



Tuvalu Philatelic Bureau

# Newsletter

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## Royal Visit of the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge to Tuvalu

As the Royal Visit of the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge draws nearer, the excitement in the capital is also building up.

Island communities are busy with their preparations, and the children in particular are specially excited.

Many of them do not really understand what Tuvalu's connection is with the British monarchy having been born generations after Tuvalu gained its independence from Great Britain.

As it is, having such popular royalties as the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge visit our island is in itself something out of a fairy tale for many of our younger generations.

Tuvalu gained its independence from Great Britain on the 1st October, 1978, and is a member of the Commonwealth of Nations.

It is a sovereign nation whose Head of State is Queen Elizabeth II.

The Queen is represented by a local Governor General who is appointed by the Queen on the advice of the Tuvalu Government of the day.

Hence, ties between Tuvalu and the British crown are indeed deeply rooted, and the people of Tuvalu have great respect and fondness of the Queen the British monarchy.

Many Tuvaluans still hold fond memories of the royal visit of

Her Majesty and His Royal Highness, the Duke of Edinburgh, to Tuvalu in 1983.

A far-flung nation in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, these royal visits to our tiny nation are few and rare.

So it is without a doubt, such an occasion is a rare opportunity for Tuvaluans, which therefore calls for a great celebration.

A special commemorative stamp issue on this Royal Visit will be released on the 18th September 2012.

The Duke & Duchess of Cambridge are expected to visit Tuvalu on the 18th-19th September, 2012. ■



## London 2012 – Tuvalu in the 30th Olympiad of the Modern Era

Tuvalu is represented at the London 2012 Olympic Games by three athletes:

1. **Lapua Lapua**, 21 yrs old Weightlifting Men's 62kg Group B, Ranked 12th
2. **Asenate Manoa**, 20 yrs old; Athletics 100m—Ranked 7th in Women's 100m Preliminaries
3. **Tavevele Noa**, 20 yrs old, Ranked 6th in the Men's

### 100m Preliminaries

This is only the second time Tuvalu has participated in the Olympic Games; it's first participation was at Beijing 2008.

Very little attention is paid to Sports in Tuvalu, and those participating in sports often have to make do with the limited facilities available.

Sports in schools are also very

much under-developed with little expert coaching and very poor facilities.

With foreign assistance, the three athletes who represented Tuvalu were able to undergo training abroad to try and improve their skills and fitness before embarking for the London 2012 Olympics.



# Staff Profile: Ms Fetulele Kotema

## Personal Details

*Name:* Ms Fetulele Kotema

*Marital Status:* Married (recently on the 30th June 2012)

*Husband's Name:* Patala Talava

*Date of Birth:* 9th September, 1989

*Place of Birth:* Nui, Tuvalu

*Hobbies:* loves watching movies, meeting people, playing volleyball and other outdoor activities

## Education

- *Primary:* Vaipuna Primary School, Nui, Tuvalu

- *Secondary:* Motufoua Secondary School, Vaitupu, Tuvalu
- Undertook some extension courses at the University of the South Pacific Extension Center, Funafuti, Tuvalu

## Work Experience

- Tuvalu Philatelic Bureau: 2008-2009
- Worked in New Zealand for a year (2010-2011)
- Returned to TPB in 2011 and has been working in TPB since then at the packing department.
- Currently working as Acting Accounting Clerk in Merita's absence.



Fetulele's great great grandfather, Christian Martin Kleis, is an early trader from Denmark who decided to settle in Nui, never to return to his country. His descendants are now so numerous and spread across the Pacific and further abroad. ■



## News in Brief ...

- The Terminal at the Funafuti International Airport will undergo major renovations to be ready in time for Royal Visit of the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge next month.
- A group of teenagers from Tuvalu will be performing at the Yeosu 2012 Expo to mark the Tuvalu Day at the Expo
- 45 successful candidates (single people as well as couples with children) have been selected for the PAC—NZ, a scheme from New Zealand allowing a certain number of Tuvaluans to enter and settle in New Zealand. The quota for Tuvalu is normally 75, so in fact, Tuvalu did not get the full number that it is normally allocated. This scheme, Pacific Access, allows not only Tuvaluans but other Pacific islands to migrate and start new lives in New Zealand. ■

# Thomas Vincent Carter's Memoirs

## (continued from last Newsletter)

The PT-boats not only brought the seven airmen with them, they also brought back their life rafts. And that's how I got into the act.

When we arrived on Funafuti in February, 1943, Rickenbacker was recovered and back in the States, but his life rafts were still there. And they were being cut up into small pieces and sold or given away as souvenirs. A marine gave me a chunk and I brought it home with me.

Twenty years later, Eddie Rickenbacker was president of Eastern Airlines and I was employed by First National Bank of Oregon in Portland. I wrote him a letter saying that I had this memento of his perilous journey and I offered it to him as a gift. He was delighted to hear from me and he accepted the little piece of raft, which now reposes in the Air Force Museum in Ohio. Someday I'd like to take a trip to that museum, wherever it is, and reminisce about yesteryear.

And that's how I became pen pals and friends with Edward V. Rickenbacker II - America's leading war ace of World War I. A genuine, full-fledged hero. Eddie's influence on our way of life on Funafuti took a pleasant turn a few months later. He made a promise to satisfy a pressing need of the military grunts and swabbies on the island. The Marine commander didn't recognize this need, but when Eddie made a promise, we found out that he kept it. God bless the man.

