

Chapter 4

Labor Missions in Tonga and Hawai'i

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First Impressions

On my first trip from California to Tonga in August 1958, I saw some of the fruits of the labor missionary program in the Pacific. At the time, I did not know that such a program existed nor did I have any comprehension of the blessings and benefits the labor missionary program brought to members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints living on the islands of the Pacific. Since then I have come to appreciate the accomplishments of all who served, and I have received countless blessings in my own life because of the dedicated, unselfish work of labor missionaries in Tonga and Hawai'i.

On August 8, 1958, Jean Tyson and I traveled together from the United States to our teaching assignment at Liahona College on Tongatapu in the Kingdom of Tonga.¹ We met for the first time at the San Francisco International Airport and flew to Honolulu, Hawai'i, where we stayed two nights before getting a flight to Nandi,

Fiji. The room we shared in the Moana Hotel on Waikiki Beach was superior to any I had ever before experienced. Therefore, our room in the Mocambo Hotel in Nandi was a major disappointment. On August 11, I wrote in my journal of the Mocambo Hotel: "Our hotel room is not very impressive. The two beds are very narrow, and the mattresses are lumpy. In addition the bed spreads and the curtains at the windows are faded blue cotton print. But even worse the bathroom is similar to a high school locker room. Several wash basins range along one wall, while shower and toilet stalls occupy the rest of the room." When we arrived in the middle of the night and needed to use the facility, it seemed a very long walk from our room to the freestanding bathhouse. Fortunately we spent only one night in Nandi before flying across the island to Suva. There we were booked into the Oceanic Hotel, which was not much better than the one in Nandi. The place was overbooked, so Jean and I were given beds in a curtained-off space near the lobby. I began to wonder about the condition



Fig. 1. Adele French Feinga
Courtesy of Adele Feinga

of the place where we would be living at Liahona College.

Since we had to wait several days for the boat that would take us to our final destination—Nuku'alofa, Tongatapu, Tonga—Jean and I volunteered to help the missionaries who had been assigned to meet us when we arrived in Suva and take us to our hotel. They showed us the newly completed chapel where the Suva Branch met and the mission home where six missionaries were living. We were able to help with some of the cleaning in preparation for the Sunday meetings. During the time we were in Suva, from August 12 to 15, I recorded in my journal: "The chapel is beautiful, the most impressive building in Suva. It is located on the top of a hill with a marvelous view of Suva, the harbor, and the great Pacific Ocean. The end walls are made from white coral that was taken from the ocean. The floor plan is similar to that of the chapels in the States. Seeing the chapel and the missionary residence gives me new hope for the place we will live in Tonga." Only later did I learn that labor missionaries had constructed these buildings in Fiji and that other labor missionaries were still building chapels and schools on other Pacific Islands.

Finally, Jean and I reached Nuku'alofa on the *Tofua* early on Monday morning, August 18. Our principal, Elder Ralph Olson, met us and took us to the school. I was amazed to see that it was so large. Again, at that time I had no idea that all of the buildings—classrooms, auditorium, dormitories, and faculty housing—had been built by labor missionaries and that the cafeteria and the homes still under construction were being finished up by the labor missionary program.

How excited I was to see the home Jean and I were assigned. It was a modern three-bedroom house, similar to the houses I had previously lived in. We had an electric range and a refrigerator in the kitchen. In addition, we had an electric hot water heater and a new washing machine. The house had been completed about six months before we arrived. Only later did I appreciate the comfortable and convenient home we were privileged to share with two other single sisters—one was a teacher like us with a contract from the Pacific Board of Education, and the other was a sister missionary with an assignment to teach at Liahona College.

The Building Program in Tonga

My first week at Liahona, I learned that in addition to the students who lived on campus, there was also a group of young Tongan men who lived on campus in a section of the boys' dorm. They had been called and set apart as labor missionaries to construct buildings on the campus and at other sites on Tongatapu. Additional missionaries were also building chapels on other islands in the Kingdom of Tonga. Since none of these young men knew anything about the building trades before being called on their missions, they learned on the job from supervisors who were called from the United States to direct specific projects. Some of these supervisors and their wives also lived at Liahona in duplexes that had previously been occupied by some of the Tongan teachers and their families. We all attended church together and had callings

in the Liahona Branch, Hihifo District, of the Tongan Mission.

