

37. David

(1) Tell me about your background.

We come from Fiji islands. It's a wonderful place, very healthy place, and I've had a very healthy life during my childhood. The weather's very nice, the people are very friendly, and it's a wonderful place; in fact, it is a paradise.

What did your parents do?

My father was a doctor. He was practising in a small district, and he was moving from place to place, because, as he was employed by the Fiji government, he had to sort of travel all around Fiji, and sometimes travel around islands as well; remote islands.

Was he what we would call a GP?

That is true. He is known as General Practitioner, yes.

Did your mother do any paid work?

No, my mother has been always doing domestic duties. She has led a very healthy life as well, because when she was very young she used to work in the farms; it's from working in farms. And she came from a poor background, where she had to work for her living.

Did you have any brothers and sisters?

Yes, I have a sister. She used to be in medical field as well - she was a staff nurse in a hospital. She, at the moment, lives in Melbourne, Australia.

What kind of education did you have in Fiji?

It was wonderful education. We used to have only secondary education. To get a university degree we had to travel to either Australia or New Zealand. But the education was of a fairly high standard, because it was a Crown Colony, and English happened to be compulsory in schools. So, the education was of a very high standard, and we did learn quite a bit in our young days, yes.

At what age did you leave school?

I left school at the age of sixteen, from a secondary school.

And what did you do?

After that, I worked for public works department on the clerical side for about two years. And then, during these two years, we were not quite settled in Fiji, because we heard of the wonderful life abroad, so we just wanted to travel, so we travelled to UK then.

(2) And how old were you then?

I was only twenty four then, when I arrived to this country. And I came along with two friends; there was three of us altogether.

How did you find it when you first arrived?

We found it fairly exciting. We have never experienced busy life and such an interesting life before, so it was quite interesting, yes. Yes, something very exciting happened. When we were in London, arrived from Liverpool... from Southampton, rather - sorry - we sat at the train station not knowing what to do and where to go. And then we started talking to some people who used to sort of spend nights in the railway station, and one of them said "why don't you go to Birmingham? There's plenty of work there and you'll find place to live there, and you should be able to live there happily". So, the next morning, we got the train and we came over to Birmingham. Now, Birmingham, at that time, had a lot of industries and we could find job anywhere at all, so we started looking round for jobs. And I read an article in the newspaper, Birmingham Mail, about British Telecoms engineers required, so I applied there. And since it was, in those days, a civil service job, they wrote back to all my employers in Fiji asking them for references before they could take me on. So, I had to wait for approximately seven weeks before I started work, when they had all the replies from my old bosses. Then they called me in and recruited me, and...

Did you have any qualification to work for British Telecom?

Yes, I had secondary education, which they accepted. And also, when I started working for British Telecoms, I started taking telecommunications course in Matthew Boulton Technical School. And I was there for quite a few years, until the age of forty, really, I was still studying as part time, still a student.

(3) How did Birmingham compare with what you described as a paradise in Fiji?

Yes, it was quite a difference in the beginning. In fact, we missed Fiji so much that we felt like going back the following year! But fortunately we stopped on. Now, Fiji, in comparison to Birmingham: Fiji's a paradise, and it's a multicultural, multi-religious country, and harmony prevails there all the time; there wasn't any problem at all. There's enough jobs to keep the locals employed, and sugar cane happened to be the most important industry there. We used to export sugar to Australia and New Zealand. Also, we used to have banana plantation, which was exported to New Zealand, and fishing industry was most important, because we used to just have fishes whenever we wanted to, really. All it meant was going out in the sea and fishing. And we had all sorts of fresh food, and the atmosphere was very clean, and the life was very healthy there, and I led a very healthy life there. I didn't have any complaints; no problems at all with health.

And what was your health like when you moved to Birmingham?

I was feeling all right, until bit later on in life. In fact, I led a fairly healthy life here as well, until a bit later on in my years. My mother was diagnosed as diabetic about ten years before me, and my father was already a diabetic, so we suffered in this field quite a lot, really, family wise.

Were they insulin dependant or were they on diet?

