

**William M. Dillon Oral History Interview**  
Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Collection  
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**Biographical Note**

William M. (Bill) Dillon served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Fiji from 1978 to 1981 as a land use planner.

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Oral History Interview

with

William M. Dillon

September 12, 2018  
Santa Barbara, California

By Julius Sztuk

Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Collection  
John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum

SZTUK: [00:00:03] Today is September 12th, 2018. This is Jay Sztuk. I'm interviewing Bill Dillon, who was a Peace Corps volunteer in Fiji from September 1978 through April 1981. Bill worked for the Native Land Trust Board as a land use planner in Fiji. All right, Bill, thanks for interviewing today. Uh, so tell us a little bit about why you decided to join the Peace Corps?

DILLON: [00:00:40] Oh, I thought about Peace Corps ever since I heard about it when I was in grammar school even, and then never really necessarily thought I would go. But, uh, and when I finished college, I went to grad school in planning. There was a professor on the staff who was a former Peace Corps somewhere in Africa. His name was Gabe, and he was really high on encouraging people to go into Peace Corps. And so Cal Poly San Luis Obispo was where I was going to grad school, and he encouraged me to go see a recruiter who they had one on campus. I guess Cal Poly had a pretty good enlistment rate. So I checked it out and I

was finishing a two year graduate program in planning, city and regional planning, and signed up for Morocco. Back then, it used to be first come, first served. And Morocco fell through because of some conflict going on in Morocco at the time. So Peace Corps Fiji opened up and the recruiter said it was a really great place to go and I was lucky to get it. So with his encouragement, I went ahead and signed up.

SZTUK: [00:02:02] All right. So before Peace Corps, you were in college. Anything about your life before joining Peace Corps, other experiences that might be relevant to Peace Corps, being a Peace Corps volunteer?

DILLON: [00:02:22] Um, well, it gave me a chance to work in my field of planning. They were recruiting in that. So going to a country like Fiji, you know, being valued as a planner was kind of neat. But otherwise I don't think anything especially different from any other person who goes into the Peace Corps.

SZTUK: [00:02:45] So what did your friends and family think when you got when you told them you were going to be heading overseas?

DILLON: [00:02:51] Um, it happened at the end of school and going into the summer. I was down at Cal Poly. A lot of my friends were still up in the Bay Area, so I didn't see a lot of them before I left, although I did go up there for a couple of weeks before I left. Um, my dad was very supportive. He had been, he had a career in the military. He had 22 years in the Army. So he had lived all over the world and loved it. He and my mom and even us kids, you know, a lot of, you know, good times traveling, you know, around doing that. He made a lot of great friends doing that. And so he encouraged me to go in and said that it would be a great travel experience and a great way to make some, you know, lifetime friends. So he was supportive. My friends in Oakland, when I got up there, were really cool about it. Supportive, you know, gave me a little bit of a send-off. And so that was all positive.

SZTUK: [00:03:52] So you said that the you thought you would be going to Morocco, was that was that a choice that you made or was it just like something in the literature you read where you thought could be

something or was it a preference? And did you have any other preferences for a particular place to go?

DILLON: [00:04:17] And back then, and I think the approach has changed from time to time. But they qualified you to go in, like you had fill out the application and go through a process. And then once you were fully qualified, they told you what positions were available and you could, I guess, target a particular position. So the first one was actually, I think it was Guatemala and then the recruiter saw Morocco open up. He had spent some time in Morocco and he thought that would be a better place to go. So he really recommended that. And it used to be the first one through the process got the assignment. It wasn't I think later they made it more competitive and, you know, selected people as opposed to just taking the next person out. So anyway, Morocco fell through. And so I either read about Morocco or Guatemala. I think it was actually El Salvador. And so anyway, when Morocco fell through, Fiji opened up and he was really high on going to Fiji, highly recommended that as an assignment. And he said, you're through the process. You're the first one ready. No one else is even close to being available. So this is basically there if you want it, all you have to do is say yes and you're in. And then he made a comment about El Salvador, he goes, if you don't take this and Morocco is gone, you'll be stuck in El Salvador or something like that. I thought, oh I thought you were recommending El Salvador. El Salvador would've been cool. I was hoping for a further away experience just miles wise. But so I had to go read about Fiji. I never read anything about it. And I did a little bit of research over a week and then got back to him and took the assignment.

