

**THE DIFFERENT WORLDS OF
THOMAS ALEXANDER STOKOE**

HISTORY 397

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Chapter 1,	Two different Worlds, 1938 – 1951	3 – 6
Chapter 2,	Island in the Sun, 1952 – 1959	7 – 13
Chapter 3,	Opportunity Knocks, 1959 – 1965	14 – 18
Chapter 4,	New Horizons, 1965 – 1968	19 – 23
Chapter 5,	“A Lamp Unto the Youth,” 1968 – 1982	24 – 32
Chapter 6,	From Here to Eternity, summary and conclusions	33 – 35
	Notes	35
	Bibliography	36

CHAPTER 1
TWO DIFFERENT WORLDS

1938 - 1951



Tommy, about age three, remained with his mother in Aramoho, Wanganui, New Zealand while his dad was at war.



Tom Senior served in the New Zealand Regiment, artillery Division during World War 11.

“You have been called to serve your country,” Tom’s commanding officer told his men. “Many of you will not return, but go and do your duty.” These were the worlds that passed through Tom’s mind as he said “Good bye” and kissed Bella and their year old son at the front gate of their Aramoho home. The year was 1942, little Tommy would turn five and be in school before he would see his father again. Tom Senior would see action in New Caledonia, the Solomon Islands, Egypt and Italy before returning to New Zealand in 1946.

Tom Stokoe was the son of a Thomas Stokoe and the grandson of a Thomas Stokoe. He was born in Manchester England, June 24, 1910 to Thomas and Ada Annie Dunn Stokoe. Both his father and his grandfather had been chemists. Grandfather had a shop for many years in Kirby Lonsdale, Northumberland, the northernmost county in England. His father worked as a chemist’s assistant in the city of Manchester. The Stokoes had been in England for hundreds of years—from the time that an early ancestor crossed the North Sea from Denmark and settled in northern England. The name “Stokoe” was taken by this ancestor which means “Isle of Sticks” or man from the Isle of Sticks (Denmark).¹

Young Tom would never know his prominent grandfather for the old man had died on December 30th, 1896. Apparently he was deeply religious, charitable and kind to the people of the community for the funeral notice in the Lancaster Guardian read, in part:

A most useful member of the little community, he was ever ready to forego his own ease and convenience to assist his neighbours in sickness, and his demise will be felt,

especially by the poorer among the inhabitants. Mr. Stokoe was a prominent member of the local Wesleyan body, and for many years had given his service as a local preacher in the neighbourhood. He was closely connected with the Kirby Lonsdale Lodge of Rechabites, the successful juvenile branch of which he was mainly instrumental in forming. At the time of his death he filled the important post of Actuary of the Saving's Bank, in addition to that of an overseer of the Poor for the township. Deceased had been twice married, and leaves a family by each wife. . .2

Tom's mother, Ada, lived only a few weeks after the birth of her son; she died August 10, 1910 leaving three children, six-week-old Tom, a nine-year-old daughter Betty and a twelve-year-old daughter, Lilly. Tom and his sister were raised by their widowed father. They attended Manchester schools and of the British educational system Tom writes in a letter date August 16, 1982,

Headmasters came around at 9:00 a.m. every day to beat unruly boys with canes, teachers naming the ones due to be punished, and beating the hands of others from time to time with leather straps which fringed ends. All those brought up under that system can still read, write and calculate which is apparently more than some high school students can do today.3

Although quite young, Tom has some vivid memories of life in Manchester during World War 1, in the same letter he writes,

In 1917 I saw a hospital train pull into London Road station at Manchester. The dead were carried out covered with white sheets, the wounded on stretchers and the walking wounded looking surprisingly cheerful and glad to be home and on crutches. On the platform set a group of Armenian refugees, survivors of the Turkish Massacre in Anatolia and whose great grandsons are now the ones shooting Turks and setting off bombs.4

At the age of 16, Tom left England to live with an uncle and aunt in Switzerland near the frontier. The aunt was a sister of his long-deceased mother. Tom worked three looms as a weaver in his uncle's factory but was not allowed any pay as he was a foreigner. Most everyone in the factory spoke German.

About 1927, he returned to Manchester where he worked in a warehouse and then spent two years in London. The world-wide depression of the thirties brought hardship to everyone. Nobody had any money and millions were unemployed. Tom worked on two farms during this time without pay; he received food only.

In 1934, at the age of 24, Tom left England for Australia. He lived and worked in Australia and New Zealand for the next four years. In 1938, he took a trip to Samoa.

Tradition has it that while in Samoa, Tom went up to a waterfall where several Samoan girls were swimming. Calling out in a loud voice he asked, "Is there anyone up there who wants to

marry me?” The girls looked around to see a blond, blue-eyed 28-year-old Englishman gazing at them with a crooked smile.

Several of them blushed and giggled. Some laughed in amusement, but a 24-year-old Samoan-English girl with flashing dark eyes and a round face stood apart from the others, “I will!” she called back boldly. Her name was Isabella Crichton.⁵

“Bella” Crichton was born in the village of Tufutafoe on the island of Savaii in Western Samoa on November 8, 1915. Her mother was the third wife of Alexander Sane Crichton. The family were Methodists. She was only three years of age when her mother, father and baby brother died in the world-wide flu epidemic of 1918. Bella was raised by her grandmother Faitala until she reached the age of ten when her half-sister Lisi came for a visit. Lisi told her grandmother that it was better for Bella to go to school where she could learn English than to remain with her. They agreed and Lisi took Bella and enrolled her in the Mormon school in Viola, Savaii. While there Bella was baptized into the Mormon church by an Elder Stone. Later, she spent a year living with relatives in Hawaii and returned to Samoa in 1938.



Bella while attending Viola School in Samoa

Bella’s sister, Louisa, loved to tell her the story of their grand-father, William Crichton. Born in Glasgow, Scotland in June, 1828, family tradition had it that as a young boy he and his little sister enjoyed going to the train station to watch the trains come and go. His mother admonished him to take care of his small sister. He promised to watch her and one morning, set out with her to enjoy their favorite pastime. That day tragedy struck. In a careless moment she slipped and fell beneath the wheels of a train. The boy watched in horror as his sister was crushed. Shocked and afraid, he recalled the words of his mother, “Take care of your little sister.” He decided never to return home. He ran away and never returned. He hired on a

sailing vessel as a cabin boy and spent several years aboard ships sailing around the world. Tradition has it that he became a “Blackbirder” or pirate that trafficked in the sale of slaves in the South Pacific. In his mid-twenties he sailed to Samoa, married a native girl, Uputaua Falemalu Lesa, and settled down to raise a family of four sons and two daughters.⁶

Alexander Sane Crichton, Isabella’s father, was his fourth and youngest son. Several of Alexander’s children, being one fourth Scottish, had red hair and red beards. Many Crichton descendants were marked with traces of their Scottish heritage—although half or one fourth Scottish, some had European features and red hair, like their Scottish progenitor.

After that rather unusual first meeting, Tom and Bella got to know one another better. Tom eventually returned to New Zealand where he worked on the South Island on tobacco and fruit farms or at sheep stations. Bella followed him to New Zealand and lived with her sister in Wanganui. The couple married on April 1, 1939 in Wanganui. *“God married after Chamberlain said: ‘Peace in our time’—biggest swindle ever and a tragic one,”* Tom Senior recalls.⁷

During the war years, Bella and her young son lived in Aramaho by the railroad station. Bella worked in a woolen mill. She and Tommy often visited Bella’s sister Louisa and once a week she took Tommy to a movie. Perhaps the earliest realization Tommy had of being different from the full Caucasian kids came during his early years in Aramaho.

“On one occasion, as mum was playing tennis, two kids came up to me and said: ‘Nigger, nigger pull the trigger. Off it goes, Bang! Bang!’ They taunted me. I ran and told mum who came and slapped their faces. Crying, they left saying they’d tell their mother. Mum’s response was, ‘You go and tell her and when she comes I’ll beat her up!’ On one special festival occasion where children wore costumes mum dressed me up as a Samoan chief. She was proud of her heritage and wanted to share that heritage with me.”

Tommy’s favorite pastime in New Zealand was going to the horse races. He loved it. Sometimes he would go with his father. Sometimes with his mum, auntie, uncle or his cousins. He was five when he became interested in horse races. As he grew older he became somewhat of an expert on horses and jockeys studying them intently and often picking winners. He even had marbles named after race horses and would spend hours rolling his marbles along the floor and calling the race as though he were the announcer.

