our first year in Vava'u, Tomfa and I decided that we would accompany Charl to Conference. No steamer was available, so we had to use our boat - the Fetuaho - with only sails and of course, no engine.

No doubt we had become accustomed to lovely little trips on our beautiful harbour and had more or less forgotten our fears of sea sickness, so we joined Charl and 20 Tongans, taking Tom and Tubou Kami, to help care for him.

Once out of the Harbour we were in very rough seas, and regretted our previous decision. At one stage it became very rough and Tubou said, "Give Tomu to me, I can swim and you can't". Not a very comforting thought, as you can imagine. To make matters worse, the Tongans at the other end of the boat were thoroughly enjoying themselves and eating fat pork! The trip of 100 miles took us 2 days and 2 nights. We slept (or not) on folded tapa cloth on the open deck - there was no toilet, although we had foreseen that difficulty and taken the necessary equipment with us. About half way to Ha'apai, to our consternation, the Tongan who was washing it, dropped it overboard. It would surprise you to know how handy a bully-beef tin can be! By that

time both Tomfa and I agreed that nothing could persuade us to go a further 100 miles to Nukualofa, so when we did reach Ha'apai, we would stay in our erstwhile Mission House with our successors, Rev. & Mrs. Harris, and rejoin Charl a week later, on his return from Conference. When we did arrive at Ha'apai, we found that Mrs. Harris had just given birth to her first child. She was more than pleased to have our help for a week.

It was a great relief that when Charl returned, it was then we travelled back to Vava'u on the "Hifofua"¹¹ - a much larger boat than the "Tofua"¹² we had been expecting, with proper bunks and only 1 night on board.

1928

It was nearing the end of the year and after three years' service we were due for a three months' furlough. Also, I was expecting an addition to the family, and we were both apprehensive about it, so decided to go back to Adelaide and have this baby in a little hospital near our parent's home ("Barnsdale"). It was good to be back with the family after our long absence and we found it very refreshing to have a quiet time for a while.

A second son was born on March 24 - it was a Good Friday and as he was born, a peal of church bells rang out - a lovely welcome for our lovely baby. We named him "Peter Taufu". We wanted to give him a Tongan name, and had chosen "Taufu", which was the name of Queen Salote's son - the heir apparent.

The remaining few weeks of our furlough were happily spent renewing old friendships. One of my friends had also a new baby son, so we arranged a double christening in the Malvern Church. All too soon we were planning our return to Tonga. Peter was only 5 weeks old and Charl and I could not travel to Sydney together. He left with Tom who was nearly 3, a week earlier than the baby and I, in order to spend a week with his own parents at Fairfield West. In the 1920's a very handy piece of luggage was called a "dress basket". It consisted of 2 pieces, one on top of the other and fitting over each other. Half of it was just the right size to serve as a cradle for the babe and made a very comfortable journey for him, by train from Adelaide to Sydney, where we joined our old boat, the "Suva", with the more difficult task this time of coping with two children *and* sea sickness.

Following a delay as usual in Fiji, we finished our travel on the "Tofua" with only an hour or so in Nuku'alofa and Ha'apai, landing at Vava'u with the prospect of another 3 years there.

The nearest island to Neifau was Lofango - Charl visited it a number of times but I never did. It was possible to reach it at low tide by walking or riding a horse across a very narrow, rocky

¹¹ The Hifofua may be seen between 12 minutes 2 seconds and 12 minutes 24 seconds into the video available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TNq1V2_Ytvk.

¹² Gweneth may have been confused here. It is likely that she travelled back on the Tofua. It travelled to New Zealand, Fiji and Samoa was a much larger ship than the Hifofua, which was owned by the Tongan Government and used for internal travel.

strip something regarded as dangerous, with deep water racing by on each side, and I made no attempt to risk it. Charl certainly had a more hazardous life than I did (in some respects).

It was now our second year in Vava'u and from time to time unusual things happened. One such occasion was the wedding of a lass from Australia who had come to Tonga to marry the son of one of the local traders. The wedding was held in our Mission House with all the customary trappings - flowers in profusion and a reception - mostly her new husband's friends. Bill and Lilian Sundin became very good friends of ours. The interesting part of it was the Bill's father had come to Tonga years before from Sweden - he was unmarried - young and lonely, so he sent to a newspaper in Sweden and had an advertisement inserted, asking would "someone" come to Tonga and marry him. Fortunately for him, a very fine woman replied - came out and married him. He had never seen her before, but everything ended very happily. They had several children (including Bill) and she built up his business most successfully.