No, my father was insulin dependant, and my mother, later on in her life when she was about seventy-odd, went onto insulin as well. She had other health problems as well: she had angina and she had arthritis of spine, and she didn't enjoy a very healthy life in her later life.

You say you felt nostalgic for Fiji. Why didn't you go back?

- (4) Yes, I would have loved to go back, really, in fact. But at the time, we couldn't afford to go back, because it was so expensive to come here, and we thought "perhaps, all right, we'll stop here for a while and then go back". But meanwhile, my wife was very interested in coming across. I was married there, and so I called my wife after about eighteen months on my own. And when she joined me, of course, life was much more easier, and we got used to the way of life in this country.

Did you have any problems finding suitable accommodation?

Yes, we did have a lot of problems finding accommodation. We lived with an Asian family for roughly one year, and then I applied for a grant to buy a house. I was... in those days the mortgage was given by the council, so we applied to and got a mortgage, and we had a first house in Clifton Road, Birmingham.

Did you have any children before your wife came over here?

Yes, my son was born in Fiji in 1958. He was just one and a half years when he arrived here, and he arrived in 1962 when the weather was really bad, really; the winter was really bad. There was quite a few feet of snow, and I had to go and pick them from Tilbury. The services were all suspended, and the only service that was going was train service, so we had a very hard time getting here to Birmingham, where I used to live.

But he was one and a half years when you left to come to England?

Yes, he was one and a half years old then.

Was that quite common for men from Fiji to leave wife and child behind and go in search for work?

Well, it was just excitement. We were living on a small island and we thought perhaps life would be much more interesting abroad. A lot of people from Fiji were not allowed to move away from Fiji. They could go for a trip and pay a trip to wherever they wanted to, but immigrating was forbidden in those times. However, we got away with it, and we came and lived here. And restrictions were slacking up a little bit in those days.

- (5) So what was the date that you came to England?

The actual date I can't remember, but it was in September 1959 I arrived in this country. And since then, I've worked for British Telecoms all my life, and retired at the age of sixty.

Tell me about your work at British Telecom.

It was very interesting work. I used to work every day of the week, and never missed any work. And even in the weekends, if there was overtime going, I'd go and do it, overtime. And the people were very friendly, they accepted me very well, and the work was very interesting. I did work for the Post Office in Fiji Islands. I used to manage a small Post Office looking after two linesmen, who used to maintain the lines, and I also I used to look after the switchboard and the postal side as well.

Of course, when you joined British Telecom, it wasn't called British Telecom, was it?

It was called GPO in those days, yes, and, as I say, it was a civil service job, so we had to be on our best behaviour!

A white collar office job?

This was engineering work, so it involved most of the day outside, working out in all sorts of weather. We were doing line maintenance and provision of lines and provision of equipment, and on the whole it made it very interesting work, and a very good firm to work for.

You said that you took any overtime that was going. Were you in particular need of money?

Yes, I was desperately in need of money, because, at the time, in the very beginning, I wanted to call my wife along, and in those days the fares were not too expensive, but it was difficult to save money because the pay was very less. In fact, I was getting only about seven pounds and sixty pence a week, and so it was difficult to save money. Yes, we had to work overtime to keep our family going, because the family number increased from one to two, and then from two to four, and then from four to seven. So, I had to carry on working overtime to keep them in education, and to keep them at home, and to provide them with clothing and food, and the rest of the things required by the children.

(6) Did you come from a Catholic background?

I came from a Methodist background - my father was a Methodist and we were practising Methodists. But when we arrived in UK, my wife was already a practising Catholic in Fiji, and so she persuaded me to join the Catholic religion, so we did join the Catholic religion. We had a lot of advantages by being a Catholic, and the children had a good education in Catholic school, and the people were very friendly. And on the whole, it was very interesting life we lead.

And how did your diagnosis of diabetes come about?