Even though I was not a labor missionary, my future husband, Sione Feinga, was one. Our children and I have enjoyed some special family home evenings listening to Sione's accounts of life as a student and a set-apart missionary. In 1951 he left his home in Ha'alaufuli, Vava'u, to travel by boat to attend Liahona College on Tongatapu. When he arrived as a new student, he learned that he would be a part of the first labor missionary effort that was in its infancy on the Liahona campus. Under the direction of five experienced building missionaries from the United States and three from New Zealand, the students from the school and local labor missionaries called by mission president Evon W. Huntsman were given the principle charge of erecting the first permanent buildings for the school. While the main building, two classroom buildings, and the first part of the girls' dormitory were under construction, the students and supervisors lived in grass structures near the building site. The students also went to classes in similar grass buildings.²

Sione recalls that there were five forms (grade levels) at the college when he arrived. Each form had about twenty-five students. He was fourteen and in the youngest class. In addition to attending classes, the students were assigned to help with the construction. Each class worked on the project for one full week and then attended classes for four weeks. Therefore, every fifth week each class helped with the construction. The students dug ditches, hauled sand from the beach to the construction site several miles away, mixed concrete and hauled it in wheelbarrows to the place it was needed, and did any other jobs that the supervisors requested. Because the physical labor was difficult and tiring, most of the students were eager to go back to their academic classes at the end of their workweek. Some students who lived on Tongatapu and could easily get home even dropped out of school because the labor was exhausting. This

manual labor contributed by the students was absolutely necessary because in the early 1950s most machinery used in other countries was not available in Tonga. In a little less than two years, the Liahona College facilities, which could accommodate three hundred students, were completed. All the Tongan grass huts previously used at the school were torn down.³

For the next four years no other construction was done in Tonga. According to David Cummings, "In the interval the Church Building Committee at Salt Lake City had been reorganized under the chairmanship of President Wendell Mendenhall and the entire Pacific Building Program had been revitalized and systematized to a high degree of efficiency." Then in January 1956, a much larger building program was begun in the Tongan Mission, and 116 Tongan labor missionaries were called and put under the instruction of 14 missionary supervisors called from the United States.⁴

My husband also participated in this second phase of building in Tonga. This time he was called and set apart as a full-time labor missionary by Fred W. Stone, president of the Tongan Mission. This mission proved to be on-the-job schooling as well. Cummings provided some insight into this process: "The operation had to include teaching many of the labor missionaries English and training them in the various crafts; handling materials and transshipping them sometimes four or five times from a central unloading point; crushing quarry rock and gathering rock and sand from beaches; making a quarter million concrete blocks; working without power equipment most of the time; finding a way through coils of government red tape to meet or overcome restrictions, and fighting a language barrier on every hand."⁵

In December 1955, Elder Franklin R. Knowlton was called from his home in Layton, Utah, to serve a mission as the construction supervisor for the Tongan Mission.⁶ When he arrived in Tonga, he encountered some major obstacles. One of the principle challenges was

getting the shipments of materials from the United States and other countries to Tonga when the supplies were needed. In response, Brother Knowlton decided to use the materials available even if it meant beginning many buildings, none of which could be completed in the foreseeable future. This plan drew a lot of criticism in Tonga such as, "They only know how to put in a foundation; . . . there's no harmony or efficiency in the program; . . . why can't they finish a project?" and "We have nothing against you personally, but we think you have made a big mistake."⁷ But Brother Knowlton went ahead with his plan to use the materials as they were available. For example, at one time he had twenty-thousand bags of cement in storage space that was at a premium. The cement needed to be used before the humidity spoiled it. Consequently, five large school buildings and seventeen teachers' homes at Liahona, one mission home, three missionary residences, the renovation of all Liahona school buildings, and seventeen chapels were begun between March 1956 and July 1958. The first structures completed were teachers' residences in July 1957 and the dormitories in March 1958. Over a period of two and a half years, the materials to finish the projects finally arrived so the missionaries could complete the remaining 75 percent of the projects. Brother Knowlton kept the program rolling along even though only a few buildings were completed before the first chapels were dedicated in May 1958.