SZTUK: [00:06:02] Okay, so you were accepted and you're ready to go to Fiji. Did you guys travel over as a group or?

DILLON: [00:06:09] The convenient thing was they staged in San Francisco. And then when I finished my master's thesis that summer at Cal Poly, I drove up to Oakland, stayed with friends in the East Bay, and spent a couple of weeks there. I remember doing a nice trip up to the Russian River with an old friend and his family. And then for staging, I just went across the bay and my buddy dropped me off at the Bellevue Hotel in San Francisco. I think that was it. And yeah, we staged as a group. There was about 20 of

us and we met, I think, for an hour. We checked in that day. Met one of my best friends, we were roommates, Jim Oliver, when we each got to our room, respectively. And then had our first meeting the next day of the group and went from there.

SZTUK: [00:06:57] You flew directly from there?

DILLON: [00:07:00] Yeah, we stayed for a couple of, three nights. I had several meetings, you know, these meetings where you, you know, talk about your views and your thoughts. And even some role playing and stuff like that. And I think they even try to deselect a couple of people at that stage. And it was pretty, uh, in that respect, a little, well, not intense. But, you know, it was not relaxing. But we'd go out at night and have some beers and have some fun. So that was cool. And then flew out like three days later straight to Fiji, except we got to, we had to change planes in Hawaii and there was a bomb threat on our plane. No, no, I take it back. There was a bomb threat on our plane leaving San Francisco. 1978, before they did any screening at the gates and stuff like that. So they had to search the plane. And that took like three hours to go through everybody's bag, because you had to go get your bag, take it off the plane or out of the place where they brought it off the plane, take it to an agent. They went through it and then put it back on the plane. So we missed our connection to Hawaii, which is kind of fun, because then we got two nights in Hawaii at a hotel with no Peace Corps supervision. So we were just there, you know, in a motel somewhere and we're just having fun having beers and hanging out at the pool. And a couple of us rented a car and we drove around the island. It was kind of a nice break because, you know, the staff put us on the plane in San Francisco and was waiting for us in Nadi, but there was no staff in Hawaii. So we were just on our own, which is kind of cool. So, you know, two days later, we were put on a plane to Fiji and then flew in, you know, three days after that or I mean, you know, three days after originally leaving. So that was kind of fun.

SZTUK: [00:08:48] So do you remember your first impressions of Fiji when you arrived at the airport or were flying in and what you did the first couple of days?

DILLON: [00:08:56] I remember seeing Fiji from the air, Nadi on the Nadi side, it was beautiful, obviously tropical beaches. And it was a gorgeous morning. And I think we flew all night and landed early morning. And so it was great. And then we were picked up at the airport, met the director, a guy named John Delezio, who's picture is here in this book. And we were bussed to the Nadi Hotel, which I looked for when I was in Nadi a couple of months ago, the one that was the Nadi Hotel is not there. So anyway, and spent a couple, I think a couple of nights there, that was a lot of fun. It was a little more relaxed. The Peace Corps staff I liked a lot. Delezio was a very cool guy, not too different from the guy you and I just met in Fiji at the reunion. I forget his name.

SZTUK: Dennis.

DILLON: [00:10:00] Dennis. Yeah. Kind of similar personalities and skills in terms of being, you know, well-spoken but cool and calm and very intelligent. Delezio was like that too. So that was very positive. Then we took a bus, or I think we took, did we take the local bus to Suva? I think we made every stop on the way to Suva, so it must have been the local bus. Or it was a Peace Corps bus, but it's still a local bus. And with, you know, no windows, the flaps are all rolled up, and driving through the country on dirt roads, a lot more dirt roads back in those days. So a long bus ride but that was kind of neat. And the coral coast all the way over to Suva. So that was the arrival.

SZTUK: [00:10:49] So you did your training then in-country when you got to Suva?

DILLON: [00:10:53] Yeah. Yeah, we were.

