

but 4 of us swam in the pool later. Happy Hour on the deck, dinner in

Restaurant,

18 Nayavu - Had breakfast at Rakiraki - Included with lodging.....

FRIDAY Visited school - Tour & tea. Pouring Rain! To Village sevusevu
saw old students. Baba - Naw turaga ni kara. Apisalome - served
yagonga, Losalini served tea & Samu. Jina & Sai - Grandchildren
Sai & Atu. Wonderful day!

On to Tailivu Hotel ~ 4:30 Food was excellent! Rooms very local.
To Suva!

Start the day at Wananavu with beautiful views and a nice breakfast and then hit the road for Nayavu. And we had a visitor to help with our breakfast





Our drive south took us through more beautiful scenery, a lot of rain, very little sunshine, potholes, many villages and then to Wainibuka Secondary School and Nayavu Village – our homes away from home.

Our first visit was to the school. Wow! Has it changed! The picture below is of the only class building we had 40 years ago, except for two small classrooms made from bamboo that didn't survive the years. Rod's home rooms were the two on the right.

So many memories...





We presented our gifts to the School Manager: Calculators, technical drawing sets and \$200.00. And darned if he didn't present us with a nice plaque.



Careers in Computing
Network engineers - care for an organisation's technological nervous system by ensuring that communication networks operate smoothly and efficiently for user and customers.
Computer Programmer - write, revise, test, debug and maintain the computer program that instruct computers how to carry out certain tasks.
Web/internet engineers - develop web pages and interfaces for an organisation's external or internal websites.
Software developers - research, design, develop, and test software and system found in technology ranging from automobiles, to gaming system, to life saving medical equipment.



Rod's first house 40 years ago. Still stands. It is now green.

On the tour of the computer room – Computer Room!?! We see this sign. 40 years ago, there wasn't even electricity in this school or village.

Below are two pictures. On the left between Rod and Marg is Mrs. Avolonia (Lewaiwaca) Nacolaivalu. Avolonia was one of my students in Nayavu the first year. She passed her Fiji Junior exam! She is such a sweetheart and it was heart-warming to see her after all these years.

Avolonia's husband is the school manager: Nemani Nacolaivalu. He is wearing the blue shirt at bottom right. The principal is in the middle: Avikash Vinay Kumar.



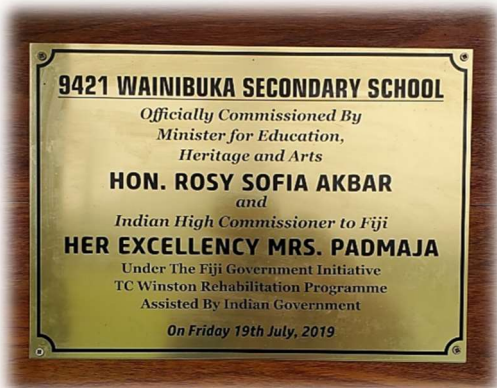
Same house 40 years ago. Same girlfriend too 😊.





And here is where our bure was for most of our stay. All gone now and overgrown. Sort of sad... 😞

Below: Our bure with kitchen house and shower in the background.



After Cyclone Winston, the Indian government helped rebuild the school. But the kids still wear the same green skirts as they did when we taught there.

After our visit to the school, we drove up the new cement driveway (as of last year) to where more of our students and friends were waiting. We presented our sevu-sevu and drank yaqona. Rod thought it was particularly good, others, not so much.



Above: Avisalome (one of Marguerite’s students), Marguerite, Sai (Inia and Sai’s granddaughter). Back: Rod, Inia (best friend in Nayavu 40 years ago) and his wife Sai. When we first got to the village Sai (Inia’s wife) gave me a big long hug and kiss. She was very excited for us to be there. She was also a lot more talkative than she was 40 years ago.