Brother Jack Dowdle, a missionary supervisor called from Boise, Idaho, to be the treasurer for the Tongan building program, reported that during the three years and three months that the project was in operation in Tonga, the missionaries averaged one building completed every twenty-seven days, not including the renovation done on buildings constructed in the early 1950s, despite the fact that most of the buildings were completed in a period from October 1957 to April 1958.⁸ When I arrived in Tonga in August 1958, only four of the chapels had been completed and dedicated. Elder Marion G. Romney



Fig. 2. Working on the roof of one of the houses built for the Hawai'i Temple guides. Left to right: Wells Nielsen, Sione Feinga, Filiku Pututau, 1960.

Courtesy of Adele Feinga

had dedicated three of these. Seven more chapels were dedicated on Tongatapu between October 18, 1958, and March 14, 1959.⁹ I was fortunate to be able to attend most of these seven dedications.

In my journal I recorded my impressions of the dedication of the Mu'a chapel held on Sunday, October 19, 1958:

The chapel dedications here are really unique. The one held in Mu'a was especially different because Prince Tupou To'a Tungi attended and spoke during the meeting. The dedication began at 10 A.M. with the arrival of Prince Tungi. President and Sister Stone greeted him, and the choir sang the Tongan national anthem. Following the anthem, Prince Tungi unlocked the door of the chapel and entered followed by nearly four hundred members and visitors. The dedication itself followed the typical LDS format. The branch president, Sione Olive, conducted the service that began with an introduction of government officials present, an opening hymn, and opening prayer. The Labor Missionary choir, the Mu'a Branch choir, and the Liahona College choir each sang one number during the program[.] I

was impressed with the marvelous sounds of each group. I could feel each choir member's love of the Savior as he/she sang. When it was my turn to sing in the trio, 'Cast Thy Bread Upon the Waters,' with Sister Theresa Hadlock and Jean Tyson, I felt very inadequate. My contribution was musically correct, but I lacked the all-pervading spirit that I heard in the choirs. Prince Tungi gave one of the talks, and President Fred W. Stone gave the dedicatory prayer.

A Tongan feast was held in front of the chapel after the service. Because this dedication was on Sunday, there was no dancing done between the service and the feast as was done at the dedication in Vaini.

These chapel dedications brought to a close a time of spiritual and temporal growth for all who participated in the labor missionary program. Many people were touched by the miracles of the Lord when no other help was available. I remember in particular the talk given by Brother Vernon L. Gale, the electrician for the Tongan building project, at the dedication of the Fua'amotu chapel on November 1, 1958. This account in Brother Gale's own words is recorded by David Cummings:

As we were preparing to work on the Fua'amotu chapel, Elder Knowlton asked me if we had sufficient electrical supplies to commence. I replied that we had only fourteen outlet boxes, whereas it would take from 48 to 50 to do the job. Elder Knowlton said: "We will start and when we run out we will do something else."

As the chapel walls went up we installed boxes, never running out. Whenever we went to the storeroom for another box, one was always there. After installing fifty boxes, we moved to Liahona, taking along seven of the boxes with which we had started. Elder Knowlton asked again: "Can we start the Nuku'alofa chapel?" I replied: "We still have seven, half the number of boxes we started with, in spite of the fact that we have installed fifty." I searched all over Liahona College and found fifteen boxes in a place I had searched many times before, so we were in business again. These boxes kept us going until our supplies arrived from America. Please don't try to tell me that this is not the Lord's work.¹⁰