Yes, it was very strange way it came about, because I went to visit a friend in London, who was a diabetic, and I said to him "what are your symptoms for diabetes?". And he explained me, he gave me all the symptoms that he was going through. I said to him "well, I think I'm diabetic as well, now, because

I've got the same symptoms as you have". And so I came back and we made an appointment with the doctor, and when I went to see him, I said to him "I think I'm diabetic". He says "how do you know?", and then I told him that I had the symptoms of a diabetic, and so he says "we'll soon find out". And he tested my water, and came back and says "yes, you are diabetic", and so he referred me to the General Hospital to be treated by Dr Wright. That was in 1980.

(7) And what were your symptoms that led you to believe you'd got diabetes?

Yes, I used to feel very thirsty and kept on running to toilet all times of the night. And also, I felt very idle, and I didn't feel like doing much work around the house. And it was very difficult for me to do any work around the house, because I just didn't feel like, and I felt as if I didn't have much energy in the body left. And also, my eyesight was being affected - I was having difficulty seeing things, and...

And how did Dr Wright treat you at the General Hospital?

Dr Wright treat me very well. In fact, he accepted me, and told me that if I behaved myself with my diet, I could lead a normal life for a long time. So, in the beginning, he put me on diet-only treatment.

Can you remember what the diet was in 1980?

Yes, he recommended a lot of vegetables, salads, healthy wholemeal bread, and if you were to eat rice it was to be brown rice, plenty of fish, and white meat and white fish, and natural soups. And not so much of restricted food, like biscuits and things like that - he told us not to have any of those. And that diet worked for me very well.

It sounds quite like the diet you referred to in Fiji that you grew up with. Is that right?

Yes, mostly fish - we used to go for fish most of the time, and seafood was our favourite food and we went for it very well. So, I did very well with diet foods for quite a while. I used to take some cabbages, raw cabbages to work and eat it, and my friends would say "how can you eat that raw cabbage?", and I used to say "well, it's part of my diet, I'm afraid". And I survived very well with the diet for quite a long time.

But after the fresh diet that you had in Fiji, what had your diet been like in Birmingham before you got diabetes?

We were eating all sorts of things, especially chips and sausages and bacon, and a lot of meat and a lot of sugary things, because we never used to get all those things in Fiji - some of the wonderful cakes and biscuits and all sorts of variety. And so we went really mad at eating the restricted food.

So, did you find it hard to change from that sugary diet to the diet that Dr Wright recommended?

Yes, it was very difficult in the beginning. I had to sacrifice quite a bit, and I used to long for sugar, sugary things. But I avoided it and it paid dividends, because I was on diet for quite a long time.

Did your wife do most of the food preparation?

Yes, my wife did most of the food preparation, and for my lunch at work I used to just take some

(8) salad and some brown bread, a boiled egg or just a slice of ham; but very light lunch.

Did your wife find it hard to adjust the cooking and food preparation to your needs?

Yes, she did find it very difficult in the beginning, because we had children and children wanted chips and sausages and other things. And then she had to prepare separate food for me, boiled food and salad basically, which the children didn't appreciate.

Given that both your parents had diabetes, did you expect to get it?

Yes, it was told by Dr Wright that "this is a hereditary disease and I'm not surprised that you have it in fact, because your parents had it". The only one who has survived in my family is my sister, at the moment. She is still non-diabetic at the age of about eighty four.

Were you worried that your children might get it?

Yes, this is my greatest worry. I keep on preaching to my children "whatever you do, make sure you stick to your proper diet, and don't go mad at eating all sorts of things", because we've been diabetic - my wife's diabetic now, I'm diabetic - and they're most likely to get it. But if they try and avoid it, they might get away with it.

Did you try to change the diet for the whole family when you were diagnosed with diabetes?

Yes, in the beginning my wife slowly tried to change the diet, and she, towards the end, she managed to change some of the diet. We got rid of chips and sausages and... or only once a week or maybe twice a week. But we started sort of giving them more healthy sandwiches, and she did try and change the diet for the children as well.

How long did you manage on diet alone?

I managed for ten years, from 1980 to 1990. And, in fact, it took a lot of effort to sort of try and keep up to this diet.

When were the difficult times?

