

SBM NOW SOLD AT THE FOLLOWING OUTLETS:

Post Office, Payless (Town Ground), Bamboo Cafe (King Solomon Hotel), Office Works (Panatina Plaza), JJA 24hr Shop, Wings Supermarket (Chinatown), Honiara Hotel, King Solomon Airport Duty Free Shop, Lime Lounge (Point Cruz), Domestic Airport Shop, Taj Mahal (Pt Cruz), Meat Lovers (Kukum), Vision Investment (Town Ground Plaza)

MORE ARRESTS

COP on JANUS

“Expect more arrests but I am not going to put a number on it”

On RSIPF

“It’s in “good health”



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THE ANUHA ISLAND

A story of friendship, deceit, betrayal and politics

By ROBERT LUKE IROGA

For 30 years John Meint Smith dined and billeted very senior Solomon Islands Government officials at his seven acres property in Brisbane as an act of goodwill being a longtime friend of the Solomon Islands and her people. He further reveals that entertaining his Solomon Islands guests also vary including guaranteeing a few thousand dollars loan with an Australia bank to a diplomat and even paying capital for onshore development projects. According to Smith nearly all of these MPs and bureaucrats have vowed to help him, his family and investors resurrect the famous Anuha Island Resort project on Gela through due legal process and timely discharge of executive political will.

But three decades later, Smith is still waiting in Brisbane, Australia on the Government to agree to a settlement for the reopening of what is often describe as the "pearl of Solomon Islands tourism" industry.

Records show Smith has made volumes of written submissions and numerous telephone discussions with all seven of so reigning Prime Ministers since 1988. His website (anuhaisland-johnsmith.com) attempts to document all these voluminous written submissions including copies of personal letters written to Smith by some of our Prime Ministers. He further alleges that his passionate cause include records of his personal telephone conversations and written communications with cabinet ministers, successive premiers of Central Province and many other influential persons in the country including the Attorneys-General and the Directors of Public Prosecution to re-open Anuha.

SBM caught up with Smith in Brisbane, not at his 7-acre mansion as many of our Solomon Islands compatriots enjoyed, but at a quite Brisbane coffee shop.

Smith reveals during the interview that his attempts to redevelop Anuha have been curtailed by diplomatic interference, political deceptions and alleged judicial nepotism.

On his website, Smith elegantly synthesizes his struggles and writes: "(John Meint) Smith has a tale worthy of any novel. It has friendship, deceit, betrayal and politics. It's the true story of his relationship with Anuha Island in



John Smith in Brisbane 2017.

the Solomon Islands. John's faith in the good Lord and his Dutch courage has kept him steadfast over the last 30 years in his passionate campaign while Anuha Island has been lying undeveloped."

Who is John Meint Smith?

Smith was born in the Netherlands to a Dutch father and a mother with Jews ancestry. He immigrated to Australia in 1975 while all his other family members remained in Europe or South America.

On arrival in Australia, Smith initially worked in the intelligence management sector before invoking his culinary skills, hobby and his other training in the hospitality industry and bought and operated his own restaurants in the glamorous Queen Street in Brisbane's CBD. He was also a pioneer in cooking on television in Australia in the late 1970's. (See picture on page 8). His national identity, European and international knowledge of both "À la carte and table d'hôte menus and events management landed him the role of executive chef at the premier Hamilton Island Resort in the Queensland Whitsundays.

In 1987, Smith was appointed executive chef by Pacific Resorts of Australia, the then operators of Anuha Island Resort in the Central Province. Soon after his arrival on Anuha he was given the added responsibility to act as resident general manager of the Anuha Island Resort.

Some former Anuha Island Resort staff in the late 1980's recall Smith's down to earth demeanor claiming that he was the first expatriate boss to sit down and eat with them. He was also known to travel to staff's villages and enjoyed the village hospitality sitting crossed legged at their kitchen floors to en-



Anuha Island. Below: John Smith with Gella

joy meals in the villages. His benevolence for the underprivileged stems from his childhood days after witnessing his parents sheltered Jews refugees and escapees in the cellar of their farmhouse during the Second World War from the heavy German patrol around their property.