Our Sevu-sevu speech to the Village of Nayavu

Vaka-turanga vua na I tau kei ni vale	To the head of the household
vei ira na tamata ni Nayavu	To the people of Nayavu
Ogo na yagonna lailai	Here is a small amount of yagona.
Na Noda sevu-sevu ki na nomuni vale	Our sevu-sevu to your home
Vinaka vakalevu na sureti keimami ki Nayavu	Thank you for inviting us into Nayavu
Vinaka vakalevu na sureti keimami ki na nomuni itikotiko	Thank you for welcoming us into your home
Vosoti au. Au sega ni vinaka ena vosa vaka Viti	Please excuse me. I am not good at speaking Fijian.
Au sega ni vosa vake viti me vasagavulu yabaki.	I have not spoken Fijian for 40 years.
Ia, Au na vinakata me 'u tovolea	But I would like to try
Imatai e na vosa vaka viti, ka qai vakavalagi	First in Fijian and then in English
Vosoti au. Kevaka au vosa e dua na vosa cala	Please excuse me. If I speak an incorrect word.
Na yacaqu o rod	My name is Rod
Oqo na watiq, na yacana ko Marguerite.	This is my wife, Marguerite.
E dua na vanua talei vei keda o Nayavu	Nayavu is very special to us
Me rua na yabaki, keirau a qasenivuli ena WJS ena vasagavulu na yabaki sa oti	For two years, we were teachers at WJS 40 years ago
Keirau a rarawa sara vakalevu ni biuti Nayavu	We were very sad when we had to leave Nayavu.
Keirau sa lesu tale vaka vulagi, Vata kei na itokani kei na matavuvale: o Blaine, na watina o Edy, o Megan kei o Nora (tacina Marguerite)	We have returned as visitors. With our friends and family: Blaine, his wife Edy, Megan and Nora (Marguerite’s sister)
E totoka Sara na lesu mai ka raica na koro totoka oqo, Kei ira na tamata vinaka era bula eke	It is wonderful to return to see this beautiful village and the great people who live here.
Vinaka vakalevu na nomuni daulomasoli	Thank you for your hospitality



Losalini, another of Marguerite's students, made a nice snack for us.





Samu and Nemani. Samu was one of our students. He was also one of the boys that helped to carry my luggage the first day I arrived in Fiji 40 years ago. When we left on this trip, he could only hug us and leave. He was very upset to see us leave again; I think. He is a good man. The pictures right and below are of Bobo and Marguerite. Bobo was one of Marguerite's students in Form 1 (7th grade). He is now the village head man: Taraga ni Koro.







The story of Epeli Tabua (the big man in the center of the picture): Teachers in Fiji rotated supervising recesses the same way they do here in the states. It was my week to supervise. I was strolling about the school grounds with my usual pack of tagalong Form 1'ers (talk about absolutely super cute little kids! Form 1 Fijian kids are adorable!) We rounded the corner of a building and, bingo! For the life of me I cannot recall the offense, but there he stood, Epeli, in mid-offense – hosepipe-worthy – on my watch...and everyone in the playground witnessed it. I think he hit someone, a girl, his sister perhaps, likely not very hard, and knowing Lanieta, she probably started it. But there were strict rules – on my watch, anyway – about hitting each other, especially girls. It was a line I had drawn that simply could not be crossed: Master Rod does not allow hitting. Fijian boys tended to hit girls and sometimes it wasn't playful. I am not sure if it was a cultural thing or not, but I never once saw domestic violence in Nayavu Village, so I think it was just boys being boys or some such thing? Still, I had my rules.



Epeli Tabua 40 years ago

I could have turned my back and played ignorant – I was (still am) pretty good at that. But the witnesses also witnessed my witnessing of the event. I was stuck. “Epeli, come to the staff room with me please,” I ordered.

The Lali (hollow log that the Head Boy drummed to signal class changes) proclaimed an end to recess. Teachers walked out of the staff room as Epeli and I walked in. I borrowed a hosepipe – hosepipes were to Fijian schools what paddles were to schools when I was a kid – from one of the teachers that remained. I walked Epeli to my “desk” (just another student chair), leaned against it, folded my arms and asked, “Why did you do [whatever it was he did]?”

Silence. Nothing. Naught, but a squirming little boy, twisting himself so hard that I thought his bare feet were going to dig a hole into the floor. He stared at my feet, out the window, at the bookshelf, the other teachers, his eyes darting to each and every thing in that building except at me. “Epeli, I want you to look at me and tell me why you did that.” The other teachers were watching; I could feel them – Master Rod’s going to beat Epeli, the chief’s son. (That – beating the chief’s son – never crossed my mind, by the way, until the writing of this story. I wonder now if Seva – the chief – and I would have remained friends? But that didn’t enter into the equation, but Epeli, being my something of a little brother, did.) I felt the stares of the other teachers. No, this is between Epeli and me, not them. “Come with me outside,” I ordered the little boy.

I led Epeli to the far, bush-facing side of the school building. No windows, no way to see unless someone was trying to watch. I made sure no one was. Epeli leaned against the building. Now his bare feet WERE digging holes in the red soil. He pressed himself against the gray bricks, trying to pass himself into them, through them, to escape Master Rod, his dad's friend, his big brother.

Then something clicked, or had already clicked and was just making its way into my conscious. I wasn't going to hit this boy; I was going to offer him my hand. There was no reason to try to pry or beat a reason for his actions out of him. This kid was hurting: his brother, his dad's buddy, was going to cane him. He was already being tortured. That was enough. Resigned to our fate together, I asked him in my best Fijian, "Epeli, can you promise me that you will never do that again? Can I trust you?"