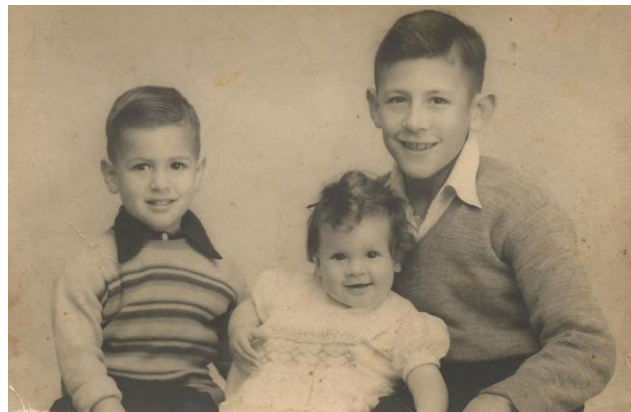
He soon became a fanatic and his relatives consulted him for advice on which horse to back. They even asked his mother if they could take him to the race track with them. Most of the time Tommy was able to pick the winner. One day Bella took him to the race track. “Which horse will win this race?” she asked. He had studied the horses carefully and said, “It will be a photo finish between Gay Coronack and Foxtavia,” he told her.

“I can only bet on one, Tommy. Now you’ve got to decide which one it will be?” Tommy wasn’t sure but with his mother’s continuous harassment blurted out, “Gay Coronack!”

In a photo finish Foxtavia won by a nose and Gay Coronack came in second. “You silly fool,” said his mother. “Why did you say Gay Coronack?” Now I’ve lost ten shillings.”

In July of 1947 a second son was born, Leo Edwin Stokoe. Tommy thought his new baby brother ugly because he had no teeth. A year later in 1948 when Tommy was eight, the family moved from Aramaho to Westmere -- out in the country.

Father wanted a farm so he purchased a fourteen acre one in Westmere some twenty miles away from Aramaho. We planted potatoes mainly, had lots of chickens and a cantankerous cow named Tiddlewinks—so named by my father. I didn’t like Tiddlewinks. She planted her foot in the bucket whenever I milked her and more milk ended on the floor than in the bucket. As we moved in the middle of the school year here, I had to finish the year out at Aramoha. I’d board the train daily with my bicycle then pedal to school repeating the process coming home. The next year my father decided I should forego Aramaho and attend the country school, Westmere. This was a more convenient school for me as it was close and I could ride a school bus.⁹



Leo, Lilan and Tommy

A sister, Lilian Margaret, was born September 2, 1949. A year later, when Tommy was ten years old, the family moved to a newly built home in Castlecliff by the sea. It was a sandy area, although gardens managed to grow, and was quite windy. It seemed that a head wind was always blowing when Tommy pedaled to school. Tom Sr. worked in a freezing works painting sheep skins on an assembly line to cure them. A pipe line carried blood and guts from the abbaters, flowing into the sea underneath the wharf, making it an excellent spot for catching herring which Tommy and his mother did frequently.

But Tom Sr. was not altogether satisfied with life in New Zealand. He longed for a change. Leo had asthma and the cold climate seemed to compound the problem. Doctors advocated moving to a warmer climate. Taxes were on the increase. Neither the National nor the Labor party appeared efficient and a disenchantment with the general social dogma led Tom to take action. The family would move to Western Samoa.

CHAPTER 2
ISLAND IN THE SUN
1952 - 1959



Photo taken at Walter Jahnke party on June 25, 1960

Tom and Bella moved their family to Western Samoa in April, 1952 and established a plantation. Bella leased 40 acres of thick jungle from the government Crown Estates and began to clear the land and plant bananas and cacao for commercial use. The effort eked out a living but was not overly successful and in December, 1961 most of the family relocated to Hawaii.

The move to Samoa had a dramatic effect upon the children. Lilian and Leo, being quite young, (age three and five) adapted quickly and were raised as Samoan children. For Tom, age eleven, it took a little longer to learn the language, culture and customs.

When God created man he did so by stirring up a large batch of cookies. . . so goes an old Samoan legend. Putting the first batch into the oven, he set the temperature, then settled back and relaxed. Removing this batch he discovered they were all pale and white. "Ah, undercooked," he said, "I'll try again." This time he left the next batch in much longer and took a nap while waiting. However, he overslept and awoke to the aroma of something burning. Opening the oven he discovered the cookies black and crisp. "Overdone," he muttered, "I had better try again." He carefully stirred the clay, molded it into figures of men and women and delicately laced them in the oven. When the air was filled with a beautiful smell he opened the oven. Lo and behold, there were the most beautiful cookies he had ever seen—the brown or Polynesian. 10

Tom, at 11, was neither white nor brown. He had the dark hair of his mother, her oval brown eyes and light olive complexion, but his features resembled those of his English father. A faint red streak in his dark hair was barely visible in the brilliant sunshine, a genetic token from his Scottish great grandfather who had arrived on these inlands over a century before. Tom found comparing himself to his Samoan cousins a painful experience for they were big, tough and husky while he was built slight, to the point of being skinny. In fact, he was so skinny that the girls called him worm. "Come and walk with us worm," they called as he set out for school each morning.

In New Zealand, Tom had been considered a good sprinter. He had taken pride in the fact that he usually won the class races. In Samoa, the teachers lined him up with the girls, and to his horror, several of them beat him in the footraces. The polite, reserved society of New Zealand seemed worlds away from the rough and tough, primitive open society that Tom found himself part of.

Still he was determined to adapt. He had sung in the Salvation Army as a five-year-old in New Zealand so when his teacher in Standard 1 asked if he would like to sing a song for the class, he went before the class and sang the only Samoan song he knew, one that four Samoan boys had taught him. The audience roared with laughter. His performance was obviously a hit. He raised the tempo and belted out the last few lines of the song. It was only later that he learned that his new friends had played a joke on him. They had taught him a questionable song called "Tui tui ma sogi sogi" which translated meant stick your finger up your butt and sniff, sniff, it smells so wonderful and good. The four friends had to bend over and Miss Enari, their teacher, belted them with a big barber strap as hard as she could.

When Bella and the children first arrived in Samoa, they stayed in Lotopa with Joe Crichton, Bella's uncle. Within a month, Bella had established a fishing business on the opposite side of the island. She set out chicken wire nets and caught fish to sell.

Later she was able to lease 40 acres from the government and began developing the virgin land by paying laborers with home brew. Tom remained in New Zealand where he worked as a lumber jack and sent money to support the family.

Bella hired Samoan workers to clear the land, cut trees and plant bananas, taro and cacao. Although Tommy was only eleven, he learned to cut down trees and plant bananas. Eventually, the banana crop began to provide the family with an income and Tom Sr. was able to join them. But times were hard as the family had to depend totally on the plantation for their support.

They lived in an open Samoan hut thatched with coconut leaves along with the rats, mosquitos and lizards. Tom remembers shooting lizards off the ceiling with elastic bands and hearing the rats scurrying around at night as the family slept. Everyone slept under mosquito nets which provided limited protection against pesky insects. Each morning, Tom would discover several mosquitos laden with blood inside his net. One morning he awoke to find that

an infected sore on his leg had been nibbled at by rats that had gnawed their way through the netting and bandages during the night.

Still Samoa was a paradise for an adventurous boy. Tom and brother Leo made shanghais (slingshots) and went regularly to hunt birds and flying foxes. Their mother, sometimes went with them into the forest to hunt Samoan pigeons. There were three kinds in those days: Beautiful big ones with green backs and pink chests, twice the size of regular pigeons (Lupe); a very rare, dark red pigeon with a knob on its nose and a crooked beak (Manuma), and a blue-black variety (Fiaui).

A favorite game of the Stokoe brothers was to take a young rooster up into the forest where they would tie a string to its leg and let it crow hoping to attract a wild rooster. The two would then fight until the wild rooster would become entangled in the string and Tommy would shoot him with his 12 gage shot gun.

Another pleasant pastime was shooting flying foxes, large Samoan fruit bats. These were excellent when fried. Lilian and Leo sometimes ate juicy fat white grubs which they found in decayed trees but Tommy never cared for them.

The family always had plenty of bananas and taro to eat. Also chicken, eggs, herring, sardines and New Zealand corned beef constituted many a meal. Although the Stokoes were better off in comparison to the natives, providing a living was a constant struggle as they were totally dependent on the success of the plantation. Yet there were three meals a day in the Stokoe home whereas the natives only ate one or two. Often, one can of corn beef provided the Sunday stew for the family and all of the workers that helped on the plantation.

Because Tom Stokoe was white and an employer, he was considered privileged in Samoan society. Tommy found that he received some benefits because of his station. He was never asked to cook when he lived away from home with Samoans as he was the "son of a white man," and considered "upper-class" by his native friends. It was the custom for Samoan teenage boys to help prepare meals.

Western Samoa was a British territory and the system of education was patterned after that of New Zealand. Tom soon learned that the school, as well as society expected more from the son of a white man. "Being the son of an Englishman, I did not fit into the total Samoan sphere of influence," he recalls. "But, by the age of 19, after eight years among the Samoans, I considered myself one of them."

As the plantation was some twenty-five miles from Tommy's school in Apia, Tommy lived with Samoan friends during the school year and returned to the plantation on weekends. At school everybody wore uniforms. His was a yellow shirt with a badge on the pocket and short pants. Some of the boys wore lava-lavas. It was a disgrace if the clothes were wrinkled and if a button was missing, the student was sent home from school. The British system

practiced corporal punishment—students were caned if they broke one or more of the major rules or failed to show proper respect for teachers.



