

Opinion

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Henry Dyer Remembers: My Early Life in Fiji, 1962-1982



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Opinion

Introduction, by Kieran James

This article describes and explores the early life of Fiji national soccer champion Henry Dyer. It covers the period 1962-1982 and gives a fascinating insight into growing up in multi-racial Lautoka City, in Fiji's western region, during the tail-end of and immediately following the era of British colonial rule. The article also describes the challenges which Henry Dyer faced as a mixed-race child of English and indigenous Fijian heritage. Henry Dyer played for both Nadi and Lautoka in the Fiji national-league in the 1980s and represented the Fiji national team in many games, including the 1983 South Pacific Games in Apia, Samoa; the May 1985 friendly 3-0 win over England's Newcastle United; and the unsuccessful June 1985 winter tour of New Zealand. Henry presently lives in Nakavu Village, Nadi Town, Fiji Islands, where he has served as both assistant and acting village headman.

Main Article, by Henry Dyer Tuidraki

My great-grandma came from the Dyer family. Her name was Helen Dyer and she came from Yorkshire, England, United Kingdom. The family came as sandalwood traders and they were originally based at the northern tip of Vanua Levu at Macuata. Her dad married into one of the chiefly families in Macuata; that's where she got her chiefly status. She married into one of the chiefly families in Bau. And she had a few children; most of them were boys. Two of them I can remember were Tuni and Jimmy Dyer. They had one sister Martha. Helen Dyer married into the Tuinitoga family in Bau. They were the *matanivanua* for the *vunivalu* of Bau who proclaimed themselves to be the kings of Fiji at this time during the colonial era.

Her husband died and she moved down to Nadi meeting up with one Meli Kubu of the *yavusa navatulevu* from the village of Nakavu. She had two children, Anare Tuidraki and Makaret Biau. She later changed their names to Henry Dyer and Margaret Dyer. This was done to make it easier for the children to get jobs within the colonial system. Henry Dyer started to work at the CSR, meaning the Colonial Sugar Refinery Mill, at the age of fourteen. Margaret married into the Watkins family. So here we can see the link between the Dyers in Bau and the Dyers here in Nadi and Lautoka. Henry Dyer was

my grandfather and Margaret Watkins was my grand-aunt. My dad married Vasiti Yalayala of the Namoli Village but she was originally from Rewa (Nalase Village) with blood-ties to the village of Yabaca of the *yavusa navatulevu*, also known as Nagaga Village up in the mountains in Lautoka.

My mum came from a religious family. Her grandfather was a missionary. She came from a family of twelve. Their names were: Ananaisa Diri (a sergeant in the police force, father of Samuela Yalayala); Litia Marama (mother of Paulo Nawalu, Japan 7s rugby coach); Timoci Waivure; Simone Tora; Reapi Lolo; Vasiti Suvewa; Siveniasi Rasakiwa ("Bosoni"); Anaseni Bulivativati; Josaia Vanua; Ema Nai; Watisoni Nasalo; and Luisa Dria. They were all excellent athletes in a variety of sports. My uncle, Watisoni, and my mum were both sports heroes to me at a young age. They inspired me to become like them also. Uncle Watisoni Nasalo played as a first five-eighth for Fiji (Fiji rugby debut 11 June 1974 versus New Zealand XV at Suva) and my mum represented Fiji in hockey in the 1970s.

Early Years at Simla (Lautoka City), Western Fiji



Figure 1: Map of Fiji.

I was brought up in Navutu (Lautoka) where my grandfather (Henry Dyer) worked in the mill as a boilermaker. This was when the sugar refinery was run by South Pacific Sugar Mills (SPSM). When I was with my mum and dad, we were renting somewhere in

Simla (Lautoka). Figure 1 is a map of Fiji Islands (Lautoka is in the north-western corner of the main island, Viti Levu) and Figure 2 shows Lautoka City Centre.

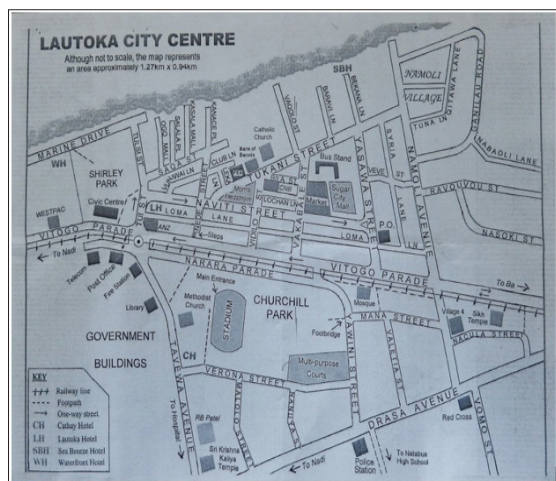


Figure 2: Lautoka City Centre Map (Showing Churchill Park, Namoli Village, and Methodist Church).