It was mostly during festive seasons, like Christmas, Easter and birthdays, when we couldn't resist but have a little bit of a taste of cake; birthday cake or

Christmas cake. And Easter time, we used to have some sweets - just a little bit, to see if we can manage it.

Did you notice any difference in your health, how you were feeling, if you did break your diet?

Yes, the sugar level would go up and the symptoms would come back again, especially being so unenergetic and just lazing around, didn't feel like doing much. And feeling thirsty, kept on drinking - and even to that, we have to drink water only and tea without sugar. So, it has been very difficult, really, to adjust and to keep up to the diet.

When you were first diagnosed, did Dr Wright advise that you should keep monitoring your sugar levels?

Yes, he gave us a chart to fill in, and we had to do that every morning - check the sugar level in the water. And we kept a constant check throughout the treatment.

(9) Tell me about changing onto tablets.

Dr Wright recommended me to go onto tablets in 1990, and I kept on to the tablets from 1990 until I went onto insulin on the sixteenth of June 2002.

What was it like being on tablets?

Since I was with Dr Wright, who was experimenting all sorts of tablets on trial basis, we were on various types of tablets to see what effect it had, and he used the best tablets recommended then for us. There were quite a few different types, which I can't remember now. But I remember going from one tablet to another and so on, because that was Dr Wright's job, really, is to practise all sorts of medication on people, and to see which was the most effective one for the individual.

Now you were no longer controlling your diabetes by diet alone, did you feel a greater freedom to break the strict diet or not?

Yes, I think I feel a greater freedom now, because at the moment I can decide on how much insulin to take.

But on tablets - we'll get onto insulin in a minute - but did you feel a greater freedom when you moved onto tablets?

Yes, I did; I did feel a greater freedom moving onto tablets. It was very interesting, really, to use different types of medication and how it affected one, especially myself. When I felt better, I told Dr Wright that I was feeling better with such and such tablet, and then he'll recommend me that one for some time. And thus we carried on on tablets.

Would you have liked to go on on diet alone?

I would have loved to stay on diet alone, but since... I suppose it may have been due to my fault as well, because we used to drift away from the proper

diet, and thus it led to tablets and then eventually to insulin.

Do you think it was all your fault?

Well, I suppose the level of insulin provided by the pancreas wasn't enough, so it slowly sort of released less and less, and as it released less and less insulin in the body, we wanted more insulin, so we had to go on tablets.

(10) Tell me about changing to insulin.

In the year 2002, Dr Wright recommended me to go on insulin, and he arranged for me to go on a day's tuition - to a day's training. This training consisted of testing and injecting - there was two sessions. First of all we started off with testing. We had the test meter demonstrated to us, by means of strip, which we used to put a drop of blood on, and they put the test strip in the meter, which indicated level of sugar in the body. And we carried on for half a day session on that one, and the rest of the half a day session was involved in injecting. And we were told to use... I was told to use the NovoMix, which was being nominated to me by the nurse in charge, and she says "you'll remain on NovoMix all the time", and so I was injecting NovoMix. But she told us how to inject NovoMix by means of the needle, and this was a very simple operation. It consists of just like a pen type NovoMix insulin and with a needle at the end of it, so all you do is just apply that four millimetre needle into the skin and press the top of the pen, which injected the insulin into the body. And we had a whole afternoon session on this, and at the end of the day we were able to do testing and injecting.

How did you feel about moving onto insulin, after twelve years, I think, on tablets?

It was a bit difficult in the beginning. I experienced a lot of lumps coming on my thighs as I injected, but slowly I started getting used to it, and even the lumps didn't appear any more, because I used to apply effectively. We were told to apply at the lower abdomen and the thighs - upper thighs - which was simple enough, and it's pain-free anyway. There's hardly any pain felt when you're injecting.

And have you felt more freedom over your diet since changing to insulin?

Yes, in fact we are much more at ease now at controlling our level of insulin. When the sugar level is high after testing then we can apply, increase the level of insulin, which brings it down and keeps us more healthy and fit. And it gives us much more freedom than the tablets and the diet, yeah.

