



## COCO NEWS NUTS

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**Talofa to everyone,**

It's been a while since we have sent out a newsletter, but now you can catch up on what's been happening at Coconuts and in Samoa. If you scroll down below this message, you will find the latest chapter of The Coconuts Story. In case you missed any of the previous installments of The Coconuts Story, you can find it in its' entirety on our website at: <https://cbcsamoa.com/the-resort/the-coconuts-story>

Also, since it's about that time of the year, all of us at Coconuts wishes everyone Happy Holidays, Manuia le Kerisimasi, and Manuia le Tausaga Fou.

Warm Samoan regards,

Brian Rose, Tautaimatapalapala (Barry), Faletua Palepa (Barbara), Onolina (Lina)

### **Maninoa Village, November 18, 2021 (Continuation from January 21, 2019)**

Greetings everyone, it's me, Brian, now keeping you informed and up to date on the continuing Coconuts Story. I know it's been quite a while, and so much has happened in the past two plus years. The delay in this instalment has not really been due to me being busy or procrastinating. While those things often happen, some other, much larger events have been at play, which I will get to in a minute.

Around January of 2020, I was prepared to start writing about the notable events that had occurred over the previous 12 months. There wasn't a lot to talk about, no new construction or renovations, no natural disasters, etc. It had been a pretty calm time, except for one situation that developed near the end of 2019, which was an outbreak of measles cases on the island. This mainly affected the children, and sadly some died before the government kicked off a large scale mobile vaccination program. The background story of how the whole thing happened was interesting, but luckily things started to turn around quickly, and the misela was under control well before our busy Easter holiday season would be starting. Little did we know that a different health crisis was about to begin, one which would affect the whole world, the Covid-19.

In early January of 2020, I had returned to the U.S. to organize a shipment of supplies. By March, just as I was trying to wrap up all the purchases, things came to a grinding halt. Supplies of many things that we needed were suddenly unavailable or were being rationed out. At the same time, a state of emergency was declared in Samoa and the borders were closed to all travel into the country. After our last guests had checked out, we had no choice so we closed down Coconuts for an indefinite, but hopefully short time.

I planned to return to Samoa in April 2020. All my airline flights were booked and ready to go, but in March, all the flights were suddenly cancelled as the whole world began to shut down. I was stuck in Los Angeles, for what I thought might be a few months. With these events happening, I thought I will just wait for all this to be resolved, then I can write the next chapter of the Coconuts Story and I can include a paragraph or two talking about the crazy worldwide pandemic. Little did I know how wrong I was about how long it would last. Every month, new SOE orders were announced, and I kept waiting for news about the reopening of Samoa. But as the year 2020 finally closed out, the borders remained closed too.

In late March of 2021 I received a call from Lina, saying there had been a fire in the staff house, which had also spread to the adjacent Coco Suites. The buildings (and all contents) had been destroyed, but thankfully nobody was injured. I really needed to be in Samoa ASAP to deal with this new situation. I tried getting on one of the infrequent government organized repatriation flights to Samoa, but it proved to be very difficult for many reasons, mainly due to the constantly evolving pandemic and associated travel restrictions.

In April 2021 Samoa had its general election. While the incumbent PM and HRPP party thought they would continue on again for another 5 year term (as they had for the last 20 years), things turned out differently. It seemed that enough people were quite displeased with some of the PM's recent shenanigans, and wanted a change. The opposing FAST party won the majority, which meant that Samoa would get its first female PM ever. Well if you thought that the last U.S. election was a mess, this one managed to top it (in different ways). Needless to say Tuila'epa did not accept defeat, and step down graciously. Instead he tried every trick he could think of to stay in power. In the end months later, and after numerous court decisions, things settled down and Fiame Naomi Mata'afa was finally and firmly established as the new PM. It seems as though most people in Samoa (and the rest of the world) view this as a very positive move for Samoa, and for women as well.

I was finally able to return to Samoa in late July 2021, on a special repatriation flight. After doing a two week quarantine, I was set free. It was very strange coming back to Coconuts without any guests and very few staff around, but it was wonderful to enjoy the beauty of Samoa again (and I didn't need to wear a mask anymore).

Finally being back at Coconuts, I was able to see the recent (2020) updating work that was done in our Treehouse rooms. This mainly consists of new vanities and stone sinks in the bathrooms, as well as some other furnishings, all of which look very nice.

We are now in the process of redoing our main entrance area, and with Robert Ross having created the new design, it should be much more beautiful than before. It will make quite a statement and create a mood, which will serve as a greeting to all who venture into Coconuts.

So now you are caught up with most of what has happened over the last two plus years, and that's been quite a lot! Which brings us to the future. What does the future hold in store? Well, don't look to me for those answers, I was proven very wrong in my predictions about how long the Covid-19 situation would affect travel and everyone's lives. Will 2022 be the year that Samoa reopens its borders? We certainly hope so. Some other islands and countries are getting set to reopen very soon, and I'm sure these will serve as real life case studies. The success or failure, and lessons learned in these countries will surely guide the Samoan government in their future actions, so we are hoping for the best.

Samoa is still the same wonderful Samoa. The sun is still shining during the day and the stars still shine at night. It still doesn't get cold, and the turtles are still swimming at high tide. The papayas, bananas, and coconuts are still growing. The surf is still breaking off the reef, and the Samoan people are still friendly and happy. But one important thing is not here right now, and that is our wonderful guests, who are also part of our family. And like so many other families, we have gone a long time without being able to see each other. We look forward to this changing very soon, for everyone, all over the world. We will see you then! .....

Tofa soifua