With a much larger population - both Tongan and European - it was possible to gather a number of the white community for Saturday tennis matches, which we all enjoyed.

A not-so-happy event was when a small Tongan boy, Lau Taimi, climbed the huge mango tree in our garden and was attacked by a whole swarm of wasps. His father, Manisela, climbed up and brought him down - he was a very sick little boy and the story of it effectively prevented our own children from climbing that tree.

The hurricane season was always an anxious time for us, as well as the Tongans themselves. They lost quite a lot of their food crops and, of course, the coconuts were often badly damaged and sometimes would not bear the following year. They not only used the coconuts very extensively in the preparation of their food, but dried them as copra, which they could sell to the traders for export - often their only source of money. As for us, it meant that battens had to be fixed on all doors and windows and naturally, we were house-bound for two or three days. One year, the Girls' College across the road had a bad time. They had a number of toilets, scattered round the compound, and during the hurricane I could see through the battens across the windows of the Mission House, that their toilets were blowing over, one after another and rolling round the compound!

When the "Tofua" made its monthly call, it was a very busy day. It brought the mail - our only contact with home - we usually had about 30 letters already written, and received about the same number. As the boat stayed only a few hours, we always liked to add last minute messages to our correspondence. Reading the incoming ones had to wait till the boat had gone and I remember our predecessor standing at his gate and greeting some unknown and would-be visitors, by saying "You won't come in, will you?"

CHAPTER 10.

1929

As the year wore on, Tomfa and I became more and more dependant on each other. Unfortunately, Tomfa contracted filaria and there was one occasion when I really wondered whether she would see the night through. She was eventually sent back to her family in Victoria for twelve months, and returned in much better health. There were also times when I was incapacitated for some reason and Tomfa spent much of her spare time caring for Tom and Peter. I have very vivid memories of Peter following her across the road to her home, saying "Tomfa, wait for me". Many years later, back in Australia, they played tennis together and he still called, "Tomfa, wait for me" (we had told him how often he had said it as a toddler).

During the latter part of the year, Conference was held as usual in Nukualofa, and it was the unanimous decision of Charl and his colleagues that it would be the wisest move if the President for the ensuing year was a Tongan, instead of Brer Page, who had occupied the position unopposed for many years. So a Tongan minister (who had rejoined the Wesleyan Church after Union) was chosen. Setaleki was good Tongan minister but hadn't the remotest idea how to rule as President and he was promptly replaced at the end of his term by Page, who held the post until his retirement in 1947.

He and his son, Rodger, lived in a house Brer had bought in Epping and Tomfa was their housekeeper for a number of years until Rodger Junior married, when Tomfa returned to Victoria and Brer lived nearby with his brother, Dr. William Page.

CHAPTER 11.

1929-30

Many of the Tongans were given names that were, to say the least, quite unique. Here are a few of them:-

"Sivi" was a dear little girl called so because her father sat for his local preacher's exam on the day that she was born. "Sivi" is Tongan for "examination".

"Befelati" (B Flat) because his father played a B Flat brass instrument in the band and was proud of it.

"Setaleki" the one time President, was our "Shadrach"

"Fusipala" was one of Queen Salote's sisters and died in Melbourne while attending the Methodist Ladies' College there: her royal name meant "Rotten Banana" and it is to be hoped that none of her school mates knew that!

A strange thing about the Tongan language intrigued us. There is never a word that has two consonants together whatever the word there is always a vowel between every consonant, and every name follows the same rule. In addition both names and words without exception end with a vowel. The strangest word of all uses all the vowels and no consonants "Oiaue" - an interjection where we would say "Oh dear" or "good gracious". Tongan is a soft flowing language and I think more musical than English - even Tonga is rightly spelt Toga, but sounded the way we use it. Whether written or not, there is always an "n" sounded before every "g".

