

Tuvalu Philatelic Bureau

Newsletter

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Newsletter going Online!

- This is our first newsletter that will be going online on www.stampsotuvalu.com
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- To help us improve our newsletter, your feedback would be greatly appreciated!

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www.friendsoftuvalu.tv
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State Funeral of the late former Governor General of Tuvalu, Reverend Sir Filoimea Telito, GCMG, MBE

July 11th, 2011 was a very grim day for the nation when one of its most beloved was called to rest.

He was laid to rest in Funafuti on the 14th July 2011.

Reverend Sir Filoimea Telito was a man known for his quiet and humble demeanor, yet when he delivered his sermons, the soft-spoken kindly and unassuming man would captivate his audience with his persona and firm voice that would reverberate throughout the church.

It was clear to see his delight in delivering God's word and message to the people, and it was without any doubt that he was someone with great faith, commitment and compassion.

Reverend Sir Filoimea Telito, or "Filo" as he is fondly known by everyone in Tuvalu, was born on the island of Vaitupu where he grew up and attended primary school. He later attended King George V Secondary School in Tarawa, Kiribati.

Reverend Sir Telito's qualifications include a Christina Workers Diploma from Ardmere Teachers College in New Zealand, a Diploma of Education from the University of the South Pacific in Fiji, and a Bachelor of Divinity degree from the Pacific Theological College in Fiji.

He started out as a teacher in profession and taught in Motufoua



**The Late Reverend Sir Filoimea Telito
19th March 1945—11th July 2011**

Secondary School in Vaitupu, Tuvalu, and later taught in a primary school in Nauru.

It was also while working in Nauru that he would meet his future wife, Pepapeti.

After completing theological studies, Reverend Sir Telito returned to Vaitupu to serve as Pastor at Motufoua Secondary School.

He then worked at the *Ekalesia Kelisiano Tuvalu* (EKT) headquarters in Funafuti for a year before his appointment as Principal of Fetuvalu Secondary School.

He later served as Pastor of the EKT congregation in Suva, Fiji.

Rev Sir Telito subsequently became Principal for Motufoua

Secondary School where he worked until the Government of the day offered him the position of Governor General of Tuvalu.

Never one to shy of duties he was called up to, Reverend Sir Filoimea Telito took office of Governor General of Tuvalu in April 2005.

In 2007, he received his knighthood, the Grand Cross of St Michael and St George.

In March 2010, he vacated the office of Governor General.

He was later appointed President of the *Ekalesia Kelisiano Tuvalu* in September 2010, a position he held up to the time he was called to rest.

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State Funeral of Rev Sir Filoimea Telito

"Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God"

Psalms 90: 1 & 2, NRSV



Above: Pepapeti (right) saying her last farewells to her late husband. With her are her grandson (middle) and son, Telito (far left)

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When Reverend Sir Telito served as Governor General, he was taken ill and had to receive treatment in New Zealand. Tuvaluans knew he had been gravely ill at that time, yet the public never fully knew the extent of his illness. On the outset, he was always the same kind

soft-spoken man everyone loved and it seemed everyone took for granted that our beloved Filo was invincible; now that he is no longer in our midst, we realize that like a true soldier of Christ, he never let his pain hinder his service to God and to the nation. He may have

departed from this life but his legacy lives on. Rest in Peace Filo.

Reverend Sir Filoimea Telito is survived by his wife, Pepapeti Telito, two daughters (Silaati and Filiamata), an adopted daughter (Fuapepe), one son (Telito), and five grandchildren. ■

Photos taken during State Funeral of the late Reverend Sir Filoimea Telito



Above: The bereaved family at the Tausoa Lima Falekaupule, receiving EKT Vice-President (far right). Fourth from right is Pepapeti, wife of the late Rev Sir Filoimea Telito, flanked by her 3 daughters (far left, second from left, and 3rd from right), daughter-in-law (3rd from left), son (4th from left) and son-in-law (2nd from right)



Above: The casket bearing the remains of the late Rev Sir Filoimea Telito arrives at the Fetu Ao Lima Church from the Tausoa Lima Falekaupule, carried by pastors of the EKT church