(11) Have you had any health problems associated with diabetes?

Yes. In 1989, Dr Wright diagnosed that I had hypertension, and that lasted me to the present day, although it has been well in control; I haven't really suffered due to that.

What were you advised - tablets, exercise?

I was put on a mild tablet for that, and I'm still taking tablets now.



What other health problems have you had?

Yes, I had problems with my eyesight, and I had a laser treatment in 1995. This was the first laser treatment I had, and it cured the problem then, and I haven't had much problem with my eyesight since then.

I remember you mentioned that you'd had eyesight problems before your diabetes was diagnosed in the first place. Did diet alone actually cure those early problems with eyesight?

Yes, it did, in fact. My eyesight improved because I was going to the eye hospital every six months. And after the laser treatment, it has been okay; I haven't had much of a problem with my eyesight. In fact, I was told... the last treatment I went for, the last check I went for, they told me to come back after one year. They say "you've got no problems at all with your eyesight".

But just going back to when you were first diagnosed, you said you had eyesight problems. How were those improved?

It was improved with diet only. In fact, it improved very well, because I was able to resume my proper duties without glasses or anything, so it did help a lot.

What other health problems have you had?

Yes, in 2001 Dr Wright told me that I had problems with my kidneys. It was quite serious, so he booked me a place in the hospital, and I went for treatment under one of the consultants at the hospital. Whilst searching for problems with the kidneys, they found out that I had some cysts on the liver as well, so there was two functions happening at the same time involving two consultants. While I was in the hospital, I had to go on to the catheter for the liver treatment, and I remain on the catheter for about roughly three months. And then they found out that I had cysts on my liver, and after doing extensive research work on it they found that it was benign. And so during this period, while I was being... while the search was being made for cancerous cells, the consultant, who was dealing with me at the time, damaged the catheter, and as a result, my body was filled up with water. And at that time, fortunately, I was in the hospital waiting for a test when this happened, and so they rushed me to the emergency ward. And I don't know what happened to me after that because I collapsed, and when I came about, which was about two o'clock in the morning, I was told that I nearly died, because the water went right from my head to abdomen and lower part of the body. And this was a nasty experience, and therefore my wife and the family who gathered all around thinking that I have passed away. Fortunately this didn't happen, and they managed to survive - pull me out of it. And then I was treated for kidney for some time, and this treatment went on for roughly two or three months, involving about two months stay in hospital.

- (12) I do not blame the consultant in charge, because he was just doing his work. He was looking around for cysts, for cancerous cells in the liver, and it just accidentally happened that he must have punctured a catheter. So,

no, I do not blame the consultant at all. I think it was in the course of work he was doing.

You didn't think of suing then?

No, not really; I didn't think of suing them at all. I thought it was a natural sort of action, and it's one of those things which just happens in a routine check like that, especially involving two consultants at the same time.

For a matter of historical record, you were in hospital for, as you say, two or three months in 2001. What was a National Health Service hospital like in that year?

I was treated very well in the hospitals. The nurses, the doctors and the consultants, they were very nice to me, and they attended to every complaint I had regarding my health and gave me all the medication that was necessary. They made sure that I took the medication which I was on before going into hospital, and so I was treated very well, I should say, generally by all concerned.

Did you get the impression that there were enough nurses?

Yes, the nursing service was very good, I thought. You know, they were always attending to us for whatever reason we wanted. Even if they were out of the room, we could ring the bell and they would come and serve us for whatever we wanted. So, the service was very good, I should say. Yes, each time I went into hospital for some time, they used to straight away put me on to drip feed, which involved getting me on to a needle. And the drip feed was on a little iron pole, and it used to feed into the arm. And it was quite an experience, really. Sometimes, in the beginning, it was painful, but towards the end, you just get used to it and accept it as a natural cause.

And the nurses supervised that well, did they?

The nurses supervised that very well. In fact, they kept on asking me if I had any pains, and I used to say "no, it's okay", and the needle was okay. And if it did pain, they used to sort of take the plaster off and re-put another lot of dressing on, which helped a lot. Used to be very, very useful, and they asked for my welfare each time they passed - "how are you?" - and the atmosphere, generally, was very pleasant, yes.