Beginning in March 1959 we held several parties to honor the labor missionaries who would soon be finishing the project and leaving.¹¹

At Liahona we had an entertainment committee made up of representatives from the missionaries from America and the teachers at the school. This committee planned socials a couple of times a month. The first farewell event was sponsored by this entertainment committee. The last Friday evening in March, we had dinner, a program, and games—all held in the recently completed cafeteria. We used the new trays and utensils from the cafeteria. What a joy not to have to bring our own! I served on the committee that month, so in the afternoon I helped the elders freeze ice cream and make the punch we served that evening. I was also a part of the program, playing the clarinet in the German band, which was conducted by Elder Butler. But when I got the giggles in the middle of one of the pieces, we all had to stop and start over again. How embarrassing!

The Liahona Branch Relief Society held a Saturday afternoon affair that included playing games and eating a complete meal of *lu pulu* (a traditional Tongan dish wrapped in banana leaves), *kumala* (yellow yam), *ufi* (white yam), punch, and cake. One Friday evening the students and faculty prepared a special program, showed movies, and served refreshments to thank the missionaries for their work. Another week all the labor missionaries invited the teachers to a big feast and games held on the school playing field. We ate under a shelter of coconut leaves erected especially for this affair. In the evening everyone on campus enjoyed the dance held in the cafeteria. Two string-bands took turns playing throughout the evening so that we always had music to dance to.

With the successful completion of the building program in Tonga, all the missionaries were released. The majority of the supervisors and their families returned to their homes in the United States, but a few stayed a couple more months in Tonga or continued their missions in

Sāmoa or in other island groups where labor missionaries were still constructing buildings. The local missionaries took a well-deserved holiday and then looked for work. My friend and future husband, Sione Feinga, went home to Vava'u for a couple of weeks. When he returned to Tongatapu, he applied for and got a job with a new government company—Tonga Construction Company. This company was looking for employees with building experience to construct warehouses, offices, all other buildings. Nearly all of the fourteen other newly hired workers had also served as labor missionaries. They were all happy to have this job because at that time it paid twice as much a day as the other jobs available in Nuku'alofa. In less than a month, Sione and his friends already had begun to reap monetary blessings for the two to three years they had served as labor missionaries. At that time none of them knew that the Lord would need their physical labor again.

My Experience with the Church Building Mission in Hawai'i

Nearly thirty-five years before building began, President McKay prophesied that the Church would build a college in Hawai'i. "The time was February 7, 1921, the place Lā'ie, Hawai'i, the occasion a flag-raising ceremony. The participants were a group of school children—children of many races pledging allegiance to the flag of the United States. Stirred by the sight of children of many races united by the common bond of citizenship as they saluted their national emblem and sharply aware of the greater bond of the Gospel which linked them together, President David O. McKay (an apostle at that time) was moved to declare that one day the Church would build a college in Lā'ie."¹²

On February 12, 1955, ground was broken on a cane field in Lā'ie for the construction of the buildings to house the Church College of Hawai'i (CCH, now Brigham Young University–Hawai'i, or BYU–Hawai'i). This huge undertaking was done

under the direction of the same Church building program that had directed the building of school facilities and chapels in Tonga. On December 17, 1958, President David O. McKay returned to Lā'ie to dedicate the completed college.¹³

Within a year the Church College of Hawai'i needed more dormitories, so in November 1959 the General Authorities approved the construction of additional dormitories. At the same time plans were made to build a unique Polynesian village on the Lā'ie campus and a new bureau of information for the Hawai'i Temple.¹⁴

David Cummings reported that President McKay himself asked Wendell B. Mendenhall, chairman of the Church Building Committee, "Brother Mendenhall, would it be possible to call young men from the isles of the sea who are trained in this experience to come to Hawai'i and do this work?" "I think it is a splendid idea, President McKay," was his confident reply. "We should make every effort to do just that."¹⁵

President McKay authorized Brother Mendenhall to issue the new mission calls. Joseph E. Wilson, who had directed the initial building of the college, with his wife, Pearl, accepted the call to return to Hawai'i as general supervisors of the second building project. J. Archie Cottle and his wife, Mildred, who had served a labor mission in Tonga for three and a half years, accepted the call to serve again, this time in Hawai'i as Brother Wilson's assistants. Twelve other men who had completed missions as building supervisors in various islands of the Pacific also accepted a second call to serve.¹⁶ As the work progressed, other supervisors were called to help with the many building projects.