Smith believes that his close association with the local staff has drawn envious looks from his superiors and the then Solomon Island expatriate elite community. His close friendship with the locals was latter used by his opponents who alleged he inflamed and incited the landowners to express discontentment towards the resort owners. He claims that even to the extent that allegations were levelled against him for allegedly inciting the locals to invade Anuha Island Resort and intimidate guests.

However, on his website Smith displays a copy of a Memorandum from the former Director of Criminal Investigation Division (CID) John Mark Parafea to the then Prime Minis-

ND RESORT SAGA

prevented by police on the advice of some prominent foreigners in Honiara.

Claim for an Irrevocable Power of Attorney

Documents show Smith holds the irrevocable power of attorney on behalf of the late Fr Pule who owned Anuha.

On 10 January 1988, Fr Pule appointed Smith who lived in Honiara then to act in person concerning all his present and future affairs and all his present and future, property, rights and interests real and personal and whether sole or joint, including the receipt, endorsement and handling of any monies, cheques, bills of exchange or other instrument regarding Anuha. The irrevocable power of attorney document was stamped and registered on the 13 January 1988 at the Stamp Duties and Register of Land. The document was prepared by a then senior Solomon Islands lawyer and witnessed by a commissioner of oath. Smith also claims he was present in the lawyer's office during the preparation of the irrevocable power of attorney.

Alleged grand fraudulent dealings

Smith recalls that immediately after his return to Australia in June 1988, to use his own words "the wolves were out", in "evil and dubious attempts by certain diplomats, MPs and rouge elements to cajole his friend late Fr Pule to revoke the power of attorney. A few weeks later an Australian media television crew, he claims sponsored by the Australian Government, approached him and his partner to re



ple during one of this visits in recent years.

ter on 26th September 2002. The former director in his investigation reported a very interesting and rather paradoxical scenario for Smith as he inevitably caught as meat in a sandwich after he stuck his head out to be a peacemaker between his newfound friends and their employers. In retrospect, Smith reminisces that the decision to follow his heart has been not gone down well with the owners and he's seen as a traitor by the then elite expats. Mr Parafea added in his report that "foreigners" used their privileged influence to convince both foreign and local lawyers to lay charges against Smith.

The report also confirmed that Smith was in Honiara after being summoned by the then Prime Minister and was nowhere near Anuha Island when the resort caught fire. It further established that Smith attempted to return to Anuha by plane the next day but was





John Smith on cooking programme on TV. Right, Above: PS Culture and Tourism Andrew Nihopara. Below former PS John W. Wasi.

turn to the Solomon Islands to appear in a documentary. He and his partner were paid some money together with their airfare and returned to Honiara later in June 1988. What he did not know was that this particular film crew had concocted a story and cut and paste his photo walking on a beach on Tulagi with Fr Pule alleging they were walking and trespassing on Anuha Island beach in contravention of a previous restraining order against him and the late priest. As a result, a warrant of arrest was issued by the Solomon Island Court which negated all his attempts to re-enter Solomon Islands and as Smith puts it "to honorably discharge his role under the irrevocable power of attorney".

In his absence, the "wolves" went out to entice late Fr Pule to deal with the documents of the island including executing a revocation of the irrevocable power of attorney which the late priest confessed to him on his death bed in front of family members and witnesses.

"The question I would like to ask our legal gurus to answer is whether an irrevocable power of attorney prepared by a senior lawyer of the Solomon Islands under the relevant laws and witnessed by an authorized notary could still be revoked within the term of the natural life of the donor and within the initial 12 years term duly expressed in the irrevocable power of attorney?"

"I have never at any time terminated voluntarily or ordered by any court to surrender the powers under the document," he claims.

According to Smith, he had attempted to obtain a probate after the late Fr Pule's death to be the court appointed administrator of the late priest's interest as the holder of the irrevocable power of attorney but they were thwarted.

In the decision, the Court cited the Law of Property Act 1925 sections 126 and 127 "that a power of attorney is revoked on death and is not irrevocable unless the power is granted in the circumstance set out in S.12". Smith however argues that the same section S126i states that the "the power shall not be revoked at any time, either by anything done by the donor of the power without the concurrence of the donee of the power, or by death, disability or bankruptcy of the donor."