To get a game of soccer with the other boys was difficult because there were only two or three small parks. They were just roundabouts. This was big for us at that age. The Indian boys owned the soccer balls and they would only pick one or two Fijian boys to be in one team. As a youngster, if you had the skills you would be picked all the time, ahead of the other boys, so I was lucky that I was able to play all the time with the guys. Because the Indian boys had money with them in their style of living they were able to control the games. This carried on until I was in my youth when I moved to Namoli and when I was moving backwards and forwards to Nadi. I knew that you had to adapt to their style of living to be in the team. This continued to be the case until I played in the club competition which is when the trend stopped. Then you see all the Fijian boys join in at the clubs. However, I enjoyed mixing with the Indian boys, from a young age, because I was able to learn their language, culture, and traditions. By contrast, a guy who grew up in the city might find it difficult to adapt. Today I find it easy to mix with the Indian community and you will know what time to leave the group because you can sense that something is not right. If you are sitting in a get-together with the boys you might sense that something is not right amongst them. For example, there might be a feud or a grudge amongst them. It is better to get out before there is a problem. If you don't know the culture and the tradition it will be like the Gaza Strip where you are just waiting around to be bombed because you don't know your way out to safety. So I could say I was fortunate to be brought up in the way that I was brought up. I learned a lot of things in life.

Living in Namoli Village (Lautoka City) and Primary-School Days

Then I moved down to live at my grandma's place in Namoli Village (Nabekavu) because my mum and dad split up. Namoli Village is where I first played soccer; I was not taught how to play. I first started playing wearing my mum's hockey boots. At primary-school level I was educated at Drasa Avenue School. This was

formerly known as the Lautoka European School and it was for the children of the colonial era. I may have been in one of the first cohorts from outside of the colonial system. Before that time the school was for white children only.

I went in with the children of the lawyers, doctors, magistrates, and judges. I started school in 1969 and the colonial era ended in 1970. I was one of the first cohorts to get into the school from outside. One reason was that my dad worked for the sugar mill then. The other children from outside I remember came from the Waiyavi suburb of Lautoka. There was just a handful of Fijian students there then and part-Europeans. There were also some Indian and European children. Therefore, the school was a mixture of colonial and post-colonial children. I could say that I was quite fortunate to pass through the school at that time. I still meet some of my former school-mates who have since become successful as teachers, doctors, lawyers, and businessmen. I schooled with the children of the Punja Group of Companies. I was rather unfortunate not to make my education through to tertiary level. This was partly because I was living with my grandma in the village. There was no culture there where children were encouraged or pushed to do their homework. Drasa Avenue students who succeeded were: Faiyaz Fisal Koya, Rohit Punja, and Ajay Punja. Other groups at that time were: "Waiyavi boys": John Ah Jong, Fale and Litiola Kava, and William, Male, Clive, and Roland Lilo; "Compound Crowd" / "Coffin Brothers": Herman, Frank, and Sister Lavonne.

My first time playing soccer was at Drasa Avenue School from Class 3. Then I went on to be in the school team with Sam Work and Niko Lilo who were both also in the same class. I remember there were some talented players whom I admired but they didn't excel such as Tommy Levy, Peni Qaugau, and Joe Johnson. We became later on champions of our grade for two years. Drasa Avenue is where we formed a combination of teamwork to lift our primary-school up to win in our grade. We became heroes of our school. Our coach of the school-team was Master Satendra Kumar. Niko, Sam, and I were picked to represent Lautoka Primary Schools for the Inter-District in Labasa, 1975. This was the first time that I went in an airplane. Most of us had their first trips on an airplane. There was a feeling that just to go over to Labasa was so great. It was like a visit to another world. I scored two goals in the final. We were the champions of Viti Levu Island and we played that match as a final against a school representing Vanua Levu Island (Tambia Primary School). The Lautoka senior players saw me score these two goals. Straight after the game Hippo, from the Press Soccer Club, invited me to play for his junior club Leopardo. But at that time I was still too small.

In my upbringing in childhood there were a lot of things which helped me become who I am. These things helped me to adapt to anything in life. For example, waking up in the morning to cut firewood with an axe to warm yourself up after a cold night in (Nabekavu) Namoli at age 13 (Class 7) and making your tea in the morning. As another example, going to dig for sea worms by the seaside to use as bait. We had to have the skills to know how to get the baits. To go and get your fish you had to learn how to set the baits first and then you had to learn how to fish.

During the weekends, we would paddle on the tin canoes to the nearby island of Bekana to fish on the reefs. By going out to fish regularly we knew what types of fish were on which parts of the reef. We had the names of the parts of the reef such as Quara Ni Kabatia, meaning “the mouth of this type of species of fish” and so on. During paddling back home to the village we would try to be back before the boys would go out for touch rugby so we would have time to go out and play too. If it started to get cloudy or started to rain we had no sight or vision of our village; we only had the landmark which was the mountains. There was a peak and we would just aim for that peak. Even if we could not see the village, we would know that we were heading home to safety. So I believe I learned the basics of nature and I learned to adapt as any human being should. So I’m grateful for my upbringing with my grandmum and my uncles and aunts from the village Namoli. This was when I was brought up in the village.

