It has been an incredible pleasure to have Satyendra Prasad as my friend. How can one forecast in Class 4 and 5 that your student will one day call you from his office in the UK's Department for International Development that overlooks Buckingham Palace, write a doctoral thesis on global governance at Warwick University, will help build governance institutions in the aftermath of the Bosnian War, will serve in the World Bank in Kabul, Delhi, and elsewhere, and will be Fiji's ambassador to the U.N.? He wrote me a letter shortly after we reconnected recounting how studying in David's and my classes had broadened his interest in and awareness of the world and inspired his life path. Well, that certainly brought some tears! And he calls that "some insane statistical chance." But he wasn't alone.

From that remote school in faraway Vanua Levu, many children have traveled varying roads through their lives, some within and others out of Fiji. In the photo he included of his class, Satyendra is in the row of boys in a faded whiteish shirt slightly to the left of the window. Behind him and to his right is a tall boy, only his round head focused on the camera, Satyendra's best friend. He's now an energy expert with the World Bank. Amazingly, for a good many years there were only two people from Fiji working in the World Bank - and both were from this single class!! The first girl on the left became a nurse, married to and divorced from a PCV, now living in the U.S. To the left of Satyendra is another boy with a whiteish shirt. He became a teacher and headmaster at Lagalaga School; he has now died. In front of Satyendra, the second girl to the left learned to administer adrenaline to her mother during asthma attacks; later she became a chemist for Fiji Dairy and now lives in Australia. Next to the girl on the far right is Sarita. This would be her last year in school, as her parents decided it was time for her to help with the farm and prepare for marriage. Her sister and many other relatives have lived in San Jose, CA for many years now, and we regularly message each other. As I look over these faces, I see a bookkeeper, several teachers, a former UN peacekeeper in the Mideast, a driver for a hospital, farmers and housewives, a hotel receptionist, and numerous migrants. I am so proud to have known them all and taken some part in their lives, and the Peace Corps played a role.

To clarify Satyendra's library story, a regional library in Nadi was offering to ship a box of books to rural locations for students to borrow, so that's where those regular shipments came from. A Peace Corps newsletter told me about a club in Darien, CT that was collecting books to ship abroad. That was the source of probably 20 or more huge canvas mailbags that filled my residences until the District Officer granted us a building and had it disassembled and transported to a nearby village where we built the Nadogo District Library. Unfortunately, I lacked grassroots organizing knowledge and skills, and that library no longer exists, but many houses and probably schools now have those books.

Satyendra wrote that I chose Fiji. Actually, I wrote on my application that I did not want to serve in India. I'd observed a few aggressive Indians and decided they were not my kind of people. So Peace Corps sent me to Fiji, known to me only as the Cannibal Islands, and for some reason included me in the group of 8 Hindi-learners! Fortunately, that turned out to be a very dramatic lesson for me in stereotypes and prejudices.

Once there, I actually did choose Lagalaga. David had been there just one year and decided he wanted to serve elsewhere. I met him just as we were receiving assignments in the Suva office, and seeing it on the map I decided that's where I wanted to be. I ended up extending an additional 2 1/2 years, so Lagalaga got not just the 2 years of PC commitment but 4+ altogether. I think I was the last primary school classroom-teaching PCV in Fiji, 1972.

No one knows if any lives would be different if the Peace Corps hadn't been there, but I was told that prior to those years, only one student had gone on to secondary school.

View from where Satyendra's house was, his long walk to school. His father was the headmaster.

Lining up for first Independence Day. Satyendra's older brother was one of the flag raisers.

As Satyendra wrote, the road from Labasa ended at Lagalaga. Becoming a civil engineer, Satyendra's brother designed the rest of the road going up the hill behind the school and to the northern end of the island, then down the other side.