SZTUK: [00:10:55] Tell us about your training, where you stayed, what the training consisted of.

DILLON: [00:11:02] We stayed at the credit union, a place called the Credit Union, which is on Pender Street, which is a couple of doors down from the Peninsula Hotel where I stayed when we did the reunion. In fact, first thing I did was walk over there after I got to the hotel. I walked over to see if it was still there. The structure is still there, finally maybe converted to some

sort of flats. But it was a kind of a dormitory setting when I was there and had, I don't know, probably 30 beds in there. I'm not sure where the women stayed because they were in a different dorm. Maybe they were downstairs because I think we're all inside. And so we started doing Fijian classes right away and the people slated for Hindi volunteer sites were doing Hindi lessons. But one thing that we got to do that we were told was unusual was they didn't try to feed us because the credit union wasn't set up for it. So they gave us a per diem per day. And so unlike most volunteer groups where they take you to a mess hall to eat or something like that, we were hitting restaurants and, you know, bars the whole couple of weeks, you know, because we had a per diem and we were out all over town. It was a lot of fun. Back then, you know, three bucks would get you more than get your dinner, it would get you dinner and a beer.

DILLON: [00:12:28] The Peninsula Hotel's next door. We'd go over there for breakfast. Movies back then were probably 75 or 50 cents. So a lot of fun. A really good group. Language training was good and I liked the people in the group a lot. And then we did that until we went into our village stay. So for that, let's see, we broke up into groups of about five or six. So we had like I think four groups and my group flew out to Ngau, the island of Ngau, which is really cool. And there's a village there called Nukuloa and we were there a week. And so people there were super nice to us. I stayed in the house that belonged to a woman named Lysa Modee, and she had a few kids. Her husband was deceased. I think he might have at one time been a chief or the chief of the village. He was a very important guy in the village, but he passed away. So anyway, we did, I guess we did more language lessons there. Johnny Thamy was our. Did Johnny go with us? No, it might have been Sova Tambua with us, and just had this great week of staying in the villages, eating village food, eating way too much.

DILLON: [00:14:04] Oh my god. Drinking kava every night. And then, you know, just throwing a big party for us at the end of the week at one of the big breweries, music and dancing and drinking kava and a lot of food. So it was a great week. When we flew out of Ngau, oh, the chief of that village all week long he had been speaking Fijian. And on the last day we're about to leave. And I heard he was on the Fiji rugby team, national team. So in English, cause I couldn't do it in Fijian, I just said, well, what was it

like being on the national team? And the guy started speaking perfect English. So he'd been speaking Fijian all week. And I asked him about rugby, it just went right into his rugby story. So that kind of cracked me up. We were flying out of Ngau, the airport was at the bottom of the island, the south end of the island there up and about the west side. And when we flew over the village pretty high, they were using mirrors to reflect at our plane. So we saw these sparkling or bright flashing mirrors as we flew away. That was kind of a neat end of the experience.

DILLON: [00:15:16] I have another anecdote there. When we were doing the big party, Fijians get up and sing and dance and, you know, they know all the songs and all these great dances. And so we were thinking, what can we do? We don't know any songs that we can really sing and, you know, dances. And then Bev Oliver, then Bev Angel, got the idea to do the hokey pokey. And so we got up and, you know, did the hokey pokey, you put your right foot in, take your right foot out. Left foot in, left foot out, right arm, left arm. And then at the end of course you put your tush in there and you take your tush out. And when we did that, the Fijians just fell apart laughing. The place was screaming with laughter when they saw us do that, because they couldn't believe that move. It was the right time of night. It was at the end of the night, everybody had been drinking kava. So when we were just leaving the village, out at the bus stop, the Fijians wanted to do the hokey pokey. And we're doing that at the side of the road waiting for the bus. That's hilarious.

SZTUK: [00:16:13] You taught them something. So you just did the one village stay during your training?