You've had a fair bit to do with the National Health Service since you were first diagnosed twenty four, twenty five years ago. What changes do you feel that you've seen in hospitals over those years?

Yes, I've been in hospital, I think... I've had very good treatment; the staff were very good. I believe there has been a lot of talk of decline in the services, but personally I haven't experienced that. There has been shortage of nurses, and nurses have been recruited from abroad even, now, to make sure that there are enough nurses. But personally, I didn't feel any problems at all with the staff at all. They were very, very good, and very kind and very attentive.

And as an outpatient, have you noticed any changes in waiting times?

The waiting time has come down a bit, really. The last time I went in for my eye test, they were virtually on time; just a few minutes late, but you don't mind that. During the course of treatment, from application of eye drops to seeing the consultant was a bit delayed sometimes, but they tried their best to keep to the times.

And you reckon you had to wait longer in the past?

I did have to wait, on some occasions, a bit longer, but most of the time, as I say, it has been on time.

(13) And have you had any experience of the Health Service unconnected with diabetes?

Yes, I've had problems with arthritis in both knees. Since my doctor recommended me to the orthopaedic hospital, it was a good five or six months delay before I got an appointment. And when I went in for the first appointment, I was given an injection with steroid - a fluid injected in my knees, and it has been quite good since then; the pain has been much more less. But the next appointment was November last year, which I went to, but unfortunately the consultant wasn't available. So, my next appointment is in May of this year, which is quite a duration, really, between each appointments.

You mentioned that your wife had also developed diabetes. Can you talk about her experience of diabetes?

My wife was diagnosed in '93 as diabetic. She hasn't suffered as badly as I have. She is on two tablets at the moment: Actos and Glibenese. She takes these tablets twice a day.

And has she tried controlling it with diet as well?

She did try diet-only, but it didn't... it wasn't very effective, so they put her on medication - tablets - straight away, virtually; just about two or three months afterwards.

And did they attribute her diabetes to heredity or to her lifestyle?

I think hers is due to her lifestyle, because her parents weren't diabetic and none of her families are diabetic. So, I think hers was just off experience, I suppose; just due to the style of her... her lifestyle, I should say.

Is there an element of embarrassment with type two diabetes, that people might feel it was your fault?

No. In fact, I didn't feel any problems with being diabetic. At work, nobody really mentioned anything about diabetes. I used to ask my boss if I could get away for a test, for a check-up every so often, every three months, and he used to cooperate and say "yes, by all means". And I never had any, in fact, adverse experience with being diabetic.

There's been quite a lot of publicity, though, recently given to type two diabetes, and suggesting that people are eating too much sugar. Have you noticed people reacting differently when you tell them you've got diabetes?

Yes. I think what the doctor told me was that it's not too much sugar that causes type two diabetes, but it's when the pancreas stops releasing enough insulin that causes the problem. So, really, I think having sugar levels and sweet foods might contribute towards early diabetes, but I don't think it's a direct factor, really.

But have other people blamed you?

Yes, they used to make a few jokes. They used to say "oh, it's 'good living' here that you've got the diabetes", and I used to say "no, I don't think it is very good living"! But they used to say to me "now, have you been eating too much sweets and having too much rich food?", and I used to say "no, not really". I used to be having sort of average amount of sweets and average amount of sugar, like anybody else. But yes, the comment has been made in the past.

(14) Have you always told everybody that you've got diabetes?

Yes. Whenever anybody asks me if I had any problems - health problems - I used to tell them I'm diabetic. I didn't feel ashamed of it. I thought, you know, it's just a normal thing that one suffers with, and there's nothing to hide about this complaint.

Are there any differences in attitude to illness in England compared with Fiji?

Yes. In Fiji, people treat diabetes as normal illness, and, in fact, they are more sympathetic with one who's suffering from diabetes. They won't sort of criticise or look down on it that you're a diabetic, but they would be more sympathetic, whereas over here, people don't worry at all, you know, they just take it as a norm, really. It's one that one tends to suffer, and it's just a normal complaint.