L-R: Mataio Fiamalua; Miss Glenn, the daughter of Headmaster Mr. Glenn; Tele Frost, Toia Fiti and Tommy Stokoe. All students at Samoa College, Vaivase, Upolu, Western Samoa.

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Tommy’s English teacher required students to write essays. Tom worked hard on these assignments, but failed to receive a mark better than 1 (out of a possible 10) on several essays he handed in. Determined to get a high mark, he wrote what he considered a masterpiece. Then penned, “Are you satisfied?” at the bottom of his paper. When the teacher read the remark, she had him go to her husband and get caned for being “cheeky.”

There were seven classes and if a student flunked any one of the seven, he had to repeat the entire school years. Students were ranked rather than graded. It was usually the

Samoan minister's children that received the highest rank. Tom normally found himself somewhere in the middle.

By the time Tommy was 16 he was a prefect (school officer.) Every second Friday the school had an assembly. Samoans loved skits, especially comedy that was bilingual. The entire school would assemble for the programs. The classes marched to the assembly had in platoons like in the army and if anyone was out of step or talked in rank they were caned. Students marched into the hall and stood at attention until the head master entered, "Good morning, Mr. Smith," the students would chant together. ""Good morning students. Be seated," he would respond. Students sat cross-legged on mats on the floor.

It was customary to begin an assembly by reading a few passages from the bible. The prefects took turns reading the passages, Tom recalls.

I will never forget the day it was my turn to read. I spoke both English and Samoan, I wasn't fluent at either, so when I started to read it was haltingly. I was nervous and scared, I stammered and stuttered. I didn't have a big voice.

Getting into rank to march back to class my Geography teacher, who was a very good teacher, sort of half smiling said to me, "Before you have the audacity to insult the good Lord's book again, learn how to read!"

I half chuckled, but I knew he was right. I decided from that day forward no one would ever say that to me again. I wanted to read well. 11

The students in Form 4 performed a short cutting from "MacBeth." Tom was not in that class. Tom's opportunity to perform came when the school needed two emcees for a variety show. Tom was chosen to be the English Emcee and Fiafia was selected to speak in Samoan as the other emcee. The Samoans didn't think much of Tom's scripted jokes, except in the audience was the crew of a U.S. Naval ship. The Americans laughed at his jokes and so it was a positive experience for him.

Despite his interest in performing, Tom was painfully shy and self-conscious of the fact that he was skinny. Although he was 5'11" tall, he weighed only 156 pounds. Each quarter the whole school went on a picnic. Everyone sang or danced, played guitars or ukuleles. "It was a disgrace if we didn't know how to sing or dance. I didn't know how to dance so I learned to be a musician so I wouldn't have to dance." Every evening he would sit out among the banana trees and practice the guitar. His folks told him they were tired of hearing the same tunes over and over again. The mosquitos were numerous so he had to work fast. It was play a few chords and then "slap, slap" as he hit at the mosquitos. He learned to play the guitar and ukulele by ear, as did all of the Samoans. This new talent rescued him from having to display his slight white physique along with those of his sturdier brown skinned classmates who performed island dances.

In Samoa (and New Zealand) the school year began about the first of February and ended just before Christmas. There was a six week vacation before the beginning of the next school year. Also, students enjoy a two-week vacation between quarters.

In order to advance to the next level at the end of the school year, a final test score of 60 out of a possible 100 was needed in all of his seven classes. In 1957, he passed six but in his final math test Tom received only 58 points. He had to repeat the entire school year over again – all seven classes. When he took the tests again in November, 1958, again he scored fifty-eight on the science section of the test. Advancement to the next level in the British Educational System—or entrance to a university seemed forever beyond Tom’s reach.

The names of those students who passed the School Certificate examination were publicly announced on station 2AP, the only radio station in Western Samoa. The radio station announced: “From Samoa College the following students have passed their School Certificate.” I listened intently for my name but it was never announced. I had failed again. I felt discouraged and embarrassed. I scored in the upper 70’s, 80’s and 90’s in my other subjects except the one grade of fifty-eight. 12

At that point, Tom knew that his education had come to an end and he would spend the rest of his life on a banana plantation. But fortune would have it otherwise. A lady missionary from the Mormon church, Sister Shimoda from Hawaii, approached him one day at church. “Tom what are your plans for furthering your education?” she asked.

“None,” he replied, believing his education had come to an end.

“How would you like to attend a university in the United States,” she went on. Tom was quite surprised and thought this was impossible. “I’ll do some checking.” She said.

In order to go to an American college Tom needed a transcript of his grades, but in the British school system, letter grades were not kept, it was either pass or fail. Tom had to attend an American high school for seven months in order to earn letter grades and a transcript. In February, 1959, he enrolled in an American high school established by the Mormon church called Pesega High or the Church College of Western Samoa. Here, courses were much easier and he earned “A’s” and “B’s” in all his classes.

Pesega High was the only high school in Samoa that produced a yearly operetta. Tom tried out for the production, “The Student Prince” and was cast in the role of Dr. Engel, tutor to the Prince, Karl Franz. One of the school teachers, Marjorie Cook, gave him and other leads vocal lessons to help with their roles.

In order to attend the Church College in Hawaii, Tom needed money. His family didn’t have enough for his fare so his mother had a farewell feast for him and invited friends and relatives. As it was the custom to give a small gift of money at the feast, Tom received enough money for plane fare to Hawaii. Thus, would commence his college education.

CHAPTER 3
OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS
1959 - 1965



Photo taken September 14, 1959 of Tom, Bella, Leo and Lilian as he left Samoa for the Church College of Hawaii.

Sister Shimoda, a lady missionary serving in Samoa, studied Tom intently. What did the future hold for this tall shy young man, she wondered? “Tom, how would you like to go to a university in the United States,” she asked? Was it really possible? Tom said he liked the idea. “I’ll check and see what can be done,” she continued. “Brigham Young University would be a good school or even the Church College of Hawaii.”

Hawaii is a melting pot of cultures from all over the South Pacific, the mainland and Europe. Japanese, Chinese, “mainland Americans,” Europeans and Polynesians from every island make up Hawaii’s vast population. The 700 students that attended the Church College of Hawaii in 1959 mirrored the cosmopolitan cultural make-up of the islands—Tom fit right in. Tauivi Tuinei, from American Samoa, first thought of Tom as a New Zealander. But as Tom associated more and more with the thirty Samoan kids attending CCH, speaking fluent Samoan with them, Tom came to be considered a Samoan. Still he was quite different from that rough, tough, bunch.

“Tom was a gentleman,” Tauivi recalls. “Far more civilized than the rest of us. We had to learn how to act in western society, Tom already knew and we looked to him as our leader.”¹³

Each year, the various groups nominated candidates for Freshman class president. The Samoan Club selected Tauivi Tuinei as their candidate and Tom as his campaign manager. At an election assembly Tom gave a speech on behalf of Tauivi. “He was one of the best speakers in the school,” Tauivi remembers. “When Tom took the stage, everyone listened. He could hold you in suspense for minutes and then end with some statement that had everyone laughing.” Some Hawaiian kids encouraged him to get involved in drama. “I considered it,” Tom said, “Because I certainly wasn’t an outstanding rugby player or athlete. Every kid wants to excel in something. Then too, I kept remembering what my geography teacher said and I really wanted to improve.”¹⁴

To improve his voice, diction, reading and acting ability, he auditioned for plays. His first role at CCH was that of the art critic, Davenport, a minor role in “The Late Christopher Bean.” In the next play, “Angel Street,” he was cast as Mr. Manningham, the lead role.

Tom, Leo and Lilian had been baptized into the Mormon church when the family lived in Samoa. However, because their plantation was so far from the nearest Mormon services, the Stokoes were seldom able to attend. Bella had joined the Mormon church in her youth. Although she did not attend during her early married days, being there was no Mormon church nearby, she housed and fed the Missionaries when they visited the family in New Zealand.

Tom was 12 years old when he was baptized on May 3, 1953 in the font in Pesega. Considering his age and the circumstances surrounding his decision to join, the question of whether or not he fully understood the significance of this step seems uncertain.

Tommy attended scout meetings with his Samoan cousins. These meetings were under the direction of two Mormon missionaries from the U.S. One evening, as the boys were practicing tying knots, Tom noticed one of the missionaries, Elder Merrill, sitting aloof and silent. He could not speak the language and difficulty in communication seemed to discourage him. Knowing that the purpose of missionaries was to preach the gospel and baptize, Tommy wanted to help the elder. He walked up to him and asked, “Would you like to baptize me?” The missionary seemed surprised, smiled and replied, “Yes.” The baptism occurred soon after.

In Hawaii Tom stayed with his Uncle Amilale Uale and his Aunt Elisa. Uncle Amilale was the bishop of the local Laie 2nd Ward while Tom was attending CCH. He had ample opportunity for the first time in his life to attend regular LDS church services. His uncle and aunt encouraged him in church activity and there were opportunities for him to give talks. Uncle Amilale even considered calling Tom on a mission but changed his mind saying: His folks sent him here to go to college, not to be sent on a mission. It’s better he attend school and accomplish this purpose.”