He looked at me with that little bit of moist hope in his eyes (eyes tell it all, don't they?). "Io, saka." (Yes, sir.)

"Lako. Iko gone tagane vinaka," (Go. Be a good boy) I believed him.

"Vinaka, saka." (Thank you, sir). Epeli ran off to his next class and I stood there for a few minutes letting the moisture in my own eyes dry before I went back to the staff room.

Interestingly, this reminds me of the time I went fishing with my dad when I was five. I first went solo, made a big mess of things – a spanking-worthy mess, in fact, as five-year old boys are prone to do – and THEN with dad. I ended that story with these words: sometimes when a little boy crosses the line, rather than giving him a whippin', you offer him your hand and pray that he takes it.

The next year I was the Form 3 and 4 math teacher. Marguerite was with me that year. She taught science. The best student in both of our Form 3 classes was, yep, you guessed it, Epeli. He was already a good boy, but now he was an exemplary student – the year before he had struggled academically. A switch had been flipped. Epeli had taken someone's hand – probably several, knowing his parents and his village – and I would like to think that at least one of those hands was mine.



Epeli's wonderful family: Back left: Seva and his wife Paulina. Middle Right: Epeli. Front left: Lanietta.

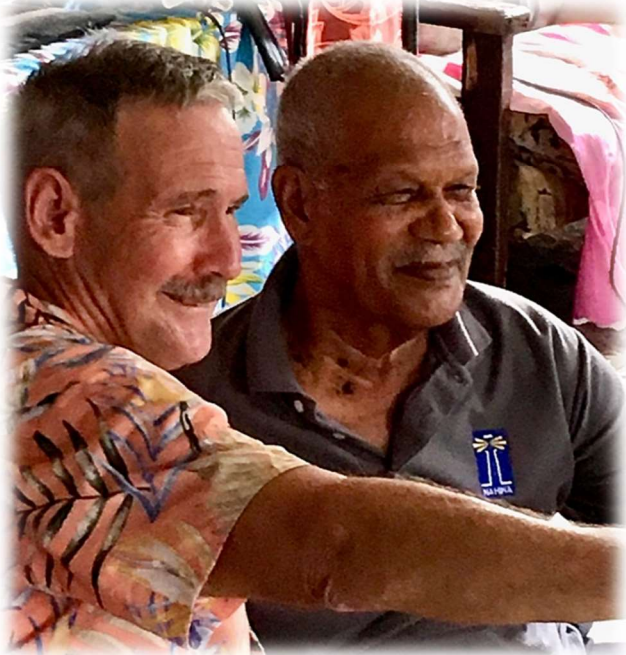


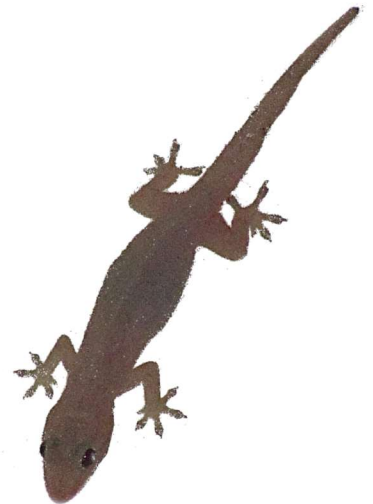
And no, I have never been able to cross my legs in that easy way the Fijians do. I don't bend that way.

Left: Inia's sister in orange. Inia's grandson, Atu, between Marguerite and Nora.



Sitting around the tanoa (wooden bowl from which yaqona is served).







Computer geniuses







Nayavu Village

We bid “moce vaka lailai” (goodbye for a little while) with a promise to return in the coming years. We will, God willin’ and the creek don’t rise. We had a great trip and it was wonderful to see our old students and friends. Time had stood still for us, I do think, and returning 40 years later was happy-sad. Happy to see our village and school still there, both thriving, with our students now the leaders of the community. Sad because, well, I guess you can never really go home again; things change whether you want them to or not. We will miss the friends who have passed: Seva, Paulina, Lanietta, Nanise, principals Mo and Qele, Khalik and all the others. But we will return to those who have continued the good name of Wainibuka Secondary School and Nayavu Village, Fiji (Inia & Sai, Samu, Bobo, and others)...and the little ones who continue our journeys for us.



That evening, we went on to Tailevu and the Tailevu Hotel. It was at this hotel, nearly 41 years ago, that Rod made his “move” and kissed Marguerite while we were both sitting on the steps to the hotel. A re-enactment of that first kiss and the steps.



Dinner at the Tailevu Hotel was very good and we were the only customers in the whole place! Talk about first class treatment!