Above: The casket, carried by policemen, arriving at the grave site from the Fetu Ao Lima church, followed by a procession comprising of family, friends and colleagues of the late Rev Sir Filoimea Telito



Above: At the grave after the funeral and burial of Rev Sir Filoimea Telito, close family and friends of the late Rev Sir Filoimea Telito relax and reminisce

Thomas Vincent Carter's Memoirs (continued from last Newsletter)

Unfortunately for us and the natives, there weren't "Funa" bananas on the island when we got there. There were only a few trees left, so in a sense the name was a misnomer, namely because the Seabees bulldozed the main part of the island flat in order to create our airstrip. Those few surviving trees were off-limits to the military and were guarded like hawks by the native population. As bad luck would have it, the airstrip was where the banana groves used to be.

There was another island just to the south of us, separated by a narrow sea channel and several small, uninhabited islets. It is not on any map of the Ellice chain, but the natives called it Funafala. I have identified it on the small map that I drew of the Funafuti lagoon. Perhaps at one time it was just another part of Funafuti, just cut apart by water, especially at high tide.

To the natives, Funafala was noted for "plenty of" Fala trees, from which they made the roofs and sides of their open-air homes. The leaves of the Fala tree were about 12 inches wide and maybe three or four feet long. The name Fala most likely gave birth to the name Fale (fah-lay) which is what the natives called their thatched homes. The islet of Funafala was to take on a much more important role in the lives of the Funafuti natives when the war reached us later. I have a hunch the Fala trees were actually Palmyra palms, noted in most tropical countries as a source of homebuilding materials. The Fala leaves would be tied to a gable frame of tree limbs, much like we would shingle a house. I don't know how many courses of these leaves they would put on, but by the time they were through they had a thick, overlapping roof of Fala leaves that was totally waterproof.

After our first bombing raid by the Japanese, all the natives were sent to live out the war on Funafala where they were safe from air attack. Funafala had no airstrip or military significance, so it was never bombed.

When we first got there, the Funafuti natives told us that the Japanese had landed on their island sometime in early or mid-1942 with the thought of establishing a base there. But after a look around they decided the narrow atoll was not a defensible base, so they packed up and headed 700 miles north to Tarawa in the Gilbert islands. There, they put all their eggs into one impregnable basket -- a coral and coconut log stronghold that they later defended with vigor and blood almost to the last man.

Later that same year, on October 2, 1942, a U.S. Marine landing force from Samoa, under the command of Colonel George F. Good, USMC, secured the island without opposition. I would guess this was the same Marine colonel who commanded the base when we arrived, and who later gave me permission to leave the island on the "first available transportation." The Marines relieved the allied garrison on Funafuti--one lieutenant and one corporal of the New Zealand Army.

The Seabees who accompanied our occupying forces came ashore right after and quickly carved out an airstrip for a squadron of Marine fighter pilots. They landed their Grumman F4F Wildcat fighters practically on the heels of the Seabee bulldozers. They couldn't operate their planes, however, without ground service personnel who didn't arrive until March, 1943.

To the rescue of the Marine fighter pilots came the U.S.S. Altamaha, which "just happened to be passing by" in early February, en route from the Fiji islands.

The occupation of Funafuti was not publicly announced or even generally known in the Navy until April, 1943. Secrecy was so well maintained that the Japanese apparently did not discover it until we made our big raid on Nauru. Then, either by patrol bomber or by submarine observation they realized that we had quietly started building a naval base there. It does seem odd to me that the Japs

were unaware of our presence in the Central Pacific for six whole months. Maybe U.S. naval intelligence underestimated the Japs, who were a lot tougher and smarter than we ever admitted to.

Home, Sweet Home!

The Altamaha Detachment set up camp in a small clearing in the coconut groves right next to the lagoon and a few hundred feet up the beach from the small pier where our whaleboats had landed. With the help of some Seabees, we erected seven large army tents in the shape of an oval in the area where we had been assigned. The tents went up quickly and we were billeted four men to a tent, except for the two chiefs who had a tent all of their own. We were given fold-down canvas army cots to which brackets were affixed to hold up mosquito netting. A small flat mattress and a pillow completed our sleeping gear.