Although the Church work was continuing so much more efficiently after Union than in our earlier years in Tonga, it was a hazardous year at times for Charl and for me. We were expecting our third child in June 1930 and everything went well until about mid-April when without any warning I had a severe haemorrhage. In spite of the fact that Vava'u was so much larger than Ha'apai, there was no *good* doctor there, nor a trained nurse and we had to call a most unattractive and definitely unhygienic man who called himself *Dr. Leper*. All he could do was to suggest that I went as soon as possible back to Ha'apai where Dr. Andrews had attended me when Tom was born. I refused to go, knowing that I would undoubtedly be seasick and probably would lose my baby. Then he said, "Go to Samoa - it's only 36 hours away" but again I protested. It was 3 a.m. then, and he packed his bag, saying, "Well, don't call me again - I'm goin' fishin'." Almost the same time the daughter of the British Consul was also about to have her first babe, but our (noble Dr?) fled to the bush and left her to the tender mercies of a Tongan Dr., who was probably much more capable than he.

Charl cabled at once to a lovely Scottish Doctor in Nukualofa and to our great relief he came

on the first available boat - 200 miles to our help. He stayed a day or two and promised to come back for the confinement and if possible bring a nurse with him.

Dr. Dawson was as good as his word. He not only returned in good time, but brought with him Mrs. Hadfield, who was the wife of the Seventh Day Adventist Church Minister in Nukualofa. I was immensely grateful to them both, and have had a soft-spot for the Adventists ever since. Mrs. Hadfield had brought her two children with her and left them in the care of her Seventh Day colleague at her Mission House not far from ours. Only a clever doctor and an equally clever nurse could have made possible the survival of us both. John Haslam was born on June 30 and has been a joy to both Charl and me from that time to this.

To our dismay, only 3 weeks later Charl and Tom and John and I developed dengue fever. Peter escaped the infection, thanks to Tomfa, who took him to her house and kept him out of harm's way. Tom and I had it very mildly, but Charl was very ill, indeed. Fortunately, the babe had just a trace of it. We all took quite a long time to recover our former good health. By the end of the year we had decided that it would be most unwise to keep John in the tropics for what could be a long, hot summer, as well as the fact that Charl's filaria was giving him a lot of trouble. So we made up our minds to leave Tonga at the beginning of the next year. Neither Charl nor I wanted to go, knowing how much we would miss the work we had enjoyed so much for the last 7 years, and the love and care of our many Tongan friends.

For the remaining few months of our stay, we were kept extremely busy. Tom was nearing 6 years old and Peter 3 and with the prospect of school in Australia for Tom, it was necessary that he should not be below the standard of his age group, so I began a small class of 5 & 6 year-old beginners - including as many young Tongans as we could fit into the room we were to use, hoping that they, too, would benefit by lessons in reading and writing English.

With a limited number of children it was surprising how much they managed to achieve in the 6 months before our departure. Charl, also, had much to do: our successors had to be notified and acquainted with the many and varied aspects of the work that would be awaiting them. It was with some trepidation that I anticipated what the future had in store for us. Charl was attached to the New South Wales Conference, so it seemed that whatever circuit to which we would be sent, it would be in N.S.W. and that time in South Australia would be for brief visits only, for the rest of my life.

CHAPTER 12

1931

It was January, 1931 when we made our final travelling plans, and our really regretful farewells to both Tongan and English friends, many of whom we expected never to see again. The very day we boarded the "Tofua" there had been a hurricane blowing, and it was almost over, although the sea was very rough. We had prepared the baby's food before leaving, and had taken a folding cot with us, but might have saved ourselves the trouble on both counts. A particularly nasty lurch of the boat sent the food hurtling down from the shelf above, and worse still the 'folding' cot *did* fold, breaking on the way. We rescued the screaming babe and to my horror, Charl threw the cot out the port hole, declaring that it was useless, anyway. We didn't travel via Samoa on this trip, but sailed direct to Suva, where we spent a week (as usual), waiting for the "S.S. Suva" to complete the journey to Sydney. Enough said about that ship! Suffice it to say I have never since been on a single sea-going vessel.

During the week's delay in Suva, we were notified by the Sydney Mission Office of our new appointment to a circuit in Australia (N.S.W.). A number of school children in the boarding-house found their atlases, but not one of them showed us the place to which we were sent. Sadly enough it was an extremely poor circuit and we arrived there during the difficult days of the Thirties' Depression.