### THOSE CAN-DO SEABEES

Something I never thought of before was how in the hell did the Seabees get their equipment on the island before we got there? When the Altamaha lay-to outside the reef and sent us into the lagoon through a shallow, very narrow, wild and riotous opening in the reef, there was no room for anything much bigger than our motor whaleboats.

And yet when we got there they already had bulldozers, dump trucks, Cletracs, cherry pickers, bomb trucks, and everything else they needed to build an airstrip, provide housing and mess halls, and a command center.

The lagoon wasn't open to ocean-going vessels until we returned to the island over a year later. It was then, on our second tour of

Funafuti duty, that we saw all the cargo ships and men-of-war in the lagoon. I assume now that the Seabees had blasted a wide, deep channel through the reef allowing the bigger vessels entry.

I can only guess that the Seabees had some heavier-duty landing craft, maybe large barges that were of shallow draft but rugged enough to carry heavy equipment. Maybe the heavy machines were stowed on board ship disassembled, carried piecemeal into the lagoon on barges and then reassembled on the island. Maybe they landed them on the seaward side of the island? Those guys could do almost anything you asked of them. I wish now that I had been nosier and asked a lot of questions when I was there.

There is no way now to accurately reconstruct how this marvelous feat happened, except to believe totally in the Seabee motto: "Can Do." Those older warriors driving caterpillar tractors, rather than tanks, were every bit as essential to our wartime success as were the men who carried rifles and died for Old Glory. And on some island invasions the Seabees did their share of dying too.

It wasn't until I started writing about my grand adventure that I realized that somebody, somehow, made it into that lagoon with a whole lot of equipment and supplies before we showed up. That will probably remain a mystery because I doubt there is any WW II archival information that would clear it up. I'll have to locate me an old-time South

Pacific Seabee, ply him with booze, and get him to tell me some sea stories. (See addendum).



**Thomas Vincent Carter**

I wish I were a more curious person, but I'm not. I now realize that there is so much about Funafuti and its gentle islanders that I know very little about. During our extended vacation, I had endless time on my hands, but instead of learning more, I just lazed around and did nothing.

### BIG POND, BIG FISH

I was swimming in my lagoon one lazy afternoon about 30 yards from shore when a guy on a nearby pier started waving and yelling at me. Being friendly, I waved back and continued my daily swim. He continued to wave his arms back and forth, all the time yelling something unintelligible to me. I think my hearing had begun to fade even then.

Finally, his frantic movements convinced me that something was not right...he wasn't just being friendly. So, I headed for shore at a leisurely stroke. Then I started to feel uneasy, like maybe there might be some danger nearby. My stroke increased rapidly, one or two beats slower than Johnny Weismuller at his Olympic best. I skidded up on shore like a beached whale.

With my heart pumping, I raced out to the end of the pier. The guy was pointing to the part of the lagoon I had just vacated. He was pointing at two large, shadowy shapes about 10 or 12 feet long and they were cruising toward shore along the same angle I had taken. There were no fins showing on the surface; their bodies were totally

*(Continued on page 4)*

under water but I had the very queasy feeling that these were sharks, baby, and big ones.

They nosed around the spot where I had been, then slowly swam away to the deeper part of the lagoon. I can think of no other fish that size that might be in our private swimming hole. Without positive I.D., I can't really say what they were. However, if you asked me today what I saw out there, I would have to quietly and firmly scream: SHARKS, SHARKS, SHARKS!

If that guy had not been out on that pier, I might have been shark food instead of one scared swabbie...brrr, it gives me the shivers even today in 1991. Shortly after that episode, I asked one of the natives if they ever saw sharks in the lagoon. He told me that a young girl had lost an arm to a shark in the first line of breakers, which would have been about ten feet from shore.

I was about 60 or 70 feet out. It took awhile before I would venture out

much farther than the first small, rolling breaker. Even then, I made sure someone was out there swimming near me. Sharks just scare the living heck out of me and they always have. One Samoan word that I made sure I knew immediately was "mong-oh"...the word for shark. I can remember seeing only one shark positively all the time I was in the Pacific. I was standing a four-hour watch on the port sponson when our carrier went right by one about 12 feet long on the surface of the water. It looked like it

*(continued below)*

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might have been sick or injured, but it looked fierce enough to me, sick or healthy.

### THE GREEN PAINT CAPER

After we were relieved of our line duties by the Marine ground crew, it took several weeks before Chief Wood came to the realization that perhaps we weren't earning our pay. In truth, our war effort was nowhere to be found. So, the chief sought out the island commander to find out what we might do that was useful.

What the chief and the Marine colonel came up with was about fifty gallons of green paint. It was their idea that we

could beautify the officers' wooden sleeping quarters by changing their appearance from a drab, bare-board brown to a pleasant, restful green.

Of course, that interfered with our sleeping-in, poker games, dips in the lagoon, and the like. Naturally the chiefs wouldn't be required to paint, but 23 grumbling swabbies would. So grumble we did, and bitch, and moan, and carry on. However, paint we did.

I think we may have even painted one complete hut before it became apparent to one of us that paint spread very poorly in coral sand and other elements. We began painting coral rocks, the bases of coconut palms, and we

painted stretches of coral sand. The sand took an amazing amount of paint, which was literally sucked into the ground.

From the ridge of the first officers' hut, an "inadvertent" shower of green paint blanketed the white chief's hat of "Jug" Jungers. It took very little time at all to go through fifty gallons of green paint, and we had very little to show for our work. Chief Jungers decided the whole operation was one of futility. He never sought out any more paint of any color. We retired quietly but with considerable jubilation to the sanctity of our hammocks and sleepy lagoon. It was a test of will and honor. We won handily.

*(to be continued in our next newsletter)*