So, because over here they take it as a normal complaint, you mean people are less sympathetic?

Yes, they are. I suppose they are less sympathetic since this is much more sort of busier and people sort of mind their own businesses, and they're not concerned much about other people's problems, so they just take it as norm. Whereas in Fiji, now, they will be more sympathetic.

Do you feel that your parents, as diabetics, got more sympathy than you've received from the general public?

Yes, they did, in fact. They were aware of my father being a diabetic, and if he went somewhere, they'd treat him accordingly. They'll give him things which he should be eating, and avoid food which he shouldn't have been taking.

Would you have received such good treatment for your diabetes if you'd stayed in Fiji?

No, definitely not, because the treatment over there is very poor. The hospitals are not very good, not well-equipped, and there aren't any consultants... very few - I should say - very few consultants there, and they are overloaded with work. And the medication isn't there, and so I believe the treatment over here is first class and you get treated very well for whatever complaint you have.

What is your state of health regarding diabetes now?

Since I've gone onto insulin, I've had one or two hypo attacks. This hasn't been very serious, because I could see it coming. And when you feel the symptoms coming, I've been taking precautions and keeping sweets in my pocket - sugar lumps - and avoided serious hypo attack.

How do you know they're coming?

Yes, it shows that one's getting dizzy and fainting and sweating, and these are mostly indication of hypo. And I've had these attacks a few times, but, as I say, I've avoided... Once I went out shopping in Sainsbury's, and as I was holding the railing I was going to reel over. And fortunately I had a sweet in my pocket, and I held onto the railing, took the sweet, and I avoided collapsing there. So yes, it does affect me in bad ways sometimes.

(15) So, what keeps you going?

Well, we have a very strong faith. We're Catholic - Roman Catholics. All my children are practising Catholics, we are practising Catholics, and we believe in God, and we believe in his cures as well. And that gives us hope for carrying on in life, and carrying on in spite of suffering.

Would you say that you have suffered?

I should say I have suffered only when my kidneys failed for a while, and apart from that, I haven't really suffered badly, I should say. You know, I've been able to carry on working, doing domestic duties after my retirement, and helping my wife around the house. And I like to move about all day long, rather than sit down and watch television and passing time that way. I would like to be active, yes.

What advice would you give to somebody newly diagnosed with type two diabetes?

I would say make sure that you have the right treatment and control your diet, and try and live life as normal. Be active and don't give in to it.

You said try and find the right medical treatment. Do you have much to do with the medical profession now?

Yes, they normally call me every six months to check my diabetes, to see how I'm progressing. The last few times I've gone there, they've told me that I was doing very well; I'm controlling very well. And I've kept well - in fact, I have given up alcohol, which I used to enjoy. And so it's really self-control and making sure that you are protective, and carry on life as normal.

Would your life have been different in any way if you hadn't had diabetes?

Yes, I was very active. I used to do all sorts of 'do it yourself' jobs around the house and help other people. We've been helping the elderly of the Church. We've been very active in the Church: visiting people, visiting sick and housebound, and that kept us really busy and very active, really, for the last few years that I've spent here.

(16) Yes, diabetes hasn't prevented me from doing my normal chores.

And how do you see the future?

I see future as good, for time being, and we tend to lead a normal life, as we ought to. My children, I'm concerned about, as we're both now diabetic, so we have to advise them and make sure that they don't experience the same problems as we have. They have been doing well so far. They've all had their degrees and are in good jobs, and I hope they maintain a good standard of life, involving good diet and healthy life, which they are doing at the moment, with our advice.

And have you had any thoughts of returning to Fiji?

Yes, I had dreams of returning to Fiji. I thought when I retire the first thing I'll do is pack up and go back home, but it never materialised, because my wife was ill, I became ill. And then we had all our children here well-established, and also we have grandchildren now - seven grandchildren. And we just can't pluck up the courage to go back, leaving them all here.