When we were young kids in Namoli, during the eight-week school-holidays, we would go up to Tavakubu near the cemetery. There was a big guava fruit forest. We would catch the bus up to the cemetery and start looking for guavas to make jam. If you did not have your bus-fare back you had to carry the guavas back down to the village of Namoli which was around five miles away. We would follow all of the shortcuts from the cemetery down to the Tavakubu Village and then down through where all the Waiyavi Stages 2, 3, and 4 estates are today. There were no housing scheme buildings there back then.

Sometimes, in the heat of the Tavakubu sun, we would be stung by the hornets while trying to pick guavas. If you were lucky you would be stung only once. Sometimes you would be stung three or four times. You would feel the pain in your back and still go on looking for guavas. It was like being shot on your arms and still holding your rifle to shoot back with pain. All of your other mates would be laughing at you as the hornets would be chasing you through the guava bushes. You could tell that they were laughing inside.

Sometimes, during the holidays, we would go to the same area in Tavakubu River coming down from Yabaca. We would be looking for big and thick bamboo to use to make bamboo guns for New Year’s Festival. We could not afford fire-crackers. This was the way to celebrate amongst the children in the village. It was really noisy blasting these bamboo guns. We would carry this bamboo from the river to the road and wait for the bus. We would put the bamboo baggage into the luggage bays at the bottom of the bus. Back then to carry a bamboo gun through town was a big thing. It was like carrying your New Year’s present back home. I haven’t seen or heard a bamboo gun for ages. Maybe the bamboo gun era has come to a close because of the influx of the fire-crackers. People have more money now and more people can pay for fire-crackers. People now don’t know what happened at that time. The children then really had to struggle to make their lives enjoyable.

At the Namoli Village Grounds, where the Methodist Church sits today, we used to play rugby. We would take our singlets off and we would choose which singlet to wrap and tie into a ball to play rugby. In the evenings, after dinner, we would come and meet at

the old Namoli Methodist Church. This is where the community hall sits today. We would sit there until about 9pm singing Fijian folk songs and sometimes church songs. Sometimes we would become a bit noisy because of all the laughing and joking. Our grandfather, Ratumeli Qoro, who lived just beside the village cemetery two blocks away from the church, would just yell out once and we would all disappear into the darkness.

When I was growing up I knew the family history of the Dyer family. My grandfather told me it when I was small. The Fijians are one race in the world which looks after the children of their sisters whether they are born out of wedlock or not. The Fijian race has a lot of love for its *vasu* (meaning “the sister’s children”) be they Hindu, Chinese, Indian or South African. They always have this love for the sister. If my sister gave birth to an Indian boy we would not think any better or any worse about that. We only think of the sister and the child. We don’t want to bring any unnecessary harm into her or his life.

My self-identity then was that I was part-European because I had the Dyer name and because of my complexion. I was always known as Henry Dyer in school. There were quite a number of people in my age group in school who would joke to me about my being half-caste and part-European but they knew who I was. As we grew up into youth things changed for all of us. When you are young it is quite difficult to soak the teasing in and to accept it. You are still young and your brain is not ready for all these things. There is no-one to comfort you or to advise you. I learnt the hard way but I’m glad that I came out of it. I think I became more Fijian in my self-identity as I grew older mainly because I live in the centre of the village and because my wife is native iTaukei (i.e. indigenous Fijian) from the border of Tailevu and Naitasiri (Vatukarasa). So everything around me nowadays is Fijian. It is breakfast, lunch, and dinner Fijian. However, I did enjoy my upbringing.

In my childhood in Namoli Village (I moved there when I was in Class 4 or 5 or around nine or ten-years-old), I was the family pet to all my grandparents. In Fijian tradition those whom your parents call uncles and aunties are called your grandparents, so I had a lot of grandparents. My grandmum’s (Ulamila Neisau) sister’s (Kesaia Tawa Bouwalu) husband was the chief of Namoli Village (the Taukeki vidilo) Ratu Jone Bouwalu. He was a very good outboard mechanic. I was his boy every afternoon to strip his outboards and put them back together. I was very close to him maybe because I was very young and I was his grandchild. So getting to Bekana Island for school-holidays was a very easy thing for me to achieve. There is a beautiful beach on Bekana Island facing the Lautoka City. It is just like Akuilau Island facing Denarau Island. They have very similar beaches. Ratu Jone Bouwalu had an old Seagull outboard engine. He would carry this Seagull engine as a standby in the boat. If anything happened to the outboard engines back then the Seagull would never go wrong. It would bring you back home.

There was an old man who lived alone on the island. His name was Tai Peni. We used to take his food and water over when we visited. However, to our surprise, he had often not finished the food we had brought over previously. Only half had been eaten. When we asked if there was something wrong and why he hadn’t been eating

the food, he would say he was living off the fish from the sea and the root-crops which he had planted on the island so he was a real islander. The people who lived with me when I was small will know that I am not hiding how I was brought up.