The Seabees showed us how to fold the tent sides up into a trough to collect rainwater. They also provided us with 55-gallon gasoline drums that had the tops cut out, eight per tent, two for each tent corner. We were to discover that water was a scarce commodity on the island, and when it rained we had to collect as much as we could. One torrential downpour of 1/2 hour or so would provide each tent with about 450 gallons of water for washing clothes, showers, and shaving. That had to last until the next rainfall, which might be a month away. It didn't rain often in the Central Pacific, but when it did it came down in torrents--around 100 inches annually.

Drinking water was distilled from the sea and was dispensed from lister bags that hung from trees all along the encamped areas of the island. Sometimes the equipment that changed seawater into potable drinking water couldn't

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Thomas Vincent Carter

Thomas Vincent Carter's Memoirs (cont.)

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keep up with the demand. So the lister bags contained water that was still moderately salty to the taste. With the average temperature between 80-85 degrees, thirst was always a problem early on, until we got more and better distilling gear. I'm sure the natives also drank our water, but before we got there they had to rely on a large coral cistern that collected rainwater from the roof of their church.

Within a few weeks our camp was neat and tidy, as sailors are inclined to be. We had

our hammocks strung between coconut trees, the circular clearing was swept clean of debris, and was packed down hard and level. Someone had put up a bulletin board on a tree and someone else had scrounged up what looked like a long picnic table with benches. Each tent had been issued a kerosene lamp, and we had one extra over our table. Break out the cards--what began then was probably the longest continuous poker game in history. The whole group had maybe \$2,500 in cash that was won and lost in its entirety virtually every night.

Because we didn't get paid for eight months, everyone played the game on I.O.U.'s. In one 5-card stud game I lost \$400 on a single hand. With nothing wild, my four tens lost to my buddy's four aces. My four tens were all showing, and when he raised my \$100 bet I knew I was doomed. He had three aces and a small card showing...and the case ace in the hole. Impossible, I said to myself. But true. Thanks to the I.O.U. system, I was able to get back into a later game and won a couple hundred dollars back that staked me to entry in many more exciting poker games.

(To be continued in our next newsletter)

Tuvalu Philatelic Bureau

Tuvalu Philatelic Bureau was established in 1975 to deal with all stamp issues of the newly created territory. The bureau is run by a Tuvaluan manager ably assisted by some 11 local staff well known to existing customers in 60 countries worldwide for their courteous and efficient handling of all aspects of the bureau's affairs.

The popularity of Tuvalu stamps is reflected by the catalogue values of obsolete Definitive and Commemorative issues.



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State Funeral for the Minister of Natural Resources, Hon Isaia Taeaia Italeli

Another tragedy struck our small island nation within a week after the state funeral of a former Governor General, Rev Sir Filoimea Telito.

The Minister for Natural Resources, Honorable Isaia Taeaia Italeli was found dead in his hotel room in Samoa where he was attending a meeting.

His remains were flown in on Sunday 24th July 2011 where public viewing and a formal Government ceremony took place at the Vaiaku Falekaupule.

His remains were then taken to the Nui

Falekaupule, *Lotonui*, for public viewing. Hon Italeli is from the island of Nui.

Following the public viewing at the Lotonui, a more private occasion for close family and friends took place at the Prime Minister's private local hall known as *Te Tamafine ote Namo*.

Hon Italeli's remains were then taken to the Patrol Boat, *Te Mataili*, for the final leg of Hon Italeli's voyage to his home island of Nui where he was laid to rest the following day, 25th July 2011.

Hon Italeli was 47 years of age at the time of



his untimely demise.

He is survived by his wife, Pelenike, three daughters and a son.

Further details and photos regarding Hon Italeli's state funeral will be featured in our next newsletter.

TUVALU PHILATELIC BUREAU

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Flora and Fauna - Horses of the World

Release Date: 31st August 2011

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