**Preface Who is Hiroshi Taniguchi?**

Some of you may have already seen me on TV or magazines in Japan, but please allow me to briefly introduce myself.

I was born in Fukui prefecture in 1972. After attending university in Shanghai, China, I worked here and there in Asia, and am now president and CEO of Free Bird Institute (stock listed in securities market in the Republic of Fiji) as well as for its parent company. South Pacific Free Bird Inc., in Japan. I am also the honorary chairman of Ba Provincial Free Bird Institute, a national high school in BA administrative district of Fiji.

I also happened to be a stage IV terminal cancer patient. Next to me, as I am drafting this, there are "Senba-zuru" (thousand paper cranes) and message cards given to me by acquaintances to pray for my recovery and good health.

So, do you all know about the country called the Republic of Fiji? 　I would think you only vaguely know that it's a warm, southern island country and is strong in rugby. Briefly explained, Fiji is an island country located about 7,200 kilometers south of Japan, across the equator, and a bit north of New Zealand. A famous Britain novel called it "Heaven on Earth" and indeed it truly is a country of heavenly beauty.

The population is roughly 900,000 people. It is constituted by Fijians of a Polynesian/ Melanesian descent, British descent (Fiji was dominated by Britain as a colony until 48 years, Indian descent (Indians were brought as work force by the British), and Chinese descent (also brought as work force). It is a multi-ethnic nation. When you hear "southern islands" everyone probably thinks of its people walking around half naked. But in Fiji, if a young girl is walking around only wearing a camisole, she would be condemned that her outfit was too sexy and should hide her shoulders with a cardigan or something of the like. It is quite a strict Christian country.

The interesting thing is that each ethnic group has their own language, but everyone, from the young to the old can also speak English because English education has been obligated for over 100 years. When I first went to Fiji, I had thought islands around there were French-speaking countries. I was surprised that everyone was talking in Queen's English at the airport. While English has become widely used, children are unfortunately losing their native tongue.

Fiji is known for ranking 1st in Gallup's world poll surveys that indicate overall rankings of country happiness. Though it is economically poorer than Japan, everyone lives happily, as you would expect in southern islands.

The first time I visited Fiji was Christmas of 2002. I never imagined I would be starting my business here nor would that small business grow to be stock listed on the market.

I started an education business to teach English to non-English speaking people in Fiji about six years ago. My management skills of my language school were highly evaluated by the Fijian government and I was offered to serve as a chairman for one of its national high schools. I endured a lot of hardships along the way. When this high school rose from the very bottom to 6th place (out of 162) in academic ranking as well as become two times rugby champions in 2014 and 2015, I became quite the hero in Fiji.

At the 2016 Rio Olympic Games, the Fiji team won the gold medal for the first official competition of rugby sevens. Though the team consisted of strongly built men, who did not train much and took too many breaks, it was the first time in Olympic history for a small island country with a population less than 1 million people to win the gold medal in a team competition.

It would not be as surprising if a small populated island country won gold medals for an individual or a two-person sport. To win medals for a team sport is truly amazing. I watched the final Rio Olympic game of rugby on TV while fighting stage IV terminal cancer in the hospital. My body was weakened to the core with anticancer drugs, and yet I could feel the adrenaline pumping in my blood as I watched the Fiji team play.

In Fiji, the country of rugby champions, there are a total of 162 high schools. Four years after I took over as the chairman, my school became the rugby national champions of Fiji. Well, it was the students who made the effort, so accurately speaking, I was only able to help them become champions, but for me, it was a great honor. Recently, the people of Fiji have been asking me to become their politician. As a terminal cancer patient, this is one of my dreams that I want to fulfill if I am able to live a little longer.

This book is a record of half my life, about a young man who swam out into the South Pacific by coincidence. Cancer may get to me first, in which case this book will end up as not half but rather an 80% autobiography.

This book is about me living life as it will be, like a bird freely flying to wherever the wind will take it.

**What kind of language school is the "Free Bird Institute"?**

My school, "Free Bird Institute", is a language school that is unique in both Japan and Fiji. It is a language school established by a company. I established a language school in Fiji and its entrance center in Japan in 2004. In Fiji, there is the South Pacific Stock Exchange, (probably) the smallest in the world. My company is stock listed here as the Free Bird Institute.

So, I would greatly appreciate it if everyone would buy my stock! (lol)

There are two campuses for the language school--- one in Nadi, the city where the international airport is located, and Lautoka, the second largest city in Fiji. Although the number of students vary, especially during the summer and Christmas, but throughout the year, there are 250-500 international students enrolled at both campuses. Since reputations about studying abroad in Fiji has recently spread, our campuses are filled with students when summer holidays arrive in the northern hemisphere. Students are of various nationalities, and since our foundation, we have accepted more than 20,000 international students from 26 countries.

About 70% of the students homestay at the warm homes of Fijians. Fijians are incredibly affectionate people, and many students feel that their Fijian families are warmer than their families. Considering that students desire facilities such as their own rooms and hot water showers, host families are limited to those that are on a slightly higher end than the average homes in Fiji. During their stay, the students make meals with their homestay families, eat meals with their homestay families, and enjoy conversations with their homestay families. Of course, the students are provided with breakfast and dinner. "Provided" meaning that in general they eat the same meals as their homestay family. Sometimes the meals are lavish, sometimes simple, and sometimes they go to a nearby restaurant to eat out.

