

Chapter 11

Thomas Alexander Stokoe

Churchill Jr. High, Friends, Entertaining & U.S. Citizenship

I taught at Churchill for one year, 1968-69. My assignment included four P.E classes and two Health classes per quarter and I was the volleyball coach. The volleyball team won the Eastern Division championship, not because of me but because of the talent of the team members. They were good athletes and good natured boys. I appreciated the help and advice I received from the two other P.E. teachers Gene Kunz and Craig Poole. They were excellent coaches.

At Churchill I wrote and directed a script for the faculty assembly and had every single faculty member involved. It ran about 45 minutes and was segmented specifically to accommodate all teachers and convenience for rehearsal. We rehearsed before school. The assembly was very successful and the students enjoyed it as well as the faculty.



As a first year teacher I enjoyed the P.E. classes. However, I found teaching Health classes at Churchill Junior High to be challenging. I did not anticipate classes being unruly and talkative. I did not encounter this when student teaching at Logan Jr. High or the Job Corps. There were days when I wondered if I wanted to stay in teaching. I would go home and stand in front of a mirror and pantomime strangling a student venting all the emotion pent up inside me, my face turning red, eyes glaring, and teeth gritted. I had heard teachers say that the first year of teaching was the hardest, that it started getting easier the second year.



Churchill Volleyball Championship Team. Top Row, L-R: Steve Timothy, Les England, Blaine Michaelis, Scott Grayson, Coach Stokoe, Tom Lee, Bill Rice, Eldon Call, Mike Lund. **Middle Row:** Richard Dahlquist, Larry Jensen, Mark Christiansen, Gary Vincent, Alan Tingey, Dave Ferney; **Bottom Row:** Paul Wagstaff, Gary Sine, Steve Spere, Gary Beynon, Jay Rice and Robert Brown Manager. (Absent: Jerry Romney, manager; Larry Sheffield)

Blair Brewster told me if an opening became available in Drama at the high school level for the next school year, he would let me know. In March, 1969 he sent me a letter to go to Skyline High School and interview for their Drama position with principal, Mr Pizza. Apparently there had been a turn-over of drama teachers over the past years. Principal Pizza was straight forward and to the point. He said, "I want someone who will be permanent and stay here for a long time. If you are not willing to stay here for a long time, I don't want you." I said, "Mr. Pizza, I will stay for a long time." He hired me, and I kept my promise. I stayed for 31 years. Since I retired from Skyline in 2000, there have been seven drama teachers going into the 2011-2012 school year. The turn-over rate has been high.

Classes I taught at Skyline included: Drama 1, Drama 2, Drama 3 for 31 years, Speech-Public Speaking for about 4 years, for one year a class of Poetry, one year a class of sophomore English, U.S History for about 12 years, World History for about 16 years, Stagecrew for 29 years. Besides being Drama Teacher, I was Drama Director of plays and musicals, Stagemanager of the 3,000 seat auditorium, Drama Team Coach, and Drama Club advisor.

In the 1970's -2000, district high school drama teachers and stage managers had to keep track of their extra curricula hours per year to receive extra pay. The log was submitted to the principal at the end of the school year. The money received for extra curricula hours was a standard sum for all district drama teachers; likewise, for all teachers in charge of the stage. Some high schools had a drama teacher and a separate teacher to manage the stage. At Skyline I did both. For Drama and the Stage I averaged 500-800 extra curricula hours per year for all 31 years I taught at Skyline. The first year the extra pay was implemented, mine worked out at 5 cents per hour. The extra pay steadily increased as years went by. The most extra curricula hours I put in at Skyline in one year was 848.

Counting the major plays, musicals, plays for region competition, and one-act evening plays I directed at Skyline 1969-1985, the count was 100. From then on I quit counting. If I was to add 1985-2000 at Skyline the number would be higher. In my nine years at Mountain Ridge Jr. High School, Alpine School District, (2001-2010), I directed 27 major theatrical productions – 3 per year. I have enjoyed directing theatrical productions over the years. The talent has been outstanding at both schools and seeing the growth and development in student actors and their shining in performances has been most rewarding.