Smith hopes that the lawyers who once viewed his documents as only "discredited piece of paper" have read the laws again. He accuses them of committing one of the grandest fraudulent dealings in peacetime in the Pacific Island islands.

Anuha Island Resort

Anuha Island Resort is located on Anuha Island in the Florida Group. It is approximately 35 miles from Honiara, and around 15 min-

utes from Henderson airfield. The resort was burned down over an alleged land ownership dispute in 1988. Smith however said that though he was in Honiara when the burning took place he was later reliably informed that there was another intent for the arson and not as alleged as the locals would not wish to lose their source of income and pride of their province. Smith hopes that another thorough investigation would be conducted to unearth the truth of the arson.

Anuha was successfully developed and managed by Pacific Resorts Ltd in 1983. It was a major draw-card for tourism in the region. Ownership later changed hands over the course of the resort's history. Anuha Island Resort played host to a number of well-known celebrities. Transportation to the resort was through Anuha's private airline and its own charter boat fleet. The resort generated its own electricity and water supply.

Firm stance

Speaking exclusively to SBM, Smith said he is open to reviving the resort but the Government as a party to the original dealing of Anuha must meet his demands for compensation for the loss of business in the past 30 years and untold vilification of his family's name in the international arena by certain books and publications which he claimed to have been

Friendship, deceit, betrayal and politics

written by diplomats who once served in the Solomon Islands during the Anuha era.

"I have submitted to the Government of the Solomon Islands what I sincerely quantified as the value of both specific and general damages and loss both in person and as custodian of Fr Pule's rights. I am aware that a former advisor to the present Prime Minister's Office has taunted these claims in social media late last year. The same advisor who was a regional executive in the Maritime Industry was aware of my fishing vessels which were unceremoniously taken away from my Solomon Islands business partner during the time when I was barred from entering Solomon Islands," he said.

Meanwhile Permanent Secretary of Culture and Tourism Andrew Nihopara said that Anuha has been sidelined for this year and there is no provision in his budget to further pursue the project.

Mr Smith said whilst he's flexible on negotiating the compensation settlement, the Government of the day cannot and will not do anything because he holds the irrevocable power of attorney over the island.

He adds that no amount of fraud would take away the right from him as the person who holds the power of attorney over Anuha.

"The power of attorney was given to me with a prayer and it was from a man of God, Fr Pule," he told this Magazine in Brisbane.

Mr Smith asserts that a number of interested investors who tried to avoid him to redevelop Anuha were either unsuccessful in securing a loan because he holds the power over the island.

Also he said many foreign lenders are aware of the ruling in "Lever Solomon Ltd case in of November 2013." Smith referred to it as "Lever Solomon Ltd v Attorney General [2013] SBCA 11; SICOA-CAC 24 of 2013 (8 November 2013)"

Smith adds that if the Government thinks that they'll open the resort when he dies then they're wrong because he has put in place appropriate legal measures both in Australia and through his family lawyers and associates in Europe to continue his crusade even posthumously on his behalf.