As President Mendenhall made travel arrangements to go to the South Pacific to call labor missionaries to work on the second building project in Hawai'i, Jean Tyson and I were making plans to go to Suva, where I could have my loyalty oath signed at the American Consulate in order to renew my California teaching credentials. Summer vacation for Liahona began on November 21. We left for Fiji on the *Aoniū*

that same day. We had expected to return on the same boat four weeks later, but before we left Tonga we learned we could get a seat back to Tonga on the charter flight that Brother Mendenhall had arranged for on December 1. None of us knew why he was making this trip to Tonga, but I felt it was an answer to my prayers. I was even happy to pay the extra cost to avoid spending a couple of days being deathly sick sailing on the ocean.

Our return flight on Fiji Airways with Brother Mendenhall arrived in Tonga a little after four o'clock in the afternoon. President Mendenhall got right to work. He asked Fakatou, the former local labor missionary supervisor, to contact thirty-one former labor missionaries and ask them to attend a meeting at Liahona that evening. Only the six who were not on Tongatapu did not come. There was much speculation about President Mendenhall's request. Sione was working on the roof of a building in Nuku'alofa when Fakatou called him down and gave him the message. Sione and his friend conjectured that Liahona

needed more buildings and that they would be called to serve another mission. They agreed that they would accept a new call, but they were also reluctant to give up their high-paying jobs with the Tonga Construction Company. What a surprise they had when they learned that the call was for another mission, but this time in Hawai'i.

By the next morning the news of the missionary calls was all over the island. Thirteen of the men were married, one of whom had been married just the morning of the call. Nevertheless, they all agreed to serve the Lord again in the building program in Hawai'i. President Mendenhall then went to Sāmoa and New Zealand to extend calls to other former labor missionaries from those countries. He also called a group of young men from Hawai'i to immediately begin preparing dormitory and eating facilities for the groups of missionaries who would arrive from the South Pacific.

When President Mendenhall spoke to the young men in Tonga on December 1, he expected their departure date would be about February 1, 1960. However, it took nearly three months to assemble and process all the paperwork and to get the proper approval from both the United States and Tongan governments. The group finally left Tonga on the *Tofua* on March 2, 1960. They sailed to Pago Pago, Sāmoa, to join the missionaries called from Sāmoa. On March 8, fifty-three new missionaries bound for the Church Building Mission in Hawai'i, otherwise known as Project Number Two, boarded a Pan American jet clipper and began their long journey to Hawai'i. Many of them had never been on a plane before. The project yearbook states:

After the initial unease of [the] novice air traveler, the group relaxed. Under the direction of Brother Lafi Toelupe, the Building Missionaries gave a program of dancing and singing. The flight proceeded without incident until shortly after the refueling stop at Canton Island, violent storm clouds appeared. The pilot, ordering seat belts to be refastened, instructed passengers to be prepared for rough flying. They carried out his orders, and then the Building Missionaries



Fig. 3. Feki Samani (left) and Sione Feinga taking a break outside on unfinished house being built for the Hawai'i Temple guides in August 1960

Courtesy of Adele Feinga

bowed their heads, as one of their group led in a prayer for safe passage to their destination. Almost instantly the threatening storm clouds moved away on either side of the plane, and it passed through the area untouched by any outside turbulence. Pilot and crew were astonished—[they] told Brother Toelupe they had never experienced such a phenomena.¹⁷

It was ten o'clock at night when the plane finally landed at the Honolulu International Airport. The plane crew and fellow passengers reluctantly said farewell to the missionary group because traveling with these young men had been such a rewarding experience. After going through customs, the missionaries were met by President Mendenhall, Joseph E. Wilson, and other building supervisors. The last forty miles of their long trip to the Church College of Hawai'i was by bus. The group from Tonga was amazed at the many lights and structures they passed on their way to Lā'ie. Sione later told me that he did not know that there was so much ocean and land in the whole world.