In Samoa, most churchgoers wore white. It was customary of Samoan people regardless of denomination. When Tom arrived in Hawaii he wore his white coat to all his church meetings. However, in Hawaii, wearing a white coat to church was not a custom. After giving a speech at a Mormon sacrament meeting, he was approached by an old Hawaiian man whose speech and physical motion had been afflicted by a stroke. Stammering, he told Tom how much he enjoyed hearing him speak and that he wanted to give him a coat. "In Samoa, you wear white coats. Here it is different. I want to give you a navy-blue coat and whenever you speak at the pulpit, remember you speak for me too. For I cannot speak, but you have the talent, so you speak for both of us." His name was brother Hubbell. He was an inspiration to Tom.

Living with his uncle's family, Tom grew in the gospel and advanced in the priesthood. Uncle Amilale had a very positive spiritual effect on Tom's life. While ordaining Tom to the office of an Elder, he made a statement that Tom never forgot and in time proved prophetic, "You will be a lamp unto the youth," his uncle told him. Tom would teach school for forty-one years.

As his second year at CCH grew to a close Tom and his friend, Tauivi, considered transferring to BYU in Provo, Utah the fall of 1961. CCH was a small college and they wanted to try a larger institution and broaden their interests and experience. Then too, neither had lived on the mainland. The prospect of transferring to Brigham Young University was very exciting.

Along with other Samoan CCH students, Tom and Tauivi signed up with the Dole Pineapple Company to spend the summer in the Hawaiian pineapple fields picking pineapple. They knew it would be hard work but they needed money in order to go to school on the mainland. The pineapple gang consisted of Iosefa Salea, Eliu Ieremia, Weng Chan Boon, Bill Fruean, Mapu Palepoi, Misluki Mathis, Seagai Faumuina, Fotu Soliai, Nick Levi, Tauivi Tuinei and Tom Stokoe.

Wearing protective clothing, gloves and goggles against the prickly leaves, picking pineapple in the hot Hawaiian sun was not easy work especially wading through a thick field. Gangs of pickers followed a tractor pulling a conveyor belt upon which the picked pineapples were tossed and conveyed onto the back of a truck.

By the end of the first day of work, the pickers were exhausted. "There was a determination about him. A dedication that carried him through," Tauivi remembers, "a mental toughness."¹⁵

It is sufficient to note that Tom was exhibiting the quality of dedication and perseverance that would surface through out the rest of his life. When confronted with a challenge—concentrated effort to learn difficult lines in a short time, the pressure of putting together a major dramatic production in six weeks, the need to work long hours running a 3,000-seat auditorium with all its scheduled activities, classroom teaching responsibilities, coaching a 30-40-member drama team, or working two jobs to earn additional income when

times were tough, Tom made the commitment and always came through. This ability to adapt, to endure, to achieve his goal no matter the cost was to stay with Tom for the rest of his life.

The Welcome Assembly, at BYU in the fall of 1961 could only be described by newcomers as thrilling. Signs naming countries all over the world where students had flocked from to attend BYU dotted the Smith Field House. Students sat clustered around the signs of their respective countries and states and their excitement at being at the “Y” in the crisp, golden autumn was electric. Everyone was friendly and enthusiastic about starting school. It was more than the two young men from Samoa could have dreamed of. They were able to find a house to live in which they shared with eight other roommates.

Here at BYU, Tom was considered a foreigner. But realizing that the campus was made up of students from all over the world, that designation was not uncomplimentary. He spoke with a slight but delightful English accent which he termed, “faded New Zealand,”

He had matured and filled out and a few of the girls at BYU thought him handsome. Few would have guessed that his dark looks was a result of his Samoan heritage. More likely they would have guessed that he was part Spanish or Portugese.

Adjusting to the fall climate was an experience for the young men that had spent most of their lives in the tropics. Dave Tanner, a returned Samoan missionary, took Tom and Tauivi deer hunting that fall. In the beautiful Wasatch mountains they saw their first snow. They both enjoyed hunting.

Dave gave them a rifle to share and stationed them in an area where he was sure they could see deer, then went over a nearby hill. “If a deer comes by shoot it,” he instructed.

Tom and Tauivi watched carefully and within half an hour a big buck came over the hill and stood silhouetted against the sky. Tauivi raised the rifle and took aim but because he was shivering with cold the deer disappeared before he could squeeze the trigger. Both stood shaking with cold and laughing at one another.

Once in college in the U.S. Tom was cast in every play he auditioned for, except one where the cast called for southern U.S. accents. “His characters were always interesting and well developed.” 15

Tom once needed a new pair of shoes. He was embarrassed by his one and only pair because they stunk so bad. Going downtown to a Provo shoe store, he selected a size 10 without trying them on. “But you’ve got to try them on before you buy them,” said the salesman “What if they don’t fit?”

“They’ll fit alright, I know they will. I take a size 10.” Tom replied, too embarrassed to remove his old shoes lest the salesman get a whiff of the stench.

I was playing Lord Hector at the time in the play “Time Remembered.” I put that pair of new shoes on and went to rehearsal. They about killed me they fit so tight. In

fact, I was limping around on stage in great agony portraying my role when a fellow actor started laughing at my walk. "Heh, that's a funny walk," said the director "let's keep it in." I did and my walk added a comic touch to my character. It has been one of the rare times in my life when I played comedy in agony. 16

At BYU Tom discovered girls. It was really exciting to attend the BYU dances and have a choice of 800 different girls in all shapes and sizes to choose from. Nothing like that had ever been available to him in Hawaii or Samoa. Not only did Tom discover girls but they discovered him. Because of his theatrical work, a few were interested in meeting him. They found his voice charming and sexy, his eyes compelling and his shy manner appealing.

Anna Lou Allred was an attractive blond from California. She was the assistant director for a play Tom was an actor. She made no secret of her interest in Tom, being quite intense in her pursuit of the young actor. When her uncle and aunt took a trip to Hawaii, she instructed them to visit Tom's mother who was then serving as dorm mother at CCH. She invited Tom to go home with her to California which he did. When shopping in a supermarket, Anna Lou's mother said, "Choose whatever meat you want to eat. We own this supermarket."

Tom picked out the least expensive meat he could see. He was overwhelmed by her family's wealth. Although he liked Anna Lou a great deal, he was not ready for marriage. He told her he would not even consider it until he finished college. Later, she married a fellow actor. A few days before the wedding, she and her roommate arrived in Salt Lake where Tom was staying. She described her marriage plans but admitted that she still loved Tom, that she would break her engagement and marry him if he encouraged her to do so. Tom repeated his position. He had at least another two years to go before he would finish college and would not be ready for a serious commitment before that time.

After a year at BYU, Tom assessed his position. He had found the "Y" friendly and socially exciting. He liked his job as a janitor, he loved acting there but had done poorly in two classes. When the geography grades were posted on the classroom door at the end of the quarter, Tom learned that he had received an "F." Geography was one of his favorite subjects in high school. He was so embarrassed to see an "F" grade posted alongside his name that he took the list down, ripped it up and threw it away. The professor was incensed when he learned that his list was missing.

Tom determined that in terms of his education he could best be of service to Samoa through getting a degree in agriculture. Utah State University was an agricultural college.

Tom arrived at USU in Logan in the fall of 1962 with \$1.35 in his pocket. He had worked that summer and earned enough money for tuition and rent but had heard of a place called Las Vegas where one could go and make lots of money in a few hours at the gambling casinos. Tom returned from Las Vegas with nothing in his pocket. Tuition, everything was gone.

Arriving at Utah State University, he contacted the Dean of Foreign Students and told him he had come to go to school but had no money. The Dean called the Head of the Music Department and got a little bit of money from its scholarship fund, arranged a student loan for him, and sent him to Merla Clark, the manager of "The Hub," a cafeteria in the Union Building to get a job. He was hired. Tom was thankful and happy for the help he had received. He was poor that first quarter at Utah State and could not afford any text books. He would go to the bookstore and stand at shelves reading the text books for his classes. He ate potatoes and eggs each evening.

At USU, he commenced his major in agriculture and then switched to agricultural economics. He disliked both programs. His main interest was theatre and history. It was in theatre that he excelled,

My heroes were Richard Burton, Sir John Gielgud and Sir Lawrence Olivier. In theatre it didn't matter if I were Polynesian or British. I could be whatever the role called for. I fit well into the universal world of theatre," Tom recalls. 17

He tried out for eight plays while at Utah State University and was cast in all of them. Tom completed a Bachelor of Science degree in History and Theatre and graduated on June 6, 1964. In the fall, he worked toward a master's degree and completed requirements for a secondary teaching certificate.

In the spring of 1965, Tom applied for an assistantship to teach at several universities throughout the country. He received an assistantship from Southern Illinois University for the fall of 1965. Additionally, he received an acting scholarship to the annual Utah Shakespearean Festival in Cedar City for the summer of 1965 which he accepted. He was ready to leave USU and move toward new horizons.