FRIENDS, ENTERTAINING, HUNTING & SOCIALIZING

Throughout my life I have been supported by good friends. I first became acquainted with Foalima Hokum through association with Willard and Sheila Shingleton during the 1960's, the exact year I cannot remember. The acquaintance became more familiar through association with Euka, Leilini, Dave, Tauivi, Paovale and Tala. As friends we entertained presenting Polynesian shows in the Salt Lake valley.

Our entertainment group included Paovale Mulitalo and I on guitars, Foalima Hokum and Tauivi Tuinei on ukuleles, and Dave Tanner on the steel guitar. The dancers included Anna Silito, Mary Fakatou, Suliana, Pauline, Tisna, Sipuao Matuauto, and Eveline Wolfgram and her daughters - the latter varying in number from 2-4 dancers according to availability. Later, Tala Mulitalo would be added to the group. We entertained at clubs, church and social functions, weddings, and group parties.

One of our most memorable summer performances was at the University of Utah Club where we the musicians were floated on a raft in the middle of their swimming pool. The girls danced at the side of the pool. The combination of electric cords running through the pool to



Life- long friends Foyalima Hokum, Paolvale Mulitalo and Dave Tanner in 2011

the raft, steel strings on our instruments and water, provided Dave, Paovale and I a slightly shocking experience playing electric guitars. There was a short in the electrical system, and each time we touched the strings on our guitars we were shocked. Consequently, we were bouncing our fingers on and off the steel strings while playing throughout the show. As the adage in show business says “the show must go on,” we endured to the end an electrifying performance.

Foyalima and Tauivi were the lucky ones. They smiled and sang, strumming their ukuleles with nylon strings, missing out totally on the shocking experience. For Dave it was a real electrical ride on the steel guitar because he had the metal cylinder in his left hand and metal picks on his right fingers, so he was getting a double dose of electricity. That was one memorable show.

The annual deer hunt with Dave, his uncle Warren, Foyalima, Tauivi and I was lots of fun. Tauivi, on his first deer hunt, mistook and shot an elk for a deer resulting in a year’s supply of meat. Dave, with either Tauivi or Foyalima, hit a cow and partially mangled his car let alone the cow. But there was one thing that these deer hunts revealed - Foyalima was old hawk eye. He could see deer in thickets, brush or woods that we couldn’t see or imagine. Perhaps his serving a mission in the four corners region on the Indian reservation gave him the “Native American-hawkeye vision.” One thing we could count on for sure, if there were deer out there, Foyalima would eventually spot them.

On one hunt, it was absolutely freezing and we didn’t see any deer, or if we did, they were so fast moving none of us could get a shot off. Fingers, feet, face, body - we were frozen.

We left the hills of Grantsville in the late afternoon and headed home. On the way Dave stopped at a café and bought us chili. The taste of that chili was phenomenal. We thought that was the most appetizing, delicious, body- warming chili we had ever eaten. It was the best chili in the world.

With the temple marriage of Foalima and Sue, we headed to Idaho for the reception. Our group played island music and sang. It was a special occasion and both Sue and Foalima looked radiant and happy. Sue's parents looked happy too, as well as her sisters and Leon, who over the years, would become close to Foalima. There was a certain bonding between them that transcends time. To Leon, Foalima is a special friend, and vice versa.

One summer, Foalima and Sue were going to Idaho to spend the weekend with Sue's parents. They invited me to go with them, an invitation I readily accepted. We left Salt Lake on a Friday afternoon, arrived early evening, had supper, talked, then went to bed. In the morning, Sue's dad, Foalima and I went on a tour of the farm. A stream ran by the barn with lots of big fish. There were so many you could pitch fork them out of the stream which Foalima and I did.