Fig. 4. An aerial shot of the Church College of Hawai'i (later BYU–Hawai'i) taken soon after its founding in 1955
Courtesy of BYU–Hawai'i Archives

My firsthand information on the project in Hawai'i came from the letters that I received from Sione. We corresponded weekly, but because of the erratic mail service to and from Tonga, we often received two or three letters on the same day and none for several weeks. The first project that Sione worked on was the new dormitories. In one letter he drew plans of the buildings he was working on. He also marveled at the amount of concrete they were using. He estimated that on just two of the dorms they would use four times as much concrete as they had on all the buildings he had worked on in Tonga. Sione was also pleased to let me know that J. Wells Nielsen, who had served as a supervisor in Tonga, arrived in Hawai'i in April 1960 to also serve another mission. His family joined him in the summer.

In addition to the work done at the college, the missionaries built and renovated many other buildings in Lā'ie. In June 1960 Sione began work on a new home for the temple president and four other homes for the temple guides. Brother Nielsen supervised this project. Then, in April 1961, Brother Nielsen and his crew began the faculty housing project on Moana Street. A total of fifteen homes were constructed during this project.¹⁸

The scope of Project Number Two grew as the work went forward. In addition to building the new dormitories and faculty housing, the missionaries also added an annex to the cafeteria, built tennis courts, added curbing and more paved walks, enclosed the campus with a brick wall, and repainted the entire college.¹⁹ Some of the missionaries made additions to the temple from the plans drawn by Church architect Harold W. Burton. The entire old Bureau of Information building was replaced with two tall structures



Fig. 5. The Church College of Hawai'i after additional buildings had been constructed
Courtesy of BYU–Hawai'i Archives

on either side of an open court with reflecting pools and covered colonnaded walks.²⁰ These buildings are now called the Visitors' Center and also house the Family History Center and the Beehive Clothing Center. The other major project, the Polynesian Cultural Center, did not get underway until early 1962 because the location was moved to Kamehameha Highway from the original site between the temple and the college.

President Edward L. Clissold made these comments about the construction of the center:

Although the swampy condition of the land, building restrictions, heavy rains and other obstacles had to be overcome, the work proceeded with typical labor missionary dispatch. Basic credit for that achievement goes to the men who directed the work—their experience and devotion. . . . All had had a diversified building experience, but they ran into something new in creating the Polynesian structures that make up the Center. They were greatly aided by the meticulous work of Douglas W. Burton, who had spent two years in research as preparation for producing the blue prints [sic] which guided them. The final factor of success was the native

brethren. They have done the manual work and now and then added their own touch to get just the right effect.²¹

Another part of Project Number Two was assisting in the renovation of chapels all over Hawai'i. One of the first ones done was the Lā'ie chapel. Then when the Lā'ie Third Ward was created in August 1961, all the missionaries became a part of the new ward and President Wilson was called as the bishop. The third ward was assigned to meet in one of the old barracks buildings that had been brought in as part of the original CCH campus. It was no surprise that in just ten days the ward members had completely renovated the building, including putting up a steeple.²²

Missionary building supervisors were also sent to many communities throughout the Hawaiian Islands to supervise chapel construction and renovations. People from the local congregations helped build these houses of worship.

My three-year contract to teach at Liahona College was over at the end of July 1961. Soon after the first of that year, I began making plans

to leave Tonga. I applied to teach in the Hawai'i public schools since during our year's correspondence, Sione and I had decided to be married when his mission was over. In the process of applying, I asked Dr. Owen Cook, the executive secretary of the Pacific Board of Education, to write a letter of recommendation for me. He was also an assistant superintendent of the Mt. Diablo School District where I had taught before going to Tonga. In April 1961 Dr. Cook offered me a job teaching English at the Church College of Hawai'i. I felt very blessed for this opportunity to work on another Church campus.