DILLON: [00:16:20] I did an Indian farm stay, so they had us do both cultures even though I was going to work with Fijians. So that was really cool, same group, although they took Hindi lessons, but not as intensely as the Fijian. Stayed at an Indian farm near Lautoka, which I tried to find the first day I got back. But there's so much development on that site since last time I was in Lautoka. I couldn't get over all the traffic but you know, a man named Ram Lacon, I think that was his name, and his family. Oh, I forget the daughter's name. She was pretty cool. And he had a son who I think was off working. And so that was pretty neat. They had a cane farm with a

view, a dramatic view of the just off the coast there of Lautoka. And they had an outdoor shower, when you take a shower you had a view all the way down the coast. It was like one of the best showers I've ever used. And that house was about the same. You also have a pretty good view from the outhouse. Very nice food, you know, I liked curry a lot. And they're really nice people.

DILLON: [00:17:34] I remember meeting one other guy I was friends with later in Suva, Indian guy, but I don't remember his name. They had a nice picnic for us one day, took us down to the beach and met some of the guys. And I think we had one session where they brought out the gin and sat around drinking gin, I think it was Gordon's. Indians seemed to like gin. And they also liked kava, but. So that was a really nice day. We're all at different farms, so we're split up. So one of the women got kind of harassed sexually, though. So I heard about that sometime later. At the time, she didn't complain. So I think, I mean, she didn't complain. She sort of implied this guy was giving her the Groucho Marx routine, but she didn't. So later I was kind of disappointed I didn't have a better idea of what was going on, because I remember she talked about it. And I don't know how bad it was because she was just someone who didn't act like anything bothered her. So I have to ask her about that someday. She's still a good friend.

SZTUK: [00:18:43] So you're still friends with a lot of the people that you trained with and were in your group?

DILLON: [00:18:49] A few. Jim and Bev Oliver, Steve Patterson were in the group, there's a couple of others. But those three I'm really close to. There's some others on Facebook, I'm sort of friends with through Facebook, but haven't seen them in years. And some volunteers who are there, Bob Texon on Facebook posts a lot. So but just the three. But they were the three people who were great friends right away in Fiji. So I'm not surprised those friendships survived. Lasted.

SZTUK: [00:19:29] Yeah. Okay, so you've finished your training and you get assigned to the Native Land Trust Board. And that was where?

DILLON: [00:19:37] NLTB is right in Suva, not far from I think it's Eichenbaum Park across from the GPH. Is that the right name? I didn't remember it until we were there recently. And I think it's the Eichenbaum. That big, or is it Prince Albert? I don't know. But anyway, I was just not far from the parliamentary buildings and state lands building and the planning department. They had a planning department, what was it called, town and country planning, I think they were called. Although I was a planner at the Native Land Trust Board, they had a couple of people over at town country. So me and another guy were assigned to NLTB and they wanted us to do basic planning for native land because 83 percent of the land in Fiji is still Fijian owned by law and it can be leased out but could not be sold. And so a lot of it was leased out for cane farming. But, you know, the British had sort of helped to revamp the NLTN and were trying to make it more efficient, so they had a bunch of expatriates are running basically the NLTB for a while under the Fijian general manager, I think at the time was Kami Kamida. And so anyway, they wanted me to push more urban development because, you know, cities were growing anyway. So they wanted to have orderly planning. It was, you know, a positive approach to development. So they wanted to, rather than just be haphazard, you know, have development plans for each urban area and also for tourist development. So my colleague Greg Barber and I worked on those plans. He did the tourism part and I did the urban planning.

SZTUK: [00:21:37] Was Greg was a volunteer or an expat?

DILLON: [00:21:38] He was a volunteer. Yeah, he was in my group. So anyway, your question was, where was it? It was right there in the downtown of Suva. I had a desk job. I had a secretary who I shared with a few people. It was very Fiji speed. So it ended up. I remember doing, you know, reports on stencil, so I could run copies when I was trying to teach a class. At one point I'm planning to their state management group. So I had to write a syllabus for that. So anyway, it was pretty nice. I could walk to work, shared a house with a couple of volunteers and eventually we got to Nasese, which is still walking distance and shared a house there with, um, Bev and Stu, two of my best friends. And then Jim Oliver, who Bev ended up marrying, was there from time to time and eventually at the end of his assignment, lived in the house with us. So, pretty sweet. I mean, you

know, nice job, good agency. Got to travel to do plans for places like Lautoka, Sigatoka, Nadi, even Labasa, Ba. And I think I did Nausori, did not do Suva, Suva was something they were working on when I was just visiting there in June. And they're doing that themselves, but. So anyway, that's why I worked in LTB. Big office building, they shared it with the State Lands Commission. I think it was state lands, maybe not commission. Had the top floor and the bottom floor and State Lands had, I think, the second floor. Still there, I just went in there in June at the reunion. Well, a bit of a facelift, but basically the same place. So it's kind of neat to go back and see what was going on.