CHAPTER 4
NEW HORIZONS
1965 - 1968



*Tom Stokoe as Benedick with Lynn Rudner as Beatrice in "Much Ado about Nothing,"
at the Utah Shakespearean Festival, Cedar City, 1965.*

Tom reached the pinnacle of his acting success in the summer and fall of 1965 when he acted first at the Utah Shakespearean Festival in Cedar City and then, was chosen to play the lead by a former Broadway actress in Southern Illinois University's production "The Madwoman of Chaillot." He had met the challenge of his youth when then years earlier, his geography teacher had told him, "Learn how to read."

Although fine-tuned dramatically, he had not lost the sensitivity of his youth. Disenchantment, and a longing to return to Utah prompted him to leave Southern Illinois University and seek new horizons.

Tom thoroughly enjoyed his summer in Cedar City. There were cast picnics and hiking jaunts, and a visit to Cedar Breaks. He worked hard learning lines for his roles in three major productions. He played Benedick in "Much Ado About Nothing; Ford in "The Merry Wives of Windsor" and the King of France in "King Lear." All three plays were rehearsed daily, three-hour rehearsal periods each. Rehearsals lasted four weeks followed by performances where the plays were rotated nightly. When the summer season ended in late August, Tom drove to Carbondale, Illinois in an old Ford he had bought for \$300 to attend Southern Illinois University.

At Southern Illinois University, he learned his assignment was to teach Job Corps students at Breckenridge, Kentucky. At the time, Southern Illinois University had a contract to provide instructors for the Job Corps which was about seventy miles from Carbondale campus

into Breckenridge, Kentucky. The Job Corps classes were made up of kids who were “drop outs” from other schools in large cities across the nation. Tom taught two classes of history each week.

When I think back to those classes I remember it as one of the best teaching experiences I have ever had. They talk about those kids being hard core. I thought they were really great. Most were American Blacks. Out of two classes of 25 students each, I had only two White students. I really liked all those kids.

When they realized I had an accent, they wanted to know where I was from. I told them I was originally from New Zealand and Samoa and that I lived in Hawaii. They wanted to know about Samoan girls. I told them that if a Samoan girl liked you she would kick your leg under the table which meant “I like you. Let’s get together.” Or “Let’s meet under the coconut tree tonight under the moonlight.”” They enjoyed my stories. I performed a Samoan slap dance for them and a Maori Haka and sang a couple of Island songs for them then taught them some Polynesian chants. They really enjoyed this first day of class and accepted me as their teacher. Whenever they would see me across campus and they would call out “Heh, Mr. Stokoe” and wave. Those kids were really neat and always very respectful. They called me “sir,” I didn’t ask them to call me sir but they did. We got along fine.18

Tom stayed in a house with ten roommates. The guys called him “The preacher” because he was the only one in the house who went to church every Sunday. Whenever he was around they’d sound the alarm, “Tom’s home, no more swearing!”

Upon arrival at the Southern Illinois campus Tom searched the college housing bulletin board for prospective places to stay. Knocking upon the door of a two-story house, the door opened and there stood a large man about 6’ 4”, 240 pounds. “I’m looking for place to stay. Do you have a vacancy here?” Tom asked. The man replied, “You’re in theater, aren’t you? I can tell.”

Bob was in his forties. He had gone to acting school with Marlon Brando and Julie Harris. He’d done a lot of television commercials and played bit parts in movies while trying to make it as a professional actor. “I was too big and tall to be a leading man.” He said. He and Tom hit it off right from the start. Altogether there were ten living in the house from different parts of the country.

The first week of school they held auditions for the first play of the season, “The Madwoman of Chaillot.” Tom didn’t want to act as he would be teaching classes and doing graduate work. He felt he wouldn’t have time.

“Let’s go and watch the auditions,” Bob suggested one afternoon.

“I’m not going to audition,” Tom said.

“Neither am I, but let’s go and listen, auditions are fascinating,” Bob responded. So, that afternoon the two of them went. Upon entering the theater, they saw about 200-250 students

there to audition. It was a big university with a large theatre department and many students were interested in performing. The assistant director was handing out casting sheets and handed one to Tom and Bob. Tom said, "I'm not auditioning."

"Yes you are," Bob said. "Sure, go ahead and fill it out." and placed a pen in Tom's hand. He compelled Tom to fill out the casting sheet. One of the questions read, "List the plays you have been in." At the time, Tom had acted in 30 productions and couldn't be bothered listing them and wasn't interested in auditioning anyway nor did he know anything about the play. He had never heard of it, so he simply wrote "Acted in 30 plays." He was not meticulous in completing the sheet, thinking the director, Dr. Williams, would never get around to hearing him read. Besides, with that many students present to audition it could take a couple of hours before his name would be called and by then he would be home.

He returned the casting sheet and about 5 minutes later Mrs. Williams, a former Broadway actress and director of the play stood up and facing all in the auditorium called "Tom Stokoe, Tom Stokoe would come down." She had 5 actors take the stage assigning each a role to read.

Midway through the scene she stopped the reading, came down to the apron of the stage and asked Tom to read a certain paragraph, then sat down. Tom read the paragraph.

Again, she came to the apron of the stage. "This time, I want you to read it more naturally." When he concluded, she came again to the apron of the stage and said "Now Tom, read it differently" By now, people were wondering what was happening.

This time, Tom read the cutting with his atrocious Southern accent. He could hear his roommate Bob in the back of the auditorium, laughing his head off. Again Dr. Williams came to the front of the stage for the fourth time and said, "Tom, read this one more time for me."

Theatrically, Tom was fit. He had been playing leads at the Utah Shakespearean Festival for the summer and had just finished the last his show five days previous. He decided that this time he would put his whole heart and soul into it. For the fourth time he read the part.

Again she came down. This was the first day of auditions, the auditorium was filled with actors waiting to try out. In all the plays he had ever been in, Tom had never had an experience like this before. People in the auditorium were wondering what was going on. Tom himself had no idea what was happening. It was then that Dr. Williams paid him the greatest compliment he had ever received. She said, "Tom, I would like you to play the lead role"

Tom responded with surprise, "But Dr. Williams, you havn't even heard all the others yet."

"I can recognize a good leading man when I see and hear one, an excellent actor and reader. You are exactly what I want," she responded.

Tom's thoughts traveled back through the years. He could almost see himself the skinny, shy, 15-year-old kid that stood before the school assembly at Samoa College struggling to read

scriptures from the Bible. He thought of his geography teacher who said, “Stokoe, before you have the audacity to insult the Good Lord’s Book again, learn how to read.” Then and there he had promised himself that someday he would be a good reader and no one would ever say that to him again. Now ten years later, Dr. Williams, retired Broadway actress and director, was offering him the lead role and complimenting him as a good leading man, excellent actor and reader. Desire, hard work, commitment and dedication can drive a person to success.

Years later, Tom had an opportunity to audition for “Hawaii Five-0,” the popular television series of the late 1970’s. While visiting his family in Hawaii, Tom got an appointment to audition. The director called Tom into his private office. Tom sat across from at his desk. He and handed him a script. Tom began to read.

“Wait a minute,” the director stopped him. “how far are you away from me,” he asked.

“About four feet,” Tom responded.

“Then tone down, you’re reading as though you’re on a big stage and I’m at the rear of the theatre. You remind me of Larry Olivier when I directed him. He projected as though he was on stage. This is the movies; the mike is overhead. Take it easy.”

Tom was flattered that the director would mention the famous Lawrence Olivier, one of the greatest actors in the world, in the same projection context as himself.

The director talked with Tom discussing theatre, giving him pointers and telling stories about different stars and movies he’d directed. Tom really enjoyed the session. Finally the director said, “Well, I can use you, three or four times, but we won’t be filming until the middle of October. Will you be available then?”

Tom planned to be in Hawaii just for the summer. He had signed a contract to teach in the fall. He really wanted an opportunity to work in television but he was much too practical to give up a nine-month teaching contract for a two-week television job.

November, 1965 was a low point in Tom’s acting, as well as his academic career. The critic who reviewed “The Manwoman of Chaillot,” did not like Tom’s performance. He made several cutting comments. Tom had completed all his course work for his master’s degree at Utah State. And he was 147 pages into the first draft of his thesis when he left the university to act in Cedar City. He could have completed the thesis during the summer and received his Master’s degree before he left Utah for Southern Illinois but he had the opportunity to act in Cedar City and so never completed it. The University of Southern Illinois would only allow Tom to transfer eight hours of his graduate credit. He had been accepted into their post graduate program. He could either finish up at Utah State or start over at Southern Illinois. Tom was discouraged. He enjoyed his roommates, his teaching assignment and he liked the people in the theater department but he missed Utah—the environment, the life and his friends there.

In February of 1966, Tom left Southern Illinois University and returned to Logan. He went back to his old job as a cook at the Hub and acted in two plays, “Billy Budd” and “The Taming of the Shrew.” The Viet Nam War was in full swing. The government needed soldiers.