On July 26, Jean Tyson and I left Tonga on a chartered airplane that took us to Pago Pago, Sāmoa. The flight took only three and a half hours. I was especially grateful that I did not have to make that trip by boat! We had a four-day stopover in Pago Pago before catching our flight to Honolulu on the evening of July 31.

I arrived in Lā'ie early on the morning of August 1. For the next ten months I was busy with my teaching responsibilities on campus and my callings in my ward. Even though the second missionary building project in Hawai'i did not end until late in 1963, when I finished the 1961–62 school year Sione was released as a missionary. He had by that time served nearly six years as a labor missionary. We were married in the Hawai'i Temple on June 2, 1962. It was not until we applied for our marriage license did I learn my husband-to-be's full name—Sione Hetau Marl Feinga.

In Retrospect

As I reflect on the impact the labor missionary program has had on my life, on the lives of all those who did the actual construction, and on the lives of those who did and continue to benefit from using the buildings, I know that all of the personal sacrifice and hardships the laborers endured helped build their testimonies of and faith in Jesus Christ and helped spread the gospel throughout the world. These builders did not preach with words, but the

products of their labors have brought interest in the Church from which hundreds of conversions have followed.

For example, David Cummings wrote about how building a chapel on the island of Niue as part of the construction program in the Tonga Mission became a blessing for many people:

A number of influential persons opposed the idea of a Mormon chapel in the community. Elder Cottle met the resistance patiently and with a word or two of prophecy. He told the objectors that the day would come when they would be glad a Mormon chapel had been built on the island.

The chapel had not been completed very long when a terrific hurricane struck Niue. Of the 3,700 residents, 1,700 were left homeless. Houses were swept away, business structures were badly damaged and not a church was left standing—except that of the Latter-day Saints.

During the storm, which lasted through the night, the chapel was crowded to capacity with refugees. Having seen it built and knowing its solid construction, they had fled to it immediately. Elder Cottle's prediction had come true.²³

The blessings that our family has received because of Sione's labor missionary service are innumerable. Perhaps our greatest temporal blessing is that Sione has almost always had a job. When he first applied for work with the Carpenter's Union, the leaders looked askance at his résumé. He had never been paid for any of the work he had done in Hawai'i. Neither he nor I understood the difference between a first and a second class carpenter. We appeared to be totally ignorant about carpentry. No one in Honolulu was willing to give Sione work until Dora Hao, a student I met at Church College, referred Sione to her sister, who knew a contractor who was willing to give him a chance as a laborer. Despite the downturn in the Hawaiian economy and the reduction in construction projects in the state, Sione continually had employment. He has been able to support me and our four children so that I could be a stay-at-home mom when the children were growing up.

Another blessing we enjoy is the home Sione built for us in the evenings and on Saturdays. It took him a year with some occasional help from his friends who had also served labor missions. All of the skills that he needed to build our house, he learned in on-the-job training in the houses he worked on under Brother Nielsen's direction both in Tonga and in Hawai'i.

In addition our children have all had the opportunity to work part-time at the Polynesian Cultural Center, and all three of our daughters are graduates of BYU–Hawai'i. These buildings have been a blessing in their lives.

Perhaps the greatest blessing the young labor missionaries gained when they willingly served the Lord as builders was spiritual growth. The mature building supervisors were great examples of humble, dedicated servants of the Lord. Brother Nielsen recorded one of his experiences that set a great example for Sione:

The great challenge to my faith and abilities came in June 1958 when Supervisor Knowlton assigned me to finish the Fua'amotu chapel. I was so fearful of such a responsibility that I asked him to let me help one of the other brethren with their Chapel and have him guide and supervise me in the building of my assigned chapel.

But the Lord wanted to teach me a great lesson, and Brother Knowlton's answer was, "No." He said he felt I would be able to do the job, and the Lord would help me and bless me in it.