The belief in witchcraft or voodoo was very strong. In our childhood times we would hear all kinds of stories of the demons' deeds including taking lives away of the ordinary villagers. At night, when we were walking in the village, we would have goose bumps because of the stories we had heard. We would all tell the same stories. If someone gave a sudden yell to make fun we would be really terrified.

Secondary School Days at Ba Provincial Secondary School

My mum placed me in Ba Provincial Secondary School (Lautoka City) so that I could be accustomed to meeting the youth of the Ba province. (Ba Provincial Secondary School is located on the outskirts of Lautoka behind Kashmir Settlement and close to Tavakubu Village, Saru.) Most of the students then were from the Yasawa Islands, Lautoka, Rakiraki, Ba, and Nadi (Figure 1). It was a good experience to learn the ways of interaction including the language and dialects of the Ba province. Then we had students from Ra with their different approaches and perspectives on life. There were also students all the way from Vanua Levu but who were living in Lautoka. You could tell that all of the dialects were totally different from each other so one had to be very cautious so that one's interactions were respectful and could be understood. The students from the Yasawas were very cheerful and they had a traditional Fijian style at school. You could tell from how they talked with other students including the jokes, taunts, and gossip. This would make the day more interesting. We would keep on carrying on talking and joking.

There was this vice-principal, Master Meli. He was from Yasawa and he was a very strict guy. He was very strict because he did not want the relaxed culture of the Yasawa Islands to spoil the Yasawa children's education. The Yasawa boys wanted friends and we also wanted their friendship because they were good ukulele players and good singers. We used to enjoy spending time under the mango trees and in the guava forests which were all around the outskirts of the school compound. We would all sing the island folk songs. The good thing about these boys is that they knew how to strum that ukulele. One of the boys' names was Luke from the Yasawa Islands. He lives now in Nadi and works as a security guard. His brother is also a security guard. In the past his brother was also a skilful island-style ukulele player.

I played soccer for the secondary school's team while I was in Form 3 (the entry-level of the high-school). We did not become the champions but we beat some of the larger established schools. To go and play a match against one of these schools was a big thing for me then. We played against Natabua High School, St. Thomas High School, and Lautoka Muslim High School. To beat some of these schools was viewed as a great achievement because these schools had much larger numbers and were home to many talented soccer players.

I was playing rugby too at the school but there was no inter-school competition for rugby back then. The rugby matches were an on-and-off occasional thing but soccer at that time had an organized inter-school competition. Because I had the skills in the game, there was a call for me to play. I don't know how I developed soccer skills. It was a natural process; the skills just came to me. When I reached club soccer (after high-school) that is when I mastered the game – how to swerve the ball in the air; how to do a banana-kick; how to control and cushion the ball; how to chest the ball; and how to give quality pass to your team-mate which would give him the advantage to create the offense for the team. At this young age, this was my life. You had to keep it like it was your Bible or your secret. It was just you and God who knows your secret. The secret of the touch was what most players did not have. For example, in defence, there was a way, just in your movement, to unsettle him. His mindset would be completely shattered. In the back of his mind he would be psychologically beaten. I was still very young then but I was playing amongst the stars. I had a talent for both soccer and rugby.

Samu Yalayala, who became the hero for Lautoka Rugby 15s after scoring a try against Nadroga at Lawaqa Park, was a left-winger for the school in soccer. He used to give me a hard time during rugby games because he was my cousin. He used to have a fierce tackle on me that made me able to withstand the onslaught. Because he was my cousin I was forced to take it. This is one of the things that took me through to the heights of my career. It was great to play rugby and soccer at Ba Provincial School. The ground was not level and had stones all over the place. When you stood up, after tackles, there would be a big scratch or bruise on your thighs or back. You would be limping to school for about a month and hiding it so that people did not know. You had very little access to any medical care but you had to act strong and show that nothing was wrong with you.

In 1978, I was picked for Lautoka Secondary Schools. Our coaches for the school, Master Gajend Prasad and one other master whose name escapes me, were also coaches and managers for Lautoka Primary Schools (the team which won the Primary School IDC at Labasa in 1975). This connection enabled me to be quickly selected for the Lautoka Secondary Schools team. We beat Nadi in Nadi at the Secondary School final at the IDC and we became the Secondary Schools' champions. I scored a goal in the final. Here again soccer supporters were scouting for promising young talent. Hippo from Lautoka was there again, along with Bob Tikaram from Airport Soccer Club in Nadi. Bob invited me to play for his club Airport. To achieve these IDC victories (primary-school and secondary-school) at a young age was a huge boost to your self-esteem and morale. You would know that you were capable of achieving success at the senior level.