Government wants airport on Anuha

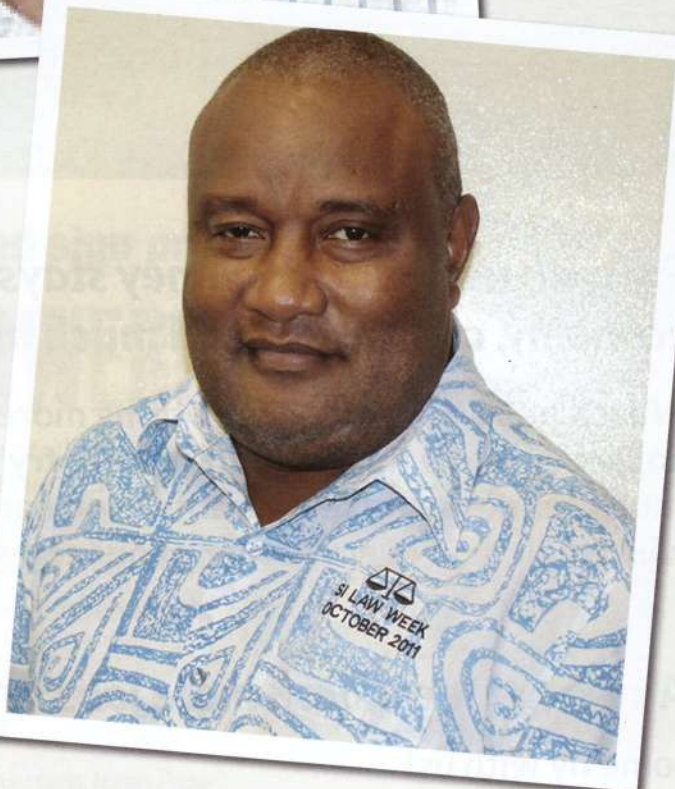
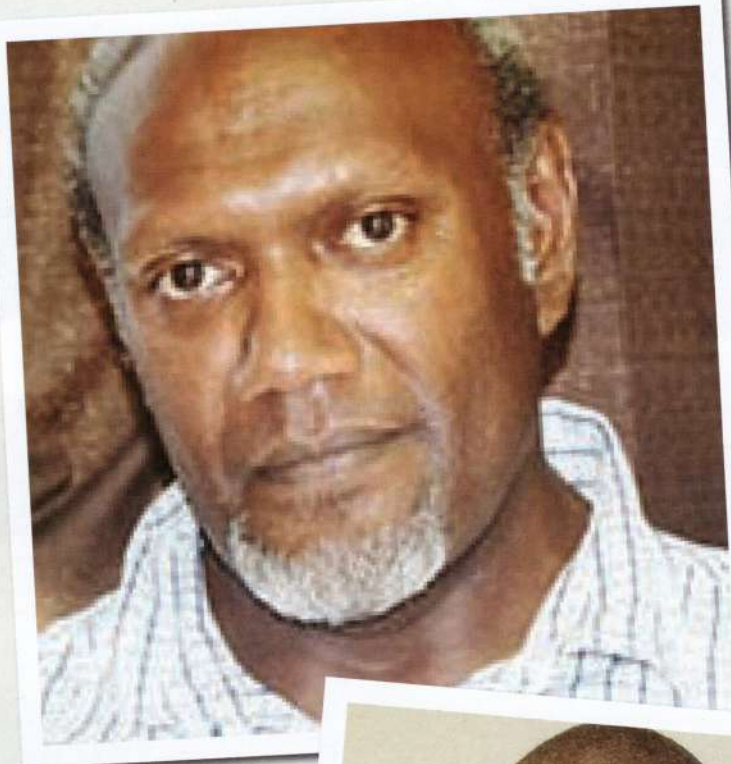
According to Nihopara who took over as the Permanent Secretary in 2016 the Government has no plans to re-open Anuha but instead wants to improve the current airfield and open it for public use.

"We want to build the infrastructure first before we can look at developing the tourism aspect of the island," he said. He added that one of the reasons is that the prime site on the island is now undersea because of sea level rise.

Mr Nihopara also claims that the landowners have also agreed to move on without Smith.

Permanent Secretary Nihopara is reluctant to divulge into the Smith saga saying the Government's focus now is to build the infrastructure on the island, which is the airport.

SBM understands that the MP for Gella who



is also the Minister of Culture and Tourism is pushing for the improvements to the airport and have it reopened.

Mr Nihopara also indicated that a Sydney based group has also expressed interest in developing Anuha.

Former Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism John Wasi said the current Government had wanted to re-open Anuha and had set up a committee which included the Ministries of Culture and Tourism and Lands officials.

He said the committee was aborted on the directives of the Minister after the Government was unable to agree to the high demands put forward by Smith.

"All I can tell you is that his demands were too excessive for the government to meet," said Wasi who is now the Government Secretary to the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI).

He said the Government had made an initial move and a meeting was held between the former senior political appointees George Kuper and Gabriel Titili with Smith in Brisbane.

Mr Smith could not elaborate on the out-

come of the meeting however said there was nothing happening since he met the two.

Mr Smith said that after seven Prime Ministers he is not surprised that yet again a grand plan to redevelop Anuha Islands is now doing the rounds again around the Government offices.

"One just have to look at all the Hansard and minutes of Parliamentary Committees over the years to view glowing promises by nearly all former Governments of the magic wand they claim to have to redevelop Anuha," he said.