The remaining 30% of the students are staying in the inexpensive student dormitory (hostel) that we had built. I. myself, designed the hostel, with my experience in working at a construction company. There are 44 single rooms and 43 sharing rooms. A total of 216 people can stay in the hostel. It is plainly structured, as frugal as the prisons in Japan. For the sake of cost reduction, I proposed the use of a "semi-single bed" with only a width of 60 cm. Students tell me that they can roll over while sleeping but for some reason it has never been escalated as a major complaint. I think it is because the Fijian dorm mothers care about the students as if they were her own children.

The reason why I was able to expand the business into the market to the point that it could be stock listed at the stock exchange is because expenses to study abroad is overwhelmingly cheaper than other countries and other language schools.

One of the reasons is because the school is located in Fiji, where living is cheap. But the primary reason is that our school has no intermediate exploitation by agents. School fees, homestay fees, and accommodation expenses are all offered directly, and thus our study abroad program is cheaper than any language school in any country. Usually, it is very rare that a foreign language school has a directly operated counseling center in Japan.

The accommodation fee is 300 yen per night at the hostel. Thus, even if you stay 12 months, it is only 100,000 yen. Plus, even if you add tuition fee and enrollment fee, you can study abroad for a year at 870,000 yen. Roughly speaking, that is about one-third the expense to study in the US!

Our directly operated centers are in Tokyo and Osaka. I often hold orientations at Nagoya and Fukuoka every year. If you are at all interested in studying abroad, search for us on the internet with keywords, "Free Bird, study abroad."

The teachers at the language school are composed of Fijians of Melanesian/Polynesian descent and of Indian descent. Most of the teachers at our school would probably not have been employed if it weren't for this school. But they are teachers who are properly awarded with qualifications of an English teacher by the Fiji government. Fiji actually has an education level as high (or maybe even higher) than advanced countries such as the US and Australia.

The students at the language school take classes Monday to Friday from 8 am to 2:30 pm. They all seem to enjoy studying every day. The Fijian teachers are not as good in mathematics and arithmetic as Japanese, but their high communication skills are not comparable to Japanese or American teachers. They are naturals at their work!

The characteristic of our students is that they are studying abroad with money that they saved on their own. This is possible because the cost to study abroad is affordable. Unlike students at American language schools whose parents pay all of the expense (which is inevitable because it is expensive), students studying in Fiji passionately listen to lectures and aggressively ask questions to teachers. People can work harder if they pay for it than when paid by others (lol).

I think the learning speed of English is faster than those studying abroad at other countries. Fiji is not a very convenient country. Unlike developed countries where there are supermarkets and convenience stores, the students must talk to the men and women at the market to buy even one tomato. Of course, everything is in English. If you cannot communicate well, the Indian-Fijian ladies at the market will try to rip you off. As a result, the students become even better at English (lol).

In Fiji, students are able to enhance their English without stress and the classes are fun. Some students come to study abroad at our language school multiple times. There is this Japanese man who studies abroad in Fiji at the same time every year. He has already studied four times! Fijian men are pretty good looking, and I have heard rumors that some students come back to see their boyfriends.

I think it helps that Fiji is somewhat similar to the Confucian spirit of Japan, respecting seniors. It truly is heaven for older aged students. The oldest student at my school was an 87-year-old woman who came years ago. She said that it was great being able to visit "Island closest to Heaven" before actually going to heaven (lol).

Moreover, Fiji has a culture of mutual aid called "Kerekere" where people help each other to live. The teachers at my school are of no exception. I give them their salary every Friday, but they use it all up over the weekend. Nevertheless, they have nothing to worry about. Somehow, from somewhere, someone provides them with some money.

If we started paying salary monthly instead of weekly, they would all probably die. What Fijians earn by day, they would spend by night. When the market ladies go shopping in the morning, they usually do not have any small change at hand. Both adults and children use up all of their money as is.

They are hardly ever wealthy, but they are gentle to everyone, to people they know and do not know. Some of the sneakier students took that to their advantage, and often went to nearby churches to get their share of free cakes and donuts. They went to the church so often that I ended up feeling pitiful for the people running the church. I decided to lend them the school hall for free.

Several years ago, there was a Russian woman named Anastasia and her son Maxim who had come to study abroad at our language school. They liked Fiji so much that they relocated to Fiji from Russia. Her son Maxim was born with short arms and was physically handicapped. However, in Fiji, there isn't anyone who cares about it. This mother and child liked the fact that Fijians always lend a helping hand to Maxim when he seems to be troubled.

Students at the language school get acquainted with various people both on and off campus. Facebook has more presence in Fiji than in Japan. Some students make hundreds of friends during their few months of studying abroad in Fiji. There are also students that fall in love with each other and ultimately get married. I think there has been about 300 couples that married. There are also 'Cinderella' girls who get married with students from a wealthy family and are now living in castle-like houses in Dubai. And yet here I am, still unmarried!

**What kind of high school is the "Ba Provincial Free Bird Institute"?**

"Ba Provincial Free Bird Institute" I had undertaken as chairman seven years ago was a national high school founded by the Fiji government that just declared independence from UK in 1970. I renamed Ba Provincial Secondary School to its current name after I took office as the chairman. When I took over, Ba Provincial Free Bird Institute was a "rock-bottom" school that wasn't good in academics or sports.

Both teachers and students had lost hope.

There is a total of 624 students. Not only are they from Fiji, but there are also students from the Republic of Nauru, where there isn't a proper high school in their own country, as well as students from the neighboring republics of Tuvalu and Kiribati. Among them, there are also 120 Japanese students and it is the tuition that they pay that enabled this national high school to become the first tuition-free high school in Fiji.

I will explain in more details about this later on in the book.