Even though Tom was a New Zealand citizen, and a registered alien, he was subject to the U.S. draft. In May, he found a job in Salt Lake City as a painter. He had signed a contract to teach school in Los Angeles that fall in Los Angeles. Being he wasn't registered in school, he was drafted into the U.S. Army on 15 of August 1966.

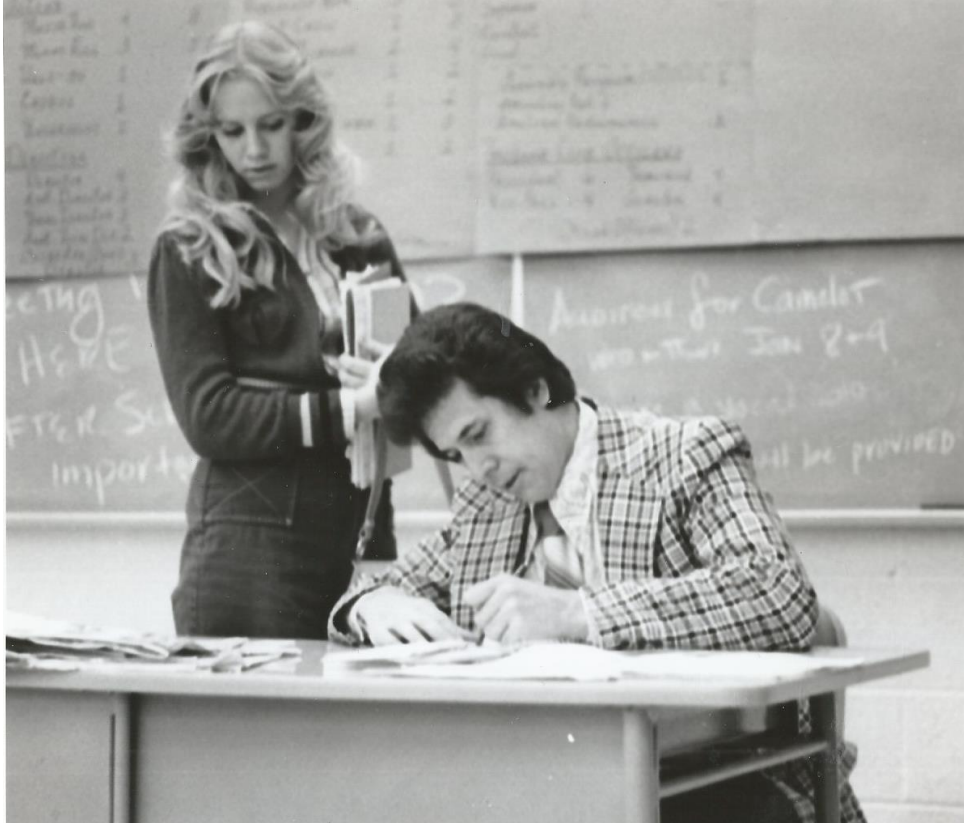
He took Basic Training at Fort Lewis, Washington, Advanced Infantry Training at Ford, Ord, California and spent the remainder of his service time at Fort Gordon, Georgia. He entered the service as Private E-1 and emerged Specialist E-5. Tom worked in the Company Commander's office as a clerk attending to military records, correspondence, writing letters of commendation, and answering the telephone. In answering the phone, he was instructed to say: "Headquarter Detachment, 95th Civil Affairs Group, Specialist Stokoe speaking, Sir." This was rather long and one captain would always cut him off midway through saying, "Cut the speech Stokoe, put me through to Captain Thayer." Eventually his speech was shortened to "95th C.A. Specialist Stokoe, Sir."



Men were receiving orders to go to Viet Nam. Tom had seen lots of John Wayne war movies as a teenager and he thought going to war would be exciting. He and two others, came down on orders from the Pentagon to go to Viet Nam, a year tour. However, in order to go to a war zone, aliens needed a military security clearance. One soldier was born in Jamaica, the other in Germany and Tom was born in New Zealand. Security clearances were initiated but the time they came through, all three had but a few months remaining in the service, so they never went.

Tom was very active in the Augusta Ward at this time. He held seven church jobs in addition to his army work. His mother believed that he was not sent to Viet Nam because the Lord needed him in Georgia.

CHAPTER 5
“A LAMP UNTO THE YOUTH”
1968 - 1982



In January, 1975, Tom writes out an assignment for a student. “A Lamp unto the youth” had been the words of the blessing. Uncle Amilale Uale would never know how many young lives the light of the lamp would teach. In 31 years at Skyline High School Tom would teach Drama and History, direct close to 100 theatrical productions, costume and build scenery, design lighting, choreograph musical numbers, and stage manage the 3,000-seat auditorium and all its activities. Each year he would put in between 500-800 extra curricula hours.

Tom returned from the army in August, 1968 determined to find a teaching position. He went to Granite School District in Salt Lake City and was interviewed by Blair Brewster, the personnel director. Blair had served a mission in Hawaii and was particularly helpful in placing Polynesian graduates that were looking for positions within the district. The only job that was available that late in the year was for a physical education teacher at Churchill Jr. High. Blair scheduled an appointment for Tom and the following day he found himself sitting opposite Principal Maurice Cannegeiter.

They visited for an hour. Mr. Cannegeiter had a son in the army, whom Tom had been stationed with at Fort Gordon. Like Tom, Principal Cannegeiter had been involved in drama at Utah State University. Both had acted in the same melodrama, "After Dark" (though some twenty years apart) under the same director, Floyd T. Morgan. Toward the end of the visit, Mr. Cannegeiter said, "Well Tom, would you like to see the gym?" The job was his.

Tom enjoyed the year at Churchill. He was placed in charge of the faculty assembly and wrote and directed "Pioneers of Westward Expansion." The teachers put it on for the students. Still his main interest was drama and not physical education. When an opening occurred at Skyline High School for a drama teacher in 1969, he interviewed for the job.

Mr. Pizza was explicit in selecting the new drama teacher. He wanted someone who would stay and build the program. "If you are not willing to stay a long time I don't want you." said Mr. Pizza. "I will stay a long time." Said Tom. He kept his word. He stayed 31 years.

In 1969, Skyline High School was one of the largest schools in the state of Utah with 3,200 students and a faculty of 150. Located high on the east bench, it boasted an advanced academic program, a high percentage of students that went on to college and a reputation for excellence.

Tom's first day in the classroom was an experience to remember. He had no text books for his drama classes, no files of materials and no established program to follow. He spent the entire period telling his students about theatre. When the bell rang, he received a standing ovation from the Advanced Drama class. Gradually as the year worn on, Tom began to develop his program. It was a program that would build and develop over the next few years and had students that did well at Drama Meets.

In the fall of that year Tom had a romantic encounter that would have a profound effect on his life. He attended a LDS Singles Dance at the Terrace Ball Room in down town Salt Lake. These dances were always crowded and the selection of women extensive, but for some reason, Tom found that evening offering of young ladies rather boring. He noticed a tall brunette with nice legs standing in the shadows and invited her to dance and from that moment on the evening changed. She had a bubbly personality, charming animation and kept up a lively conversation.

"What do you do for a living?" she finally asked him.

"I'm a school teacher" Tom answered.

"So am I," she volunteered. "And where do you teach?"

"At Skyline High School," he answered. "And you?"

"At Skyline High School," she replied, somewhat surprised. Diane Belov had taught in the history department there for three years. As it was Tom's first year and the school was

quite large, they hadn't met. Occasionally over the next few weeks, they encountered one another at school. Usually however, they met at the Thursday night dance for L.D.S. singles.

"How did you get here so fast?" Tom asked as he finally secured a dance with Diane. "Back to School Night" ended only half an hour ago."

I left with the last group of parents when the final bell rang," she answered. They spent the rest of the evening dancing together.

There were several dates after that. They both enjoyed dancing and being together. At L.D.S. Conference time in October Tom invited Dian to the Samoan missionary reunion. Tom knew that Diane was divorced but he had no idea that she was the mother of three small sons. Diane's father had cautioned her about telling her dates about the boys. "Wait until the man is madly in love with you before you bring that up," he advised. But just how long can you hide three little boys who are 4, 5 and 7 she wondered? That night Diane invited Tom in after the reunion and told him about the children. "What, no girls?" was his response.

Tom became involved producing and directing his first high school play that fall, "The Middle-Class Gentleman" by Moliere. He gave serious thought about his relationship with Diane and decided he did not want to get involved. He invited someone else to the faculty Christmas Party. Diane was there with an English professor and they generally avoided one another. When the semester ended in January, Tom noticed that she was no longer at Skyline. She had been replaced by a new history teacher by the name of Gene Warner and no one seemed to know where she had gone.

In March, 1969 Tom met his "Miss America." He had always wanted to marry a beautiful girl and Nila Ford seemed to have everything. Her one drawback was that she was the mother of two sons. It seemed that Tom was attracted to women in his age bracket and most of them happened to be divorcees with children. Tom was deeply in love with Nila but couldn't bring himself to marry her because her older boy was a teenager and rebellious. He wasn't sure it would work. She married someone older in the summer of 1970 who could control her boys leaving Tom very sad and lonely. However the relationship with Nila served to soften Tom's attitude toward divorcees with children.