I consider myself lucky to have been educated at Ba Provincial Secondary School even though I did not make it to the tertiary level. I went through the hard-knocks of life. The principal of the school then was Dewan Chand. He was very much a philosopher and it was not easy to understand him. The teachers (his staff) were very much high-quality people.

My Step-Father John Pettit

My mum was living in Martintar (Nadi Town) with my stepdad in the late-1970s. My stepdad was the director of the South Sea Cruises which was then located at the Regent Hotel. Now South Sea Cruises is located at the Marina Bay Jetty at Denarau. My stepdad's name was John Pettit. He was from Australia. He had two sons, Michael and Graham. My stepdad was a very kind person. He always had a heart to help when help was needed. He had a very good sense of humour. He died in Australia in 2013. My mum is still alive. Figure 3 depicts the co-author, Kieran James, with the mother of Henry Dyer at Namoli Village, Lautoka City, in 2014. Figure 4 shows Henry Dyer (centre) with his former Fiji team team-mates, Tony Kabakoro (left) and Julie Sami (right), at Govind Park, Ba, in October 2015.



Figure 3: The co-author, Kieran James, with the mother of Henry Dyer at Namoli Village, Lautoka City, in 2014.



Figure 4: Henry Dyer (centre) with his former Fiji team team-mates, Tony Kabakoro (left) and Julie Sami (right), at Govind Park, Ba, in October 2015.

I remember once, in the late-1970s, my stepdad was living in Kennedy Avenue in Nadi and I used to spend the holidays with him and my mum, coming down from Namoli (Lautoka). My holiday job was to keep the house tidy and to keep the car shining and clean. I used to move the car forwards and backwards on to the lawn and into the garage. Then one day I thought of moving it down the driveway on to the road so all my mates in Kennedy Avenue were waiting on the road to have a ride. So, after driving up and down Kennedy Avenue a few times, I decided to drop them at their

doorsteps. Because I did not know much about driving I scraped the side of the door-joints on one of the driveway entrance posts. I was very scared to tell my stepdad about what had happened but I had to because I knew he would find out. At that time I was aged around 17 or 18. When I told him I had damaged the side of the car to my amazement he just said: "oh, so you did a good job of it", meaning that the job was to clean it but we did another job of going up and down the road. Then he started laughing, knowing that I was very relieved. My stepdad gave my two sisters and me the best of lifestyle and living standards that any children could have. He was the type of person that always wanted to have the best cars.

The Secret Boat Trip to Newcastle, Australia

I was very determined as a teenager to make it in life. While watching the big screens at the cinemas in Lautoka, I saw America and Australia and I thought that I wanted to experience the life-style of those places. Straight after high-school, I was working on the docks at Lautoka Wharf. This was 1980 and I was around 18-years-old. I decided to board the boat for Australia. My uncle (Timoci Waivure) was one of the supervisors on the Lautoka Wharf so I had access to nearly all the ships that docked in. The dock-workers also knew me and I was their favourite boy. They would also send me on errands to get things for them and mix their grog (i.e. kava). I was just waiting for the opportunity. The boat that we boarded had just come in from Newcastle, Australia. It had brought in some big water steel pipes as Newcastle had been the mining town in Australia. I thought: "why not? I will give it a go". I had brought our chocolates, biscuits, and water ready in a knapsack. We (three people) slept in the hull. One of the others was Sailasa Vuda aka Stanley "Stan the Man" Cooper, then aged 28, who still lived until recently in Namoli Village, Lautoka. We had very little food and we were very weak before we reached our destination. I had to go and steal food for us from the freezers at night (mainly fruits). They did not know that anyone had got on board. After the first week it started to get cold. Luckily we wrapped ourselves in a tarpaulin.

Two days before we reached Newcastle a Portuguese crew-member on the boat came down to check something at the bottom of the hull. He saw us sitting down. He was dead scared and he almost had a heart attack. He wanted to run; he didn't know what to do. Then we asked him to "please don't let the captain know". He assured us that he would see us off at the wharf. It was very unfortunate that we were seen walking out of the gates at Newcastle Wharf. We were taken in for questioning and sent back after spending two weeks at Maitland Prison. At Newcastle Police Station I had the opportunity to go for a dash, to get away. However, because it was very early in the morning and the streets were empty, I decided not to run because I would be seen. I was thinking to squeeze into one of the gaps in the shops. I thought: "no, I will give it another try again from Fiji". However, I never made another attempt because I was successful in soccer. Maybe it was not God's will.

Maitland Prison was very clean. It was a big prison and you could see all the different levels of criminals. You could tell by how they talked to you. Luckily one of my mates, Stanley Cooper, had

lived in Australia for more than 15 years. So when we got to the prison we could hear the prisoners calling his name "Stan the Man". This gave us a confidence because people had known us so we got accustomed to the prison within that short time of two weeks. Because we were very hungry we ate nearly all of the leftovers that the prisoners could not finish (especially the small milk cartons). On the return trip to Fiji we just did very small odd-jobs and made very good friends with the crew. The police were out in force at Lautoka Wharf. We went to court and we were jailed for (another) two weeks. My family said nothing. They asked me: "Why do you want to run away from us?" I said: "I just wanted to go to Australia". It was a good experience in my life. My stepfather was there. He knew about this too. He said nothing because he was a very busy guy on the job.

