

Dr. Faga's 90th Birthday Celebration Service in "El Peteli" Nadi, 17th September, 2017.

I am honored to be able to contribute in a small way to this great celebration of Dr. Faga Panapasa's 90th Birthday. I wish to thank the children and grandchildren of Dr. Faga and Aunty Saverine for the great opportunity to retrace a special relationship between Dr. Faga and my late father.

I am Susana, the second daughter of the late Wilson Fagmaniue Inia. My father's mother, Varea Inia was a younger sister of Pesili Mamao, whose daughter Kiji married Jotama Panapasa and had Dr. Faga and his siblings. My father was Faga's uncle but since Faga and his siblings were much older than my sister, brother and I, we always referred to them, as Uncles and Aunties, out of respect.

After recollecting stories from my late mother and experiences of the past, I am able to put together some important facts that contributed to the special bond between Faga and my late father.

My father was living in Suva with his Aunty Tamara, grandmother of the late Aunty Rutagrere Vaurasi in the late 1930's and early 1940's. When Faga came over from Rotuma, he could have lived there too until my father moved to Davuilevu to teach in the Teacher's College. Faga lived with my father and attended school there. I believe my dad taught Faga to make do with 3 shirts, 2 khaki pants and 1 suluvakataga; wash and wear neatly. We laughed about it when my dad was alive but he said, "We can all survive through the little we have and be very appreciative". Our mother was a classmate of Faga's in Davuilevu and she told us that our dad found Faga a young lad whose willingness to work to perfection is a special trait. To become a perfectionist in whatever you do requires sheer determination, patience, thorough planning and accuracy. My dad encouraged Faga to take up teaching or Medicine and preferred the latter. I believe that my dad gave him all the encouragement he needed and also reminded him of the advice and prayers of his dear parents Kiji and Jotama serving the Lord in Rotuman.

Faga completed his studies, married Saverine Taito of Lopta and established his family but never forgot my dad for he was included in many of the family celebrations whether it be a wedding or birthday in Tamavua.

In 1953 my parents moved to Rotuma and taught in Malhaha District School. My first encounter with Rejieli, Faga's second daughter, was in that school. One day Rejieli was sick at school and my parents took her to rest in my bed at home. My mother said that my reaction was awful, "Who is that dark girl sleeping on my bed? I think she is from Lopta. Her parents are Mekatoa and Manava." My mother replied, "No, she is Faga and Saverine's daughter and dad's mapiga." I did not know Faga then but I also came to know Mapiga Kiji and Jotama and the family in Noatau in the later years.

My father worked in the Rotuma Cooperative Association office in Noatau on Saturdays and often stopped at Maragteu to visit Mapiga Kiji and Jotama and the family. I was often with him and enjoyed the meals and takeaways of red fish, octopus, papai and coconut drink. My mother told us that our dad loved the company of Mapiga Kiji and Jotama and their household not only through blood relationship but because of their mutual love for a peaceful conversation that has grown for years through deep RESPECT.

My dad's final illness began in March 1983 while in Rotuma and could not attend the Senate meetings in Suva. My sister and I visited him in Rotuma and tried to persuade him to come to Suva but he declined.

When his condition deteriorated, the doctor in Rotuma called my sister Betty to inform her that dad needed immediate Medical Evacuation to CWMH but he refused to travel. Betty called Faga who immediately responded kindly to the situation and a mercy flight was arranged. Dad agreed to be in Faga's care in Tamavua Hospital and we were just too grateful.

Until his passing on 25th August, Faga was his doctor, nursed him with his team while Aunty Saverine and Faga's sister Emeli cooked meals and took care of laundry at his home. Our dad's stay in Tamavua allowed us to spend 3 months of quality time with him. Dad died peacefully in his nephew's hospital under his care with Mum and all of us around him. This special bond of Love and Respect that we have with our parents and elders is God's gift and should be nurtured at all times. This was what Faga had with dad for many years. In 1974 I married Aunty Saverine's cousin and my relationship with the Panapasa family became stronger.

Today we celebrate 90 years of a blessed life through God's divine guidance. "Dr. Faga Panapasa is our Life Mentor and Respected Elder", says my sister Betty in her Birthday text message. He has served family and the public with diligence and respect and we thank him sincerely.

Thank you Aunty Saverine for your love, loyalty and support to Uncle Faga throughout the years. Thank you to the children and grandchildren for the love and care shown to your parents/grandparents especially in their old age.

"Happy 90th Birthday Uncle Faga and God bless".