In February, 1972, Tom climbed the steps to the Terrace Ball Room behind a tall blond in a short burgundy dress. He liked her legs. He followed her into the hall, stepped up behind her and tapped her on the shoulder, "Would you care to dance?" he asked. When she turned he was surprised to see it was Diane in a blond wig.

The couple renewed their friendship on the dance floor. Tom discovered that Diane had spent the past year and a half at Ohio State University where she worked as Administrative Assistant to the Registrar. She had returned the previous summer but had not been successful in finding a teaching position. They began spending a great deal of time together and Tom became acquainted with her boys—Matthew, then age 6, Brian almost 9 and Dean, age 7.

Tom had always wanted to travel and now that his career was established and there was money in the bank, he began making plans for a trip to Europe in the summer. Diane had spent three weeks in Europe the previous summer and encouraged him to go. She knew he would enjoy it. He chronicled his trip for her in post cards. Several arrived each week,

Post Card from London dated Wednesday, June 14, 1972. Dear Diane, This is an interesting place. Went on a tour of London, visited the Tower of London, saw "Show Boat" which was fantastic, "Don't just Lie there, Do Something" which was a funny farce, "Canterbury Tales" which was lousy. The director has no concept whatsoever on how to block a show and the singers couldn't sing for nuts, and "Oh Calcutta" which was depraved and sick. I particularly enjoyed the Tower and of course went on your recommendation. Had a great guide—he should be made a professor of history or theatre. I really miss you. I wish you were with me. In fact, I miss you so much I'm tempted to come straight home. Also saw the wax museum. But more than anything else, I miss you. Love, Tom. 19

A card with Shakespeare's birthplace dated June 22nd, 1972 read: Dear Diane. Went through Shakespeare's house today and saw where he penned some of his works. I'm at Stratford on Avon for the night. I saw two fabulous Shakespearean productions, "Julius Caesar" and "Coriolanus." They were fantastic. Shakespeare in this town has to be about the best in the world. Even the smallest walk-on role with one or two lines was a veteran actor of the stage, television and movies. Fantastic acting and productions. So far have seen 18 plays. I still think you should be here. I wish you were. This is a quaint little town with beautiful parks and flowers and the Avon River flows through the middle of it with the Stratford Theatre right by the banks. Hope your tan is coming along great and the kids are enjoying swimming. I miss swimming with all of you. I should have brought a photo of you with me. Miss you. Love Tom 20



Tom returned in July and spent the summer going to movies and dances with Diane and taking the boys swimming. The next fall he was busy directing “Fiddler on the Roof,” probably the most successful musical production ever performed at Skyline High School up until that time. The auditorium was packed all three nights and Mr. Pizza, who wasn’t known for his love of theatre, made an unprecedented appearance on the second night to compliment the cast in the green room meeting.

Diane was in tears during the scene when Tevye attempts to rationalize his position with Chava to determine whether or not he could forgive his middle daughter’s rebellious attitude. It reminded her of her own deceased father. She had often found herself at odds with the principles he espoused and so for her, that scene was particularly touching.

Tom worked hard that school year directing four more plays, “The Lark” and “Night of January the 16th,” which opened on January 16th, and two others. It was an excellent year for talent and Skyline placed first in the State Drama Competition in spring.

The next summer Tom returned to London for a season of theatre. A postcard to Diane dated June 21, 1973 read, *Got your second letter. I think I’m looking forward to coming home. Three weeks is enough theatre and London for me. Have seen 32 shows so far. I don’t know what kind of present to get you. Maybe I’ll save the money; you might like to go to Hawaii sometime this summer.*²¹

Tom returned from London in early July and immediately began making plans to go to Hawaii for the rest of the summer. Their relationship was not going smoothly. Although he was in love with her, Tom was not ready to commit to a marriage. They had dated over a year and a half, Diane was anxious to marry and provide a father for her boys. She was not comfortable in a relationship that seemed to be going nowhere.

“I love you but I just don’t want the responsibility of a “ready-made family,” Tom told her.

“Neither do I, Diane answered, “Unfortunately, I don’t have a choice.” Diane and her ex-husband had been divorced for over six years. Pete Belov, had disappeared and provided no support for her or the children. The entire responsibility of taking care and providing for their children fell upon Diane. This seemed like an awesome responsibility to Tom who, for the first time in his life, had money in the bank and could travel.

Tom left for Hawaii in mid-July. He and Diane had argued before he left. Later she wrote him. He called and patched things up. His feeling about her and the boys were expressed in a letter dated July 26, 1973. ²² The outcome of this situation was that Diane was invited to spend three weeks in Hawaii to meet Tom’s family. It was a happy time. Brian, Dean and Matt stayed in Utah with Diane’s girl-friends.

The following school year brought additional work for Tom. Besides his regular teaching and coaching responsibilities, he was assigned supervision of the Skyline stage and 3,000-seat auditorium. This entailed attendance at all of the activities that involved the stage including numerous rentals and technical aspects with sound and lighting. Tom’s new calling seemed overwhelming but with typical dedication and commitment he was able to handle the job.

His relationship with Diane that year was an on again, off again, thing. “Tom, have you prayed about marrying me,” she asked one night.

“No, he confessed, “What if the answer is YES?” It seemed obvious to Diane that things would never progress beyond the point they were at so she began to date other men.

Midway through the spring of 1974, Diane had a serious beau. Art Ortiz was a Chicano and a Catholic who sent her flowers and wanted to marry her. One evening her 10-year-old son Brian had a serious talk with his mother. “Are you going to marry Art,” he asked?

“I don’t know, Brian,” she told him truthfully. “Well, I don’t think you should. He’s younger than you and you don’t love him.” Brian continued, “Besides you are in love with Tom.”

In praying about her relationship with Art, Diane kept getting the same answer, “It’s not Art, it’s Tom. Finally, she went to Tom and told him she didn’t care what he did with the information but that was the answer she was getting. She said that if he could not bring himself to marry her the good Lord would provide someone else.

She dated both Art and Tom for a couple of months, finally on Mother’s Day, 1974, quite unexpectedly, the three of them found themselves together in Diane’s kitchen. Art and Tom sat at the table discussing which of them would marry Diane. She found the entire incident embarrassing and had always tried to prevent their meeting.

When Art finally left, Tom gave her a lecture. “He’s not the husband for you,” he said. “You need someone like me.” Still he could not make up his mind. They dated a few more

times but it just wasn't working out. About the end of June Diane wrote in her diary, "Cancel Tom eternally."

One afternoon, Diane went to her mailbox to find a letter from Tom. It was an evaluation, "Good points and bad points of Diane Belov." This annoyed her. "Isn't that just like a school teacher," she thought. "He has to evaluate everything, including past girlfriends." So she evaluated him by return mail with a note entitled "Good points and bad points of Thomas A. Stokoe."

A week later she attended the Thursday night dance. Midway through the evening she noticed that Tom had arrived. She ignored him realizing that it was likely they'd run into each other often as they attended the same church sponsored functions. She slipped out quietly before the evening ended. About 1:00 a.m. the next morning there was a knock on her front door. She opened it and there stood Tom, "I came to ask you to marry me," he said.

They were married in Las Vegas the following Wednesday. That Friday, Tom left with Brian, Dean and Matt for their first ward "Fathers and Sons" outing. Tom and Diane had dated for three years, and the boys did not have much of a relationship with Pete, there were only a few adjustment problems. Tom loved sports and Diane's boys were avid football and baseball players.

On October 21, 1976, another son, Stephen Alexander was born to Diane. Grandma Stokoe arrived from Hawaii to help with the new baby. She was amazed when she first saw him for he was very fair—quite different from her Polynesian grandchildren. Diane's sister Corinne commented on first seeing the baby, "The others look more like you; this one like Tom." When grandpa Stokoe saw this red-haired grandson, he told the story of William Crichton, the pirate, Tom's great grandfather. He was convinced that was where the red hair came from.

As the years passed, Stephen would grow more and more like his father. His red hair would fade to a copper tone—much like the faint streak that his father had at his temple. Their faces would be the same shape and in personality, they were much alike. Stephen is a humble, shy, considerate child.

As a partnership, the marriage worked well. Diane understood and supported Tom's constant drive for excellence in his chosen profession. Many drama teachers divorced when their spouses can't adjust to all the extra hours they devote to the professions. Since they had dated for three years, Diane had accepted his situation long before they were married.

Diane was proud of the work he did with his high school actors and was excited for him when his drama teams met with success. Some of Tom's actors who went on in pursuit of acting careers included Scott Zogg (class of 1972) who attended the Guildhall Drama School in London; Alexis Cairo Fernandes (1972) who became a newscaster for Channel 2 in Salt Lake City; Jerri Dutcher, radio, and Mick Mackay (1975) who became a local disc jockey and many others who acted in colleges and community theater.

Tom directed Julie Peters, daughter of the well-known actor Robert Peterson in "Once upon a Mattress and received a letter of commendation from the Granite District Office for a fine production. He directed leading man Scott Peterson, Julie's bother, in "Finian's Rainbow."