Being Recruited for Airport Soccer Club by Bob Tikaram

Bob Tikaram of Airport Soccer Club later saw me playing touch rugby at the then Airport Club grounds (Nadi Airport Sports Association (NASA) grounds) and he asked me if I was the same guy who had played for Lautoka Secondary Schools. Quite some time (two or three years) had passed between the Secondary Schools Inter-District and my arrival at his club. He mentioned that he would buy boots for me for training which I could not afford. I was living in Nadi by then and it made me feel great to be offered soccer boots for training. During the few years, before appearing at Airport's ground for training (1981), I had not been playing soccer but I had been playing rugby in Lautoka for the Batiri Rugby Club. I played as a half-back. We played with some Fiji rugby players like the Ratudradra brothers (Viliame, Eneri, and the youngest Kitone ("Sunshine")) and my cousins, Paulo Nawalu (Fiji rugby debut 18 June 1983 versus Tonga in Suva) and Samu Yalayala (Fiji rugby debut 18 June 1983 versus Tonga in Suva), who became rugby greats in the 15s and 7s codes. (Authors' note: Viliame Ratudradra's Fiji rugby debut was 12 June 1976 versus Australia at Sydney and Eneri Ratudradra's Fiji rugby debut was 24 May 1980 versus Australia at Suva.) Paulo Nawalu went on to coach the Japanese 7s team. Samu Yalayala scored the try which led to the winning of the Farebrother's Trophy in 1979 at Lawaqa Park. Nadroga had held the Farebrother's Trophy for about ten years. Samu became a hero playing 15s rugby for Lautoka.

Going back to the subject of my first training with the Airport club, Bob Tikaram saw that I made a positive impact on the team. At my first game for Airport against an old club, or rather one of the pioneer clubs of Nadi Soccer Association, the Blues Soccer Club, I scored an early goal which drew the attention of the then coach of the Nadi (national-league) team and the national team. His name was Mani Naicker. Joe Lutumailagi, who was the assistant coach of Nadi, approached me to train on the next Monday with Nadi. I was around 20-years-old. Because there was a demand there for my services I chose to play soccer instead of rugby.

Kieran James: How did you first meet Henry Dyer?

Bobby Tikaram (ex-president Airport Soccer Club / ex-vice-president Nadi Soccer Association): During the 1970s and 1980s I was in my prime as far as sporting career was concerned. I was

watching the Inter Secondary Schools tournament in Nadi. I was very surprised by the talent available. I was there for Nadi Soccer. I was technical adviser or manager. I was an official, most probably the manager of Nadi or technical adviser. I was surprised to see the talent available in this country. One of them that caught my eye that day was Henry Dyer. In fact at that time I was not able to do much although he was a native of Nadi as he was living in Lautoka and playing for a Lautoka secondary school. I did see other talents and I suggested five names for Nadi Soccer.

KJ: What was your impression of Henry Dyer when you first saw him play at the trials?

BT: It appeared Henry had a natural sporting athletic ability. His movements and positioning were very much like a gifted sportsman. No doubt he definitely impressed me.

KJ: What position was he playing then?

BT: At that time he was playing as a forward. When I met him he was mostly as a striker. Later in Nadi the coach started to move him backwards. I saw him as a striker and very talented. I thought he had the potential to play for Fiji. I thought if I can get him I can help to make him a national rep.

KJ: So please tell us how you met Henry again several years later when he was playing touch rugby on the Nadi Airport Sports Association grounds...

BT: The biggest surprise in my life came when I was based at Airport and I was a regular at the tennis club, rugby club, and soccer ground. My house was just next to the ground. I had a club Airport Soccer Club. I was there and he was there.

KJ: Why was Henry there?

BT: He was playing touch rugby at Airport Ground No. 1 with Airport Workers. I started yarning with him. I asked him: 'Were you the same guy who played at the Secondary Schools tournament?' He said 'yes'. He said that his parents are here [Nadi] and it is likely that he will stay here now. That was a good surprise for me. It fits into my plan. I asked whether he would like to play for Airport Club. Another thing which caught my eye while they were training with the Airport rugby boys was his ability to play rugby. I thought: 'My God, this guy has talent; he is a natural rugby player too'. He confirmed to me that he played soccer for Ba Provincial School. This is when my relationship with Henry Dyer began. Our friendship has remained the same until today.

I introduced myself as president of Airport Soccer Club and official of Nadi Soccer Association. At that time Airport SC was a renowned affiliate of Nadi Soccer Association ... Another obvious thing I saw was that he was training rugby barefooted. I asked him if he had soccer boots. He said 'no' and I said 'I will buy you one pair'. That started his club career.

KJ: What was Henry like as a player in his early days at Airport SC?