SZTUK: [00:23:44] So did the experience and working environment in Fijian and the living environment was what you had envisioned before you left or was it was a different in a lot of ways?

DILLON: [00:23:58] Oh, planning is pretty much, you know, you get your assignment and planners go to work their reports and maps and everything else and bring it back so the day-to-day work was exactly what I trained for and was used to doing. The management was pretty good. I mean, there was a guy named John Sammin who was my supervisor, and he was a good guy, British. They were on a contract and very professional, very good. So bringing the plans to him for review and comment, you know. It was a very professional relationship. So it was very good.

SZTUK: [00:24:37] How about your interaction with the locals, other workers, around the neighborhood?

DILLON: [00:24:44] The Fijians at work were great, very friendly, very supportive. Um, saw them a little bit socially, but not a lot. It was kind of hard to break through at times socially other than, you know, maybe just occasional beer or something. But Tavita Combacora was a guy who was really cool, very nice, he was a mid-level manager or maybe a bit higher than that. But very dynamic guy and very supportive of me and Greg and also spoke and read English better than most people. So I think he had an easier way of relating to us than some Fijians. Socially my big breakthrough in Fiji was maybe eight or 10 months after I got there, I started playing basketball.

And basketball gets to be very social, you get to meet everybody who plays basketball in the league. And then if you're an American, they want you to be a coach of a team. So once I started playing basketball, I started to hang out with the sort of the basketball Peace Corps crowd because we played every Sunday morning and then also ended up coaching a couple of women's teams. So socially, that was a big kind of breakthrough because the Fijians love sports. And so playing sports was just a natural for them, just got a big kick out of it. So I got treated great by the people in Fiji.

SZTUK: [00:26:08] So that was a good way to make friends in the local community?

DILLON: [00:26:13] Yeah, yeah. I mean, otherwise I would occasionally get invited out to somebody's house for dinner. But, you know, mostly I was just, you know, pretty polite, but not so easy to break through on that level. So sports was a natural. Glad I did that.

SZTUK: [00:26:33] So did you get any chance to take some time off from work while you were there and do a little traveling around the island?

DILLON: [00:26:41] Yeah, I was fortunate in my job to, I always have, you know, do a site visit for each place I was studying. So I could either fly or drive around the island, you know, NLTB had vehicles. So when I wanted to go somewhere, I could get like a Land Rover. And that's pretty cool. I got used to driving on the left side of the road. The Fijians usually would send an agent, a land agent, with me or have some somebody meet me to sort of make sure I get around to all the sites and check everything out. So that was really good. And then they'd usually take care of me at night, take me out to dinner, take me to grog. And so I get to know people. There's a big NLTB office in Lautoka, another one in Labasa. And so I get to know people in Lautoka, up in Levu, and um. So that was good. But we did, you know, some basic social trips. I remember Johnny Thamy, our Fijian teacher, took us on a village stay up to his village and somewhere up in Tavau, just a gorgeous spot overlooking the coast there.

DILLON: [00:28:02] And I remember we brought some beer up the first night. It's unusual to have beer in the village. But the first night was drinking beer and everybody got a kick out of that and it was kava and spearfishing the rest of the week. Spearfishing was amazing. And I did one other village stay. A guy named Maruni Galelawa, when my dad visited, took us on a village stay closer to Nausori, which is really cool, even though you can drive into the village. He took us back up on some of the riverways. And I think we just stayed one night. My dad, you know, at the time was about 70. So I wasn't going to put him through a lot of that. But he had a great time. So and a few other village stays here and there and, uh, a trip up to Nandura Vatu. Also, when I got my first decent break, me and Jim Oliver took off for New Zealand for a month and hitchhiked around there. You asked about travel around Fiji, but we took off for New Zealand. That was pretty cool.