Each year for the past four years, Tom has taken drama teams to Cedar City to participate in the Annual High School Shakespearean Festival under the direction of Fred Adams. For the past three years, Tom's students have brought home trophies for outstanding ensemble performances.

Perhaps the best compliment he has yet received came from the Aunt of Wendy Smith, one of the actresses in his production "Midsummer Night's dream," which he directed in February, 1982. The aunt had seen this production at Stratford-on-Avon the previous summer. She told her sister that in comparing the two, she thought Tom's play was more entertaining and fun than the one she had seen in England.

A second, son, David Thomas, was born to them on May 26, 1978. David has a round face, blond hair and dimpled cheeks. His mischievous brown eyes hint of intelligence and fun. Unlike his shy, humble brother, David is outgoing and precocious. He provides an interesting contrast to Stephen.

Over eight years of marriage, Tom has proved to be a lamp not only to his drama students but to Diane's three sons. Brian, Dean and Matt refer to him as their "Dad" and he continues to support them in their athletic endeavors. Tom and Diane attended most of Brian's varsity basketball games at Brighton High School and regularly support Matthew in his wrestling and football careers.

CHAPTER 6

FROM HERE TO ETERNITY

Summary and Conclusions



Photo taken June 7, 1980 after the temple sealing with Stephen and David and Bella, Tom's mother.

With the responsibilities of marriage, Tom and Diane determined that it was important to work toward becoming a celestial family. They began preparing to be sealed in the temple shortly after their civil marriage. That day finally arrived at 11:00 a.m. on June 7, 1980 when family and friends gathered in the largest sealing room in the Salt Lake Temple. Tom and Diane were married for time and eternity and their two youngest sons sealed to them. The older boys were already sealed to their mother.

Tom Stokoe, the child of a Polynesian-English girl and a British adventurer, was the product of two different worlds. His own early life mirrored the parental differences as he lived first in New Zealand, the world of his father, and later in Samoa, the world of his mother. To which culture did he really belong? This shy, sensitive youth struggled to find out as he came of age in Samoa where he learned to love the culture and customs of his mother while being looked upon by that society as the son of a white man.

In 1958, at age 18, his future seemed to be fixed when he had, for the second year in a row, failed the High School Certificate Exam mandatory for advancement to the next level in the British educational system—university entrance. He passed six subjects but failed one by two points. His only alternative seemed to be to retire to his father's plantation and spend the rest of his life growing bananas and cacao in Samoa.

Then, quite unexpectedly, a marvelous opportunity came to him—a chance to attend the L.D.S. Church College of Hawaii, in Laie, Hawaii. In the fall of 1959, he enrolled at CCH and lived with his Uncle Amilale Uale and Aunt Elisa. Uncle Amilale, a Mormon bishop, gave Tom a blessing which proved prophetic, "You will be a lamp unto the youth," he had promised.

A desire to see more of the world prompted the transfer to Brigham Young University in Provo, in August, 1961. Although the cosmopolitan atmosphere, being cast in six plays and the "Samoan Brotherhood" at the "Y" made for a socially exciting year, Tom's grades suffered. He assessed his future and determined that he might best serve the Samoans by preparing for a career in Agriculture. With this in mind he transferred to Utah State University, one of the foremost agricultural schools in the nation.

At USU he first majored in general agriculture and then to agricultural economics, although his main interest continued to be theatre. "In theatre it did not matter if I was Polynesian or British. I could be whatever the role called for," Tom wrote. "I tried not to major in drama because I knew there was no money in it."

Tom graduated from Utah State University on June 6, 1964 with a Bachelor of Science Degree. He graduated with a major in history and a minor in theatre, though he had literally twice as many credits in Speech and Theatre than he did in history. He stayed on at Utah State to complete a Teaching Certificate, to act and to do graduate work.

In the summer of 1965, Tom was one of nine actors to be awarded a Utah Shakespearean Festival Acting Scholarship. He spent almost the entire summer performing roles in "Much Ado About Nothing", "The Merry Wives of Windsor" and "King Lear."

That fall, he went on to an assistantship at Southern Illinois University where he did some graduate work, taught classes at Breckinridge Job Corps Center, and acted in “The Madwoman of Chaillot.” He left SIU in February of 1966.

Although registered as a legal alien—Tom remains to this day a citizen of New Zealand—he was drafted into the United States Army on August 15, 1966, his 26th birthday. He served with the 95th Civil Affairs Group at Fort Gordon, Georgia most of his two years in the service. Though numerous John Wayne movies wet his appetite for duty in Viet Nam, he missed the opportunity to serve in that part of the world. Because of his alien status, the required military security clearance to serve in a war zone did not come through in time to affect his transfer to Viet Nam.

After an honorable discharge from the army, Tom secured a teaching job with Granite School District where he has worked for the past 14 years. After a year of coaching and physical education classes at Churchill Jr. High, he transferred to Skyline High School where he teaches classes in Drama, and History. In addition Tom has directed over 40 productions during his 13 years as drama coach. For the past eight years he has run the stage, doing all the set building, lighting and technical work.

Tom married Diane Belov, a former Skyline High School history teacher, on July 22, 1974. She had three sons by a previous marriage. Since their marriage, the Stokoe’s have added two more sons, Stephen and David, to the family.



This 1984 Family picture was included when the manuscript was retyped in April, 2017. It includes all six sons: Dean, Brian and Matt Belov standing. David, Neil and Stephen below.

At age 42, Tom has fulfilled the prophetic words of his uncle. He has indeed become “A Lamp unto the Youth.” In addition to guiding his high school students toward the fulfillment of their potential, he has been a guiding influence in the lives of his sons.

Tom’s identity crisis has long since been resolved. He has embraced not the world of his mother, nor the world of his father, but a world of his own making. By passing through New Zealand, Samoa, Hawaii, BYU, USU, SIU and the U.S. army, Tom Stokoe reached his world of success as a husband and teacher in the Salt Lake Valley. Here he has fashioned for himself and his family a world difference from what any of them had known before, it is a world that is theirs alone.

Notes

1. Stokoe, Tom, Sr. Family stories told to Tom & Diane while visiting SLC in 1974. Subject age 66 at the time.
2. Lancaster Guardian (Lancaster, England) Obituary of Thomas Stokoe, January 2, 1897.
3. Stokoe, Tom Sr., Letter to his son written at age 72 from Kahuka, Hawaii, August 16, 1982. In possession of Tom Stokoe, Sandy, Utah.
4. Ibid.
5. Stokoe, Tom Sr., incident told to Thomas A. about 1972 in Laie, Hawaii. Subject 62 at time.
6. Stokoe, Tom Sr., Letter of August 16, 1982. op.cit.
7. Stokoe, Thomas A., “Recollections of His Youth” as told to Diane, August, 1982. Subject 42 of age.
8. Ibid.
9. Old Samoan legend
10. Stokoe, Thomas A., “Recollections of His Youth.” op.cit.
11. Ibid.
12. Tuinei, Tauivi, Interview in Sandy, Utah, August 20, 1982. Subject 45 years of age.
13. Stokoe, Thomas A., “Recollections of His Youth.” op.cit.
14. Tuinei, op.cit.
15. Stokoe, Thomas A., “Recollections of His Youth” op.cit.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. Stokoe, Thomas A., Post Card sent to Diane from London, England, June 14, 1972.
19. Stokoe, Thomas A., Post Card sent to Diane from Stratford-on-Avon, June 22, 1972.
20. Stokoe, Thomas A., Post card sent to Diane from London, England, June 21, 1973.
21. Stokoe, Thomas A., Letter written to Diane from Laie, Oahu, Hawaii on July 26, 1973.

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Stokoe Family Records in possession of Thomas A. and Diane Stokoe. Letters, Post Cards, Photos, Genealogical Information, Obituaries, Certificates, Legal Documents, Pass Ports and Programs. Collection located at 8637 Snowbird Drive, Sandy, Utah.

Stokoe Family Tapes in possession of Thomas A. and Diane Stokoe, Sandy, Utah

- (1) Interview for Newspaper Article by Pat Ashby, taped in Sandy, October 1980
Subject 40 years at time.
- (2) Life on the Plantation in Samoa, taped August 15, 1982, subject's 42 birthday.
- (3) School in Samoa, taped August 15, 1982
- (4) College years, taped August 15, 1982
- (5) Telephone conversation with Bella and Tom Sr. taped August 15, 1982.

Stokoe, Thomas A. "Recollections of His Youth," as written and told to Diane Stokoe, August 1982. Notes in possession of Diane Stokoe. See Stokoe Family Records.

Stokoe, Tom Sr. Letter to his son written at the age of 72 from Kahuka, Hawaii, August 16, 1982. Stokoe Family Records.

Stokoe, Tom Sr., From Family Stories as told to Tom and Diane while visiting in Salt Lake City in 1974. Subject age 66 at the time.

Tuinei, Tauivi, Interview held in Sandy, Utah, August 20, 1982. Subject 45 years at the time.