BT: Henry was phenomenal in his games for Airport with the support of the other talented players in the team. We went on to

win the knockout league tournaments in Nadi. His performances for Airport Soccer Club met the approval also of Nadi's soccer coach. His first soccer coaches were Mani Naicker and Joe Lutumailagi. After only a couple of games for Airport SC he was asked to join the Nadi Soccer Association squad.

Henry Dyer: It was after one game Bob.

BT: After only one game for Airport SC he was asked to join the Nadi Soccer Association squad. His first game was against Blues Soccer Club at Nadi Sangam School Grounds which we won 1-0.

HD: It was 2-0 Bob...

BT: His first game was against Blues Soccer Club at Nadi Sangam School Grounds which we won 2-0. Henry scored the first goal and 'Bacardi' [Emasi Koroi] scored the second goal (source: authors' interview with Bob Tikaram, 14 August 2014, Nadi).

We (Nadi) played a friendly match against one touring club from Australia (West Woden Juventus of Canberra). I scored the winning goal. I think it was from this game that Nadi soccer management came to believe that I was a talented player. When I played my first official match for Nadi (1981) it just happened that my picture came out in the papers. A European guy from the *Fiji Sun*, Peter Lomas, was standing on the sidelines and he took my picture. It was a big picture on the back page with the heading "Henry D, a rising star". Other players and my friends made friendly comments about the write-up "Henry D, a rising star". They would say: "Are you a star?" "Hey, star!" Someone said: "Are you related to Lady D?" because Lady Di was very much in the news back then.

It felt good to play alongside star players who had won the soccer league for a few years and they had won some of the tournaments too (Battle of the Giants, Tip Top Tournament). Playing alongside the stars helped me to become a star too. Some of these stars then at Nadi were: Savenaca Waqa (GK); Emasi Koroi ("Bacardi"); Kim Momo; Rusiate Waqa (dynamic striker); Kini Tubi; Inosi Tora; Sosiceni Kaitani; Stan Morrel, Marika Ravula, and Peter Dean. Peter Dean still today drives the public bus from Lautoka to Nadi which arrives in at Nadi Bus Station at 5pm each weekday.

Kieran James: How would you describe Henry Dyer as a player?

Dr. Raymond Fong (official Nadi team doctor in the 1980s): On the field I would describe Henry as a genius. People like Henry were gifted. He had no professional support. Henry was at the wrong place at the wrong time. He could have been a successful player in Europe. Over there they take the African players; imagine what Henry could have been. Henry was three or four times better than the Italian star [Mario Balotelli] who made the 2-0 goal against England in the 2014 World Cup. The team had to put him in that position. Henry was more like Messi; he could take two or three guys on. It was a delight to watch that Nadi team.

He was a rising star; he could really have gone places. When alcohol came into the picture he fell foul of the law. If there had been money to be made in the game then his life would be much different now. On Henry's good days Roy Krishna [Wellington Phoenix FC] would be nowhere near as good as him. Roy had the opportunity

to go to NZ; Henry did not have the opportunity. On the field you could tell he had a good education tactically. He would take the ball from the half and scavenge in the penalty area (source: author's interview with Dr. Raymond Fong, 24 July 2014, Nadi).

Kieran James: What is your comment about Henry Dyer?

Semi Tabaiwalu (ex-Ba and Fiji player): He was the best link, inside player but a dirty and rugged player. He was a sensible player. At SPG [South Pacific Games] in Samoa, we had [German] Rudi Gutendorf as the [national-team] coach. Only two players had to be selected as striker and inside-striker. In that team Rudi called on me, Abdul Manaana, Savenaca Waqa, and Bale Raniga to discuss which of the two players should be dropped – Henry or Robin Simmons from Labasa. We had a meeting. Inia Bola was already in the team. Henry got the nod. This was for the final squad of 18. Rudi said to us: 'You people are experienced players; who should be dropped from the team out of these two?' We decided to keep Henry because he is rugged and experienced and can distribute the ball properly and can control the game (source: interview with Semi Tabaiwalu, 20 June 2015, Ba).

Kieran James: What do you think of Henry Dyer as a player?

Inia Bola (ex-Ba and Fiji player): He was a really dirty player too. One time here I was going to break through; there was just the goalkeeper between me and the goal. Meli [Vuilabasa] gave me the ball; I did not know Henry was following me. I don't know how I fell down; I blame that Henry Dyer! (Source: interview with Inia Bola, 17 June 2015, Ba).

Henry Dyer: What do you like most about Henry Dyer?

Savenaca Waqa (ex-Nadi and Fiji goalkeeper): He makes moves when he has the ball. I think Henry was one of the best in our days. You hardly find players in the Nadi and Fiji teams nowadays like Henry Dyer. ... He also encouraged the boys to keep playing until the last whistle even when we were losing (source: interview with Savenaca Waqa, 27 August 2015, Nadi).

Kieran James: What do you think of Henry as a player?

