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# PACIFIC™

MAGAZINE

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Use & Abuse**

**Kanaks:  
homeland  
strangers**

**Northern  
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Marianas**

**Marshalls:  
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**Interview:  
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Vanuatu**

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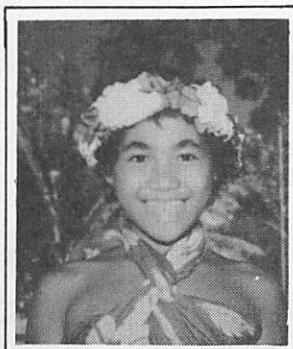
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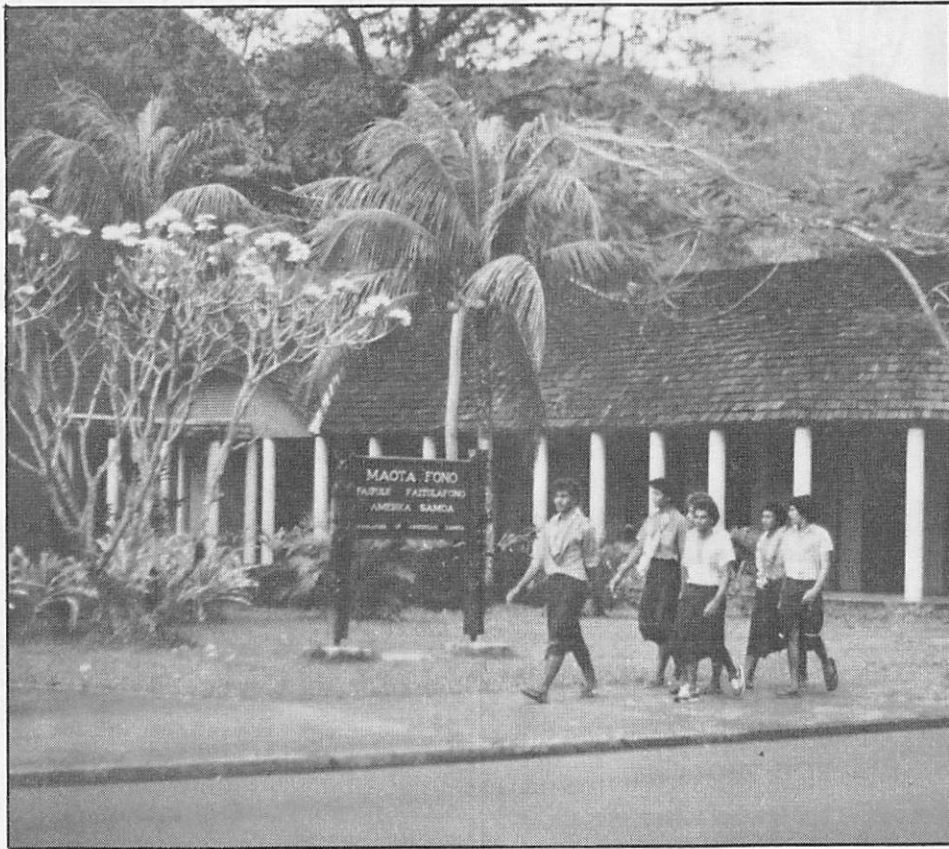
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A happy, toothy smile from a girl of Atafu, Tokelau. Photo by George H. Balazs.



GREG KNUDSEN

Traditional forms of dress are still seen in Pago Pago.

weaving, dancing, and singing are passed on from generation to generation.

Beginning in 1974, American Samoa Community College students have documented the oral history and traditions of Samoa including legends, poetry, and the arts in a fine bi-lingual periodical called *FaaSamoa Pea*, or "The Continuation of the Samoan Way." Proud families pass on the culture, and Samoans returning to the islands after education or work elsewhere soon discover that Samoan ways are still the way of life in their birthplace.

The schools, Americanized as they are, are a key to the retention of Samoan values. They reflect American values, Samoan values, and an interesting meld of both. Education is geared toward the needs facing the student after schooling has ended. This is a challenge to educators because many Samoans emigrate to the United States where life is quite different. The responsibility for the "tight-wire-act" is taken very seriously. It is especially awesome when all the young people are afforded a free education K-14. The school system in American Samoa is relatively young and has accomplished a great deal, especially when compared to other remote areas.

The onslaught of curriculum innovations, federal programs, and federal rules and regulations notwithstanding, American Samoan educators are determined to define and implement programs which reflect Samoan values and Samoan needs. Major problems in stateside schools are not problems of any consequence in Samoa.

No one will argue that the system is not frustrating, political, wasteful, disorganized, or undemocratic. Of course, these definitions are used for many school systems in the U.S. today. The Samoan educational system has "arrived," developed in a very short time, and is steadily maturing.