SZTUK: [00:29:10] All right, all right, so any, you stayed there for two years, right?

DILLON: [00:29:18] No, I stuck around an extra, almost a whole extra year, because when I was on my way back. I was going to go to law school when I got back and I would have closed service around September of '80, and I think I would have just missed the start of law school unless I closed service early. I'd have to do an ET, early termination, or somehow apply for a release. And I was not in a hurry to leave, so I thought I'll start law school in '81. And then I thought, okay, from September to the next. September, if I go home right away, I'll just be sitting around for 10, 12 months waiting for law school to start, I didn't want to do that. I thought I'd rather be in Fiji. So I extended for a year and it turned out that was a mistake. I should have extended incrementally because once you extend for a year and then you want to leave early, they were going to call it an early termination, make me go straight home because you're ET, you couldn't just get the airfare. So I had to negotiate that. I probably should have done a six month extension and a three month extension or stuff like that.

DILLON: [00:30:29] But it worked out. But so I stayed almost three years and because I knew I was leaving early, I didn't take that free trip home that they give you when you extend an extra year. They pay your way home.

SZTUK: Oh, right.

DILLON: [00:30:42] Because I knew if I left early after that, I would probably cause some angst. So I'd been there almost three years by the time I went home. And, you know, out of a group, the people who had extended, and there was a few of us who extended, I'd been the longest in country without, you know, going home. I remember when I went through, I was in Ireland on my way home, I took the long home and some Irish guy picked me up and he thought I should have traveled more, gone more places. And then he finally said, well, how long have you been gone? I said, three years. And that finally impressed him. What, you were gone for three years? And so, yeah. So but I was basically in three years in Fiji with that one stop in New Zealand.

SZTUK: [00:31:25] So you think there were any major accomplishments or what do you mean accomplishments were there and your biggest and the most memorable things that you worked on or did when you were in Fiji?

DILLON: [00:31:44] Our town plans were considered useful and they were short-term plans. But I did do a basic plan of Nadi, back then a much smaller town, and identify native land close to the urban area or right in the urban area and just say, here's development opportunities for residential or urban or, you know, commercial development. The British expatriates who were working there at the time, they were like, yeah, give us the plans and we'll go, even if it's in a lease, we'll work on getting it out of the lease and developing the property. So give it to us, you know, we're ready to do it. So that respect it was very short term planning, but still I felt productive. And then they let me teach a class. They had a training program for the Fijians to become land managers. The whole idea was the British would train their replacements, just like Peace Corps was training our replacements. So I wrote a class on planning. It was like seven or eight classes. And I wrote a basically a lesson for each class, you know, so it took a while to write all that, but I once had it had it together it was pretty easy to give the class. The class was kind of fun and so both were pretty positive and I felt like I was respected and valued and so that was good. No major, you know, home runs or saving the world or anything like that,

but no major disappointments either. So, I mean, I felt like I was working in a good office and, you know, good people to work with and for. So it was good.

SZTUK: [00:33:25] So that's been over 35 or 37 years since you left Peace Corps. But you've been back at a time or two since and you've kept a connection with Fiji somehow. So I would just say that a couple of years in Fiji drove the direction of the last 30 plus years.

DILLON: [00:33:53] Oh, uh. I kind of lost connection with the country because the last time I went back was in the early '90s. I mean, that's over 30 now, over about 30 years and maybe 35. So Winston Thompson, the former ambassador?

SZTUK: Right.

DILLON: [00:34:16] He made a really nice comment at that dinner we were at our last night in Suva. And he said that the Peace Corps made Fiji a better country, for all the different places we helped and things we did. So I really appreciated those comments because, you know, you do the work we did. And looking at the country now and how the sugar cane plantations have gone downhill in a dramatic way. And, you know, planning is planning. What those towns look like now compared to what I planned. Planning is good for like five years or so on that level. But so 37 years later, you can't really tell much. But it was, uh, I really appreciated Winston's comments. He was very generous in saying that it helped the country a lot. And so, like I said, I'll just leave it at that.

