



CLASS OF  
1971

## Netani Sukanaivalu

Fiji Institute of Technology

### Qualifications

- Full Trade Certificate in Fitting & Machining - Fiji Institute of Technology, 1971
- Technical Teacher Certificate - Fiji Institute of Technology, 1979
- Incorporate Engineer - Engineering Council, UK 1983
- Associate Member of the Institute of Marine Engineers, UK 1983
- Class 1 Engineer (Foreign Going) - Sydney Institute of Technology, Australia, 1983
- Master of Science - World Maritime University, Sweden, 1986

A tall, athletic-built 19-year-old lad took a walk down to the market to purchase food items following his mother's orders in Suva. It was his lucky day as the Walu Bay wharf was open for public visits. Filled with great excitement, the youngster seemed automatically drawn to the wharf and before he could retrace his steps, he found himself craning his neck staring up at the tall Bank Line ship berthed at the wharf.

Netani Sukanaivalu was in awe as his young curious eyes scanned over the ship finally resting upon a couple of men dressed in white overall stained with black coloured oil. It was that very moment he had decided how he would spend his life.

The next Monday morning he scurried down the familiar path and begged the Foreman of Bish Engineers Limited for work but unfortunately he was turned down. Two days later he received a call from the same company, enquiring if he was still interested in getting employment and whether he owned an overall. It was that Wednesday he reported for his first duty, and which he pulled straight into midnight on Union Steamship MV Matua. Netani's passion for ships had him wearing his overall throughout the week unless dragged out of it by his mother.

“The desire to get better in his trade soon had him enrolled into a trade course at the Derrick Technical Institute. Thereon, there was no anchoring of sail for this chap from Nukunicake village, Ono-I-Lau in Lau.”

# THE SHIP MASTER IN ENGINEERING

Netani glided abroad for further studies spending five years in Australia, two years in Sweden, and a year in the Middle East while his wife and children stayed in Fiji. One of the darkest moments he describes when his dormitory in Australia caught fire, which had claimed a student's life and hospitalized six in critical condition.

Eager to prove as an asset to the institution that had helped him reach great heights, he was appointed the lecturer in-charge of School of Maritime Studies in 1975 and in 1982 became the first local Head of School of School of Maritime Studies. Here he was responsible for designing the Marine Engineering Syllabuses from Grade 1 to Grade 5, which was accepted by the Uniform Maritime Standard Committee set up by SPEC and IMO. Thereafter, he established the Marine Engineering Cadet System.

In 1988, Netani became Fiji Institute of Technology's Vice-Principal, and two years later he was promoted to Principal - he created history for he was the first and the only former student of Derrick Technical Institute to have served at this position

Another proud moment for Netani was when he became the first Fijian to obtain Class 1 Engineer (Foreign Going) from Australia and a Master of Science Degree from the World Maritime University in Sweden.

The eldest of 10 siblings, Netani shared a huge slice of cake towards the preparatory process to transfer FIT from Government control and to give full autonomy to FIT as approved by Cabinet in 1991. As Minister of Education, he had initially recommended to Cabinet the establishment of the University of Science and Technology now known as Fiji National University. He also played a significant role in negotiating land sites in Nadi, Ba, and Labasa for FNU campuses.

**“Netani has made worthy contributions towards the National Council for Building a Better Fiji in the formulation of the Peoples Charter for Change, Peace and Progress. He was the Force Liaison officer, Peace Keeping Duties, MFO Sinai in 1996-1997 and was awarded the best liaison officer of the Force out of 11 Nations.”**

Some of his commendable duties include the Chairman of Wages Council (Building & Civil & Electrical Engineering), President of the Fiji Marine Board, Deputy Director of Fiji Intelligence Service, Senior Military Advisor, Commander RFMF (2000-2002), Senior Military Officer, General Court Martial for year 2000 Mutiny, Interim Minister for Education (2007-2008), Minister for

Lands & Mineral Resources (2008-2011) and President, General Court Martial, RFMF (2014-2015).

Netani is thankful to God for gaining scholarship throughout his career path. “God was my pillar of strength, especially while leaving my family behind and my late wife Loraini Sukanaivalu to look after the family. She was playing a dual role as a mother and father to our children leaving me to focus on my studies,” Netani said.

The accomplished naval officer's advice to young alumni is to aim high. “Be prepared to face many challenges that come with it. And remember, do not think of yourself more highly than others, always consider others as better than yourself.

Netani has left no stone unturned in his career for he has returned to Walu Bay. He runs his business Horeb Engineering Co Ltd situated right next to the Bish Limited building where he once stood as a teenager in awe for oil-stained overall - where he had discovered his purpose in life.