Julie Sami (ex-Ba and Fiji player): He was a good player, man. His forehead was very dangerous. When he got the ball Bale [Raniga, Ba goalkeeper] was afraid. We used to mark him properly but this fellow ran away (source: interview with Julie Sami, 1 October 2015, Ba).

Kieran James: Please tell me your opinion about Henry Dyer as a player.

Mr. Paravin Sharma (Fiji Sugar Corporation General Workers' Union president and Ba Soccer supporter): Henry Dyer was a dangerous midfielder. During his time he was one of the best midfielders in Fiji. He always fed the ball to Rusiate Waqa [Nadi and Fiji striker], who was [as fast as] a Melbourne Cup racehorse. That was the danger time for Ba team; they had to be admitted to ICU [Intensive Care Unit]. [Note: This was just a way of speaking; Ba team was not admitted to the ICU.] Rusiate Waqa was one of the fastest strikers. When Waqa had the ball, fed by Henry Dyer, oh my

God, the defence just fell down (source: interview with Paravin Sharma and Lote Delai, 15 October 2015, Ba).

My Wife and Family

I met my wife at Churchill Park (Lautoka) while training for rugby as a teenager. I was playing for the Batiri Rugby Club then. My wife was playing hockey then for Waiyavi Hockey Club. They trained at the hockey grounds at Churchill Park too. Her name is Liku Goneyali. She comes from a family of four. Her only brother is Misiwaini Goneyali. Her eldest sister is Tamarisi Tabua. Her youngest sister is Alisi Cabemaiwasa. Her dad's name is Sireli Sauleca Goneyali. Her mum's name is Alisi Cabemaiwasa. She was known as "Cabe". My wife's dad (Sireli Sauleca Goneyali) played for the Fiji rugby 15s team that toured Australia and he was a giant of a winger with Joe Levula on the other wing. The captain of their team then was Ratu George Cakobau. My wife's family came from Vatukarasa Village in Tailevu. Liku's family lived in Waiyavi (Lautoka City) close to the old FBC radio station and behind the Waiyavi shops. My wife's mum comes from Batiki in the Lomiviti group of islands. She was working as a maid at the Lautoka Hospital. My father-in-law was a supervisor for the Lautoka City Council.

When my wife got pregnant with my first child (Neisau Tuidraki), I moved with my wife down to Nadi. This was because, when I first took my child to meet my mum, she did not want to let go of the baby, her grandchild. So I could not do anything and I had to stay. This was in 1981. In Fijian custom it would look bad for me to take the baby back to her family until I had prepared to do the Fijian traditional customary protocol. I believe that it was good for me too that my mum had established a good relationship with the baby and with my wife's family. Figure 5 shows Henry's eldest son, Anare Waymes "Fella" Tuidraki (centre), with Kieran James (left) at Namoli Village, Lautoka City, in 2014. Figure 6 shows Henry Dyer (left) with the sister of Savenaca Waqa (ex-Nadi and Fiji goalkeeper) / wife of Inosi Tora (ex-Nadi and Fiji defender) at Namotomoto Village, Nadi, on 27 August 2015.



Figure 5: Henry's eldest son, Anare "Fella" Tuidraki (centre), with Kieran James (left), Namoli Village, Lautoka, 2014.



Figure 6: Henry Dyer (left) with the sister of Savenaca Waqa (ex-Nadi and Fiji goalkeeper), Namotomoto Village, Nadi, 27 August 2015.

My wife comes from a very religious family. They are Methodists and she used to go to the Coronation Church in Lautoka (behind Churchill Park and opposite the Northern Club) (Figure 2). My wife's family has a civil-service background with a few of them being doctors. I always respect my wife for being polite and humble and for being able to look after our family in the good and hard times. She has a reputation of being able to give me good advice when I am feeling down or confused.

My stepdad (John Pettit) was a great fan of mine in my early days with Nadi. He would come to watch me play at every match at Prince Charles Park, taking pictures with a video-camera on a tripod. He would watch the game, all over again, at home on the video-cassette player. My stepdad was the only person then doing this at the games, I think maybe because he could afford it and he was the only person devoted enough to the Nadi team to want to watch the games twice. Then he would jokingly tell me, while watching the tape, where I went wrong or what I should have done. Then we would have a debate about the match. He was fun to be around. He looked after me and my two sisters. I was going backwards and forwards between my grandmum and my mum until I got a child.

When I came back to Lautoka, to visit family and friends, people were surprised that I had become a well-known soccer player because they knew me as a rugby player only. Although I had done well in primary- and secondary-level in Lautoka soccer, this had been largely hidden to the wider public. Only the people I had schooled with in primary and secondary schools were not surprised by my soccer success with Nadi. During my playing days I had six of my children born. The last one (Alipate Driu Tuidraki) was born after I had stopped playing soccer (as told to Kieran James on 1 May, 19 and 26 June, and 1 August, 2014 in Nadi Town, Fiji Islands).

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