Quite a large number of our parishioners were share farmers and had been hard hit by the prevailing depression of the 1930's. There were 6 churches in our circuit and contrary to the usual arrangement, no means of transport had been provided, so Charl walked from place to place in turn round his 15 mile area. The bank had temporarily closed, and what money we had there was unavailable, added to which was the fact that we were paid no stipend for the first 3 months. The children had never known a winter and consequently needed warm clothes. Had it not been for the money we had with us, we would have been in dire straits. All Methodist parsonages at that time were furnished with most essentials - bedding, crockery, cutlery and the usual household furniture, but this one was strangely lacking in many respects. There were not sufficient blankets for the beds, so we were compelled to use odd mats from the lino-covered floors to keep warm at night. The kitchen was a huge one, and had no covering at all on the splintery old weather-board floor, so John, at the 'crawling' stage could not have freedom of movement in that room. Fortunately for us, a farmer's wife in an out-lying part of the circuit, became very concerned and organized a plan whereby each member of the 6 Church Aids was asked to pay one shilling, and in due course we had a linoleum on the kitchen floor, and at last, a dinner set in the cupboard.

1932

Things did improve gradually to some extent. The Church Officials managed to acquire an open, single-seated sulky, and a rather broken-down old horse for our use.

A marvellous lady, who lived about 4 miles away, had a similar sulky and a much better horse. She came to visit us quite a lot and on one such occasion, brought some sweets for the children. The seat of her sulky lifted up to disclose a compartment for carrying her purchases. When she lifted the lid on that day, it was to find a snake neatly coiled up inside. She was quite unperturbed and said that the snake lived in their barn! This lady had 3 teen-age daughters who came turn about to stay with us for a week at a time for the whole of the 3 years we were there. The whole of her family were kindness itself to us from the very first day of our arrival, and I have treasured the memory of those girls and their mother, Mrs. Gregory, for their much appreciated help.

1933

Towards the end of our second year, Charl had made many improvements. The Church was a very small one and there was no other building for holding social gatherings for the young people, but there was a disused old garage at the parsonage, so Charl cleaned it out and made seating arrangements. We were able to have fund-raising efforts there at which they often had pies, peas and potato for 9d each! - for supper, as well as entertainment.

Before the year was out we knew that our fourth and last child was to join us early in January and with the prospect of getting to hospital at Lismore 11 miles away - by means of our only transport, the old horse and sulky, we thought it wiser to be prepared for a long and uncomfortable journey. The Government had installed "Tick Gates" half way to Lismore and if the horse had not been sprayed for a fortnight, we would have to unharness it, have it sprayed, wait for it to dry, then harness up again and continue on our way. We had booked in at a little hospital run by a daughter of the Mr. Cottee who began the now famous Cottee products. To be sure that we would arrive on time, it seemed safer to leave the parsonage a week earlier than was necessary, so on January 23rd, we made what proved to be an uneventful trip to the hospital.

1934

A week later, on January 30, our fourth lovely little son made his appearance. At his first cry, I asked the Sister - "Well, what is it?" It was really amusing when she said so very apologetically, "It's a BOY Mrs. Moore!" Neither Charl nor I regretted for one moment that he formed what Sister later called our "tennis team". Both of us were overjoyed at this final addition to our family. All went well and we travelled back to the parsonage on a Government Bus!

Three weeks later our new baby was christened during our service of farewell to what had been a difficult circuit, but with our Michael as a parting joy, it had made it all worth while. The three years we had spent there had been my first experience as a minister's wife in Australia and I have no doubt that I had learned much that would be of inestimable value in the ensuing years.

EPILOGUE.

1934-1960

Following our departure after three years in a rather disappointing circuit, we served the next few years in six different circuits, during which time three of our boys were married, with Charl officiating at each wedding.

Two of the circuits to which we were appointed will live forever in our memory. At Manilla we made lasting friendships with most thoughtful and generous people and to this day have maintained contact with them.

A few years later Berry was a second home to us for 5 happy years and hardly a year has passed ever since without a return visit and a joyous welcome.

In 1939, shortly after we moved to yet another parsonage, war broke out and Charl decided that the best way he could serve his country was to retire temporarily from the ministry, and return to his former job in an engineering workshop for the duration of the war, although he still did voluntary work for the Church on Sundays. He also managed to gain the respect of numbers of the young men at the workshop and prevented them from going straight to the hotels after work.