SZTUK: [00:35:12] So that's generally, you mentioned, that as part of the fiftieth anniversary of Peace Corps Fiji and the celebrations where the group went back.

DILLON: [00:35:21] Yeah, we went back in June of this year, 2018, and were there for a couple of weeks or so. A lot of good events that you helped plan. The organic farm with the chickens was pretty impressive. The low-income housing project, um, a couple of projects I missed that you did before I got there, including I think building a playground for one of those schools, um,

to the museum night with a retrospective of Peace Corps photography in Fiji over the years. And then, um, the Fourth of July party, about a week before the Fourth of July at the U.S. embassy, was pretty cool. Very well done. And then, um, Winston Thompson, he was at the museum and I remember him when I was in Fiji because he ran a financial planning agency. I forget what they call it. Um, but it was the economic planning, uh, you know, arm of the government, uh, I think might have been Economic Planning. And he was a bit like a minister. And then he went on to become the ambassador to the United States for six years, just earlier this decade. So it's kind of neat to meet him because he's such a nice guy. I didn't ever get to talk to him while I was there. He's kind of larger than life, a super nice guy. So, yeah, the fiftieth was a great thing, and Jay Sztuk did a great job and should get an award and, you know, just like a bust of his head on Mount Rushmore or something like that.

SZTUK: [00:37:06] Okay. All right. Thanks, Bill. Well, I guess we've wrapped up all the questions. Any other reflections or anything else you want to add here before we conclude the interview?

DILLON: [00:37:17] Oh, I don't think so. It's been so long now, you know, when I went back, I didn't do any real research on connecting with people. So when I walked into my old office, it's been so long since I had been in the office since about 1992, there was obviously nobody still around. And they politely agreed to see me the next day. But when the guy agreed to see me, I talked to him on the phone. He didn't know what I wanted or who I was. And so the next morning, me and a guy named Joseph Luster walked in and Joe had worked for the Fiji Sugar Corporation over in Lautoka, although I didn't know him back in Fiji. And so, but we called around a bit and I said, come with me to this meeting. So we walked in and I explained to the planner Appelli, that I used to work at NLTB and his jaw kind of dropped. Oh really? Yeah. Oh, let me go see if the manager's in. So he went and got the manager of planning, Racheli. I forget Racheli's last name, who ran the planning department. Herself and Appelli were the planners and they had a staff of about four people including draftsman. And so I sat down with Racheli and Appelli for a couple hours, just talking Fiji issues and planning. They thought it was so nice that I bothered to stop in and say hi. So that was pretty cool.

DILLON: [00:38:44] So um that was nice little, you know, point to the trip. I walked around the old neighborhoods. I walked by my old house, walked by the old China Club, which is no longer functioning as a club. Went over to UCSB, went by the old national gym, went into the track there at the National Stadium. The fence was down. I just walked in and started walking around. And when I walked out, I realized that they had security at the gate and when they saw me walk in, they just kind of shrugged their shoulders and let me walk around and look around. When I walked out, I said, oh, was I supposed to be in there? They said, that's fine. Don't worry about it. And sort of Fujian, sized me up right away and said, oh he's okay. It's fun to go back. It's changed a lot. Uh, a lot busier than I remembered. I think I always thought it was pretty polluted. I remember visiting Fiji a couple of times, Suva, and whenever I got back home, I thought, Suva was kind of a big, dirty city. They've done a good job of cleaning up the busses. I remember them belching dirt all the way up and down every road. And right away when I got there, I saw a belching bus and I thought, oh they haven't changed that at all. And they have. I got to Suva it was much cleaner.

SZTUK: [00:40:03] Fewer belching busses?

DILLON: [00:40:04] Yeah. Especially in Suva, I think. I think they, you know, cracked down on that. I think maybe there's some still old vehicles running around but by and large they really did a good job there. So it was fun. And I guess that's all I got. All right.

SZTUK: [00:40:18] Well, thanks, Bill. And this concludes our interview.

[END OF INTERVIEW]