In an adjacent pen there were several pigs. Foalima said the pigs really liked fish and we should throw them into the pen. We did and it was amazing to watch the pigs devour the fish. They greedily ate every scrap including bones. This was a fun activity.

Fotu and Clara Aiono went on a mission to Samoa, and Tauivi and Diana went on missions to Fiji and then Georgia. They were mission examples to us as senior couples. Tauivi sent us regular mail informing us what they were doing in Georgia. This was inspirational to us and highlighted the importance of serving a senior mission. Upon my retirement and medical health clearance, we submitted our mission papers and received our call to South Africa. We enjoyed the country and the people, serving with the young missionaries, and being part of the gospel in action.

BECOMING A U.S. CITIZEN

I entered the U.S. in August 1959 on a student visa attending the Church College of Hawaii. In 1965 I became a permanent resident of the U.S. obtaining my green card. This status I maintained until I became a U.S. citizen in 2006. I had the opportunity while serving in the U.S. Army to become a citizen. Believing I would be returning to Western Samoa permanently to live, I by passed the opportunity. Also, I thought at some future date I would teach school in New Zealand and that my New Zealand citizenship would be essential for such employment.

With a U.S. wife and six sons born in the U.S., plus having lived in the U.S. for the majority of my life and Samoa and New Zealand now clearly out of the picture, it was logical to apply for U.S. citizenship. Jim and Lena Baker, and Everett and Corinne, accompanied us to the swearing in ceremony. It was a very special occasion and having served in the U.S. military, my patriotism waxed strong.

I cherish the opportunity to have been able to come to the U.S., an opportunity made possible by a missionary in Samoa, Sister Shimoda of Hawaii, principal Heber Barker of the Church College of Western Samoa, and acceptance and a visa by the Church College of Hawaii. Dr. Richard T. Wootten, president of the Church College of Hawaii, enabled the rest of my family coming to the U.S. with an employment offer to my mother to be a dorm mother at CCH, in which capacity she served for 18 years.

UTAH POLYNESIAN CHOIR



On a day in 2005, Fotu Aiono called me on the phone and said, “Tom, why don’t you come and join the Utah Polynesian Choir. We are meeting this Sunday at Lehi at 6:30 pm. You would enjoy singing with us.” He convinced me, gave me the address and I attended. Fotu was there, but interestingly, that was the last time he ever attended. I can only imagine he called me to become his permanent replacement. Diane and I sang in this choir for the next nine years.



Diane with the Aionos and Aaron, a foster son, Hale Theater, March 2014

The choir was fun. Under the leadership of Quincy Matagi and Irwin Purcell, both excellent musicians, directors and composers, along with outstanding accompanist Norma Mitchell, the choir toured wards from Payson in the south to Bountiful in the north presenting sacrament meeting talks and music. Irwin was the script writer creating excellent scripts based on spiritual themes of which the ward bishops could select the program of their choice.

The choir also performed at firesides and though small in number, the choir spirit was strong and we enjoyed singing in English, Samoan, Hawaiian, Tahitian, Tongan, Fijian, and Maori. The season culminated annually at Iosepa in Skull Valley west of Grantsville in commemoration of the Polynesian pioneers who settled there in the late 1800's.

In April of 2008 I was elected choir president and Kathy Ka'aihui vice president; Tracy Wilson, secretary; Fred Ta'ala, financial secretary; Diane Stokoe, historian; Pi'ilani Purcell, librarian; and Lester and Selena Lealatafea as activities co-chair. I served until April 2011 when Fred Ta'ala became president. We have all enjoyed the traditional summer picnic in late August and the winter social with guitars and ukuleles, island singing and dancing; also, the potluck dinners after sacrament meetings, the hospitality of the hosts, but above all, the singing and

speaking in sacrament meetings and firesides. These occasions will always be special, spiritual and rewarding and ones to look forward to.



Utah Polynesian Choir in "Aloha wear" at Iosepa in May, 2007

Link to "Did you think to pray?" by Utah Polynesian Choir:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h0j-LOaHaGk>