One needs to take a deeper look to appreciate how much of the old culture still exists in American Samoa. Supermarkets, accounting systems, transistor radios, TV, and jive-talk do not make a culture, although they are

## American Samoa Still Samoan

by James W. Moore  
and Wanda C. Moore

Samoans and friends of Samoa are gravely concerned about the problems facing American Samoa. The impact of U.S. political and economic policy is overwhelming.

How much resistance do the Samoan people have to U.S. power and the inroads on their culture and values? They have weathered amazingly well the political impact of the U.S.-appointed *palagi* leaders who have attempted to set policy and mandate change. Some of those appointees were bigots, political hacks, opportunists, evangelists, or incompetents who imported every modern "advantage" and imposed technology incongruous to a Pacific island setting. Funds have poured in, often without necessary training or methods for accountability. The Samoan ability to repel over 80 years of this kind of influence is remarkable.

The *matai* system of chieftaincy has retained its importance. American Samoans use their language constantly. The only Samoans who don't speak

Samoan every day are those raised in the U.S. and denied the opportunity to speak their language. Samoan lands are still in the hands of Samoan families, despite pressure over the years to sell to outsiders. The rewards and awesome responsibilities of the extended family, and the cohesiveness of village life are a testament to a cultural heritage nurtured by the *matai*, the legislature, and the judiciary in American Samoa.

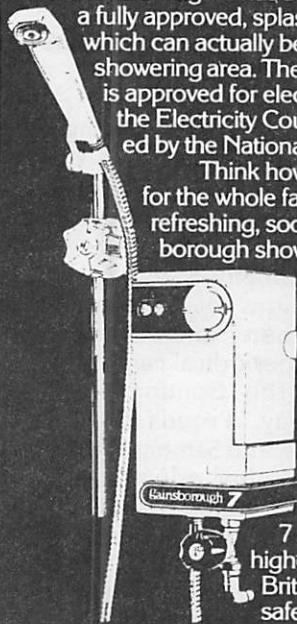
The veneer of worldly goods does not negate the substance of Samoan culture in American Samoa. The old are revered and cared for (there are no old folk's homes in American Samoa despite the affluence), and children are mannerly and subservient.

Meals are often cooked in the traditional way in *umu*'s, and the diet is still basically Samoan, with taro, pork, fish, chicken, breadfruit, and banana as everyday staples. Village-sponsored schools teach history, culture, protocol, and religion. Samoans wear the *lava lava* and the *pulatasi*. The arts are an important part of life for many; tapa making, shell work, carving,

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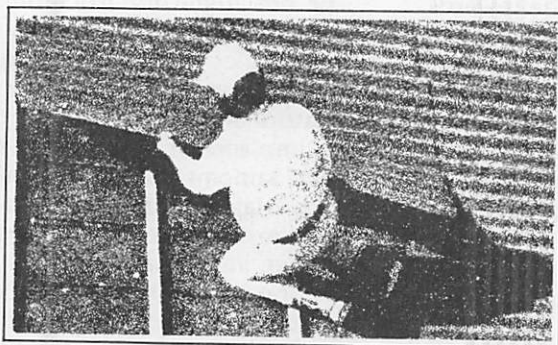
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symptoms of change and may indicate pressure for change. Samoans have resisted much of this pressure, especially where such changes seriously erode Samoan values.

Samoans are a warm, loving, forgiving, and intelligent people who have, and will continue, to sort the nut from the husk, using what is appropriate and discarding what is not, within the context of a changing world.

*Dr. James Moore was formerly dean of instruction for American Samoa Community College; Wanda Moore was formerly director of Teacher Corps and grants manager for ASCC.*

*This article was in response to "Two Samoans, So Near Yet So Far" by Joseph Theroux (Sep/Oct 1981). An earlier response from students at the American Samoa Community College (Jan/Feb 1982) drew a retort from Theroux (Mar/Apr 1982).*

## Free Western Pacific Maps

Historical and pictorial tourist maps have recently been published of several western Pacific islands. These detailed maps with descriptive text on World War II battles and insights into varied and diverse cultures are available free of charge from each of the respective islands tourism promotion offices.

The "Pacific Explorer's Map of Guam," available in both English and Japanese, locates ancient Chamorro and Spanish artifacts and describes island legends as well as the invasions of World War II (Guam Visitors Bureau, Managing Director, P.O. Box 3520, Agana, Guam 96910).

A "Historic and Geographic Tourist Map of Saipan" also describes the hostilities of the war and contains interesting notes on oceanography, beach combing, and shell collecting (Marianas Visitors Bureau, Managing Director, P.O. Box 861, Saipan, C.M. 96950).

"The Explorer's Atlas of The Federated States of Micronesia" contains maps of the four FSM states: Kosrae, a former 18th century and 19th century Pacific whaling station; Yap, land of stone money; Ponape, site of the ancient stone ruins at Nan Madol; and the Truk Lagoon site of the Ghost Fleet of the Japanese Imperial Navy (Federated States of Micronesia Liaison Office, 706 G Street, S. E., Washington, D.C. 20003).