The chapel had been started before I arrived. . . . When I went to work on it, there were a number of problems that had to be solved. . . . They caused me a great deal of anxiety. We prayed daily as a family that I would be able to work out the best solution for the problems, but I could not reach a solution that satisfied me. My wife had reminded me many times before of the words of Nephi: "I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them" (1 Nephi 3:7).

Once again she encouraged me with these words. We decided there was one thing we hadn't

done that we could do—add fasting to our prayers. So our family of three fasted and prayed for twenty-four hours. The next day, Monday, I went to work with peace of mind and renewed hope. After looking over our work that morning, I suddenly knew how to solve the problems. . . . From then on the work went forward with great support and love from the people of Fua'amotu as well as my faithful crew of Tongan labor missionaries. Nephi, with help from the Lord, had built a ship. With the help of the Lord, the Tongan labor missionaries, and the Branch people, I had completed a chapel.²⁴

Our family's life is richer because of my husband's call to serve the Lord by constructing buildings for education and worship. I concur with David Cummings, who says, "As long as gospel lessons are taught and Christ's ideals are cherished, as long as priesthood functions for salvation of the living and the dead, as long as the Church endures, the glory of the original Building Program will shine, a splendid achievement of the human spirit, an Elias of eternal truth—mighty missionary of the Pacific."²⁵

Adele French Feinga, a retired schoolteacher, completed a mission with her husband in September 2004 and is now a full-time wife, mother of four, and grandmother of thirteen.

Notes

1. Until late 1959, Liahona High School was known as Liahona College.
2. David W. Cummings, *Mighty Missionary of the Pacific* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1961), 136–37.
3. Cummings, *Mighty Missionary of the Pacific*, 187.
4. Cummings, *Mighty Missionary of the Pacific*, 138.
5. Cummings, *Mighty Missionary of the Pacific*, 138–39.
6. Arlean Tyler and Anna Po'uha, eds., *History of the LDS Tongan Building Program, 1955–1959*, mimeographed manuscript in possession of Adele Feinga, Lā'ie, Hawai'i, 23.

7. Tyler and Po'uha, *History of the LDS Tongan Building Program, 1955–1959*, 3.
8. Tyler and Po'uha, *History of the LDS Tongan Building Program, 1955–1959*, 4, 7–8.
9. Tyler and Po'uha, *History of the LDS Tongan Building Program, 1955–1959*, 7.
10. Cummings, *Mighty Missionary of the Pacific*, 160.
11. Though most of the missionaries left, a few of the supervisors did stay until the end of June to complete the last details, some of which were on the new mission home that was dedicated the first Sunday in June, just before President and Sister Stone completed their mission and returned to California.
12. Alice C. Pack, ed., *The Building Missionaries in Hawaii, 1960 to 1963*; yearbook in possession of Sione Feinga, Lā'ie, Hawai'i, 5.
13. Pack, *The Building Missionaries in Hawaii, 1960 to 1963*, 5–6.
14. Cummings, *Mighty Missionary of the Pacific*, 293.
15. Cummings, *Mighty Missionary of the Pacific*, 293–94.
16. Cummings, *Mighty Missionary of the Pacific*, 294.
17. Pack, *The Building Missionaries in Hawaii, 1960 to 1963*, 50.
18. Pack, *The Building Missionaries in Hawaii, 1960 to 1963*, 90.
19. Pack, *The Building Missionaries in Hawaii, 1960 to 1963*, 83.
20. Pack, *The Building Missionaries in Hawaii, 1960 to 1963*, 96.
21. Pack, *The Building Missionaries in Hawaii, 1960 to 1963*, 133, 164.
22. Pack, *The Building Missionaries in Hawaii, 1960 to 1963*, 102.
23. Cummings, *Mighty Missionary of the Pacific*, 149.
24. Tyler and Po'uha, *History of the LDS Tongan Building Program, 1955–1959*, 87.
25. Cummings, *Mighty Missionary of the Pacific*, 291.