When Peace was declared, Charl re-entered the Ministry and laboured in a further three places before being appointed to Penrith a very extensive charge, involving 6 smaller churches - far too much for one man to manage alone.

In our last year there, the old huge parsonage was sold and later demolished by Caltex. For a few months a new parsonage was not acquired, so we bought a dear little place of our own at Warrimoo and travelled back daily to Penrith to our duties there. Finally, a new parsonage was made available, so we lived there for the remainder of our time in Penrith, keeping our own little house at Warrimoo, to where we could eventually retire.

On the last week of that year, Charl preached three times on Christmas Day and closed his ministry there with a final business meeting the following Tuesday. He had not been well for some time, but was most anxious to finish his term in Penrith. Then came the greatest sorrow of my life. Charl became seriously ill and after a short stay in hospital, came home to the house that the boys had arranged to buy for us at Denistone East. After only two weeks there, Charl died on February 28, 1960, aged 67 years. The ensuing years would have been so much more difficult, had it not been for the love and care of the four boys.

For the next 20 years I lived there mostly alone - as Michael married a couple of years later.

1976

In 1976 I was fortunate enough to have a return trip to Tonga with Rodger Page Jr. and his wife, Mary, on the occasion of the "Century of Methodism" in Tonga.

It was a marvellous re-union with so many friends, although I missed so much not being able to share it all with Charl. We left Sydney on June 25- no ships this time, but by a plane carrying a number of clergymen and many other visitors. After a short stay in Apia, we arrived in Nukualofa on June 29, to find great excitement among the Tongan folk. The festivities continued without a break for a couple of weeks. Rodger, Mary and I stayed with Nanisi Kavabalu - I had taught her at the Queen Salote College when she was quite a young girl. Now of course, she was a fine grandmother, and was overjoyed at seeing us again.

Queen Salote's son, "Taufa Ahau" had become King after Salote's death: both he and his beautiful wife, Beloleva¹³ and family were staunch supporters of the Church. A new and much larger church had been built, seating 2,000 people. On the first Sunday after our arrival, the King himself preached the sermon and Rodger read the lesson. The Church was filled to overflowing and needless to say, a large combined choir sang the Hallelujah Chorus magnificently. Every village celebrated in its own way, but the most impressive service was held at Hihifo - the place where John Thomas the first missionary to land in Tonga, had beached his boat at the close of his journey from England. The service on that day was held in the open air - no building could have held the congregation. The preacher was the Rev. Dr. Harold Wood, a truly remarkable man, who after having left Tonga in 1937 was able to deliver a powerful sermon in the Tongan language.

On July 6, I left Nuku'alofa for just 2 days, and went on a small 5-seater 'plane to our beloved Ha'apai - a private pilgrimage of my own, where I visited our little daughter's grave as well as renewing old friendships.

The Ha'apai folk were also very involved in the Centenary Celebrations and had a rousing service on the night of my arrival, with many choirs and many speeches the choirs sang until 11 p.m.! I slept that night in the same bed that had been mine in 1924!

The following morning a large crowd assembled on the church compound for more speeches. The chief with whom I had been staying had asked me whether I would join the other speakers and make a speech in the Tongan language. I was most reluctant, but he pleaded "Please do it in Tongan". So I did make what was possibly the shortest speech on record. It took me all my time to remember enough Tongan to comply with his request, but the listeners were most appreciative

Returning to Nuku'alofa that afternoon after a delightful "extra" session, the Kava drinking and feasting and the services continued almost without a break until we all left on July 11, at the end

¹³ The King's wife was Mata'aho. Belodeva [Pilolevu] was the only daughter of Mata'aho and the King.

of a most exhilarating experience.

Not long after our return I decided that as I was over 80 years old, I would sell my little house at Denistone and move to a self-care unit at Turrumurra, whilst I was still active and able to cope with such a move. With a great deal of assistance from the boys and their wives, I settled in at "Northaven" in Turrumurra. During the 12 years since then, I have enjoyed my independence and the friendship of the people living here.

I would like to put on record the unremitting help and loyalty of my boys and other friends, especially over the last year or so.

There is just one more journey to which I look forward: the details are not yet completed, but the plans are in God's hands, not mine.

[Signed] Gweneth H. Moore

GWENETH H. MOORE

July, 1988.