

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: William Christopher “Chris” Alexander

William Christopher Alexander was born in Taft, California and moved to Hawai‘i in 1968. He attended his last few years of high school in Hawai‘i while residing in Kailua, O‘ahu. He has been living on Maui full time since 1981. After volunteering at the park for a few years, Chris was hired as a seasonal worker under Ron Nagata in 1983. His first assignment was helping to build a fence line across Kaupō Gap. Throughout the 1980s, as a seasonal worker, he spent many years brushing, building, and inspecting the fence line.



Chris holding up the “Last Clip” of the completed crater district fencing project from 1986.
Picture taken by Micah Mizukami, May 2021

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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW
with
William Christopher "Chris" Alexander (CA)
June 10th, 2021
Via In-Person
Interviewed by Alana Kanahale (AK)
Filmed by Micah Mizukami (MM)

- AK: So, to start off could you tell me a little bit about yourself, your full name, where you were born, and where you're from?
- CA: Well, my name is William Christopher Alexander, and I was born in Taft, California, but I mostly grew up in Playa del Rey, which is the beach right in front of the LAX area. And that's where I did my formative years, but then I moved to Canada and moved back to California. In 1968, I moved to Hawai'i and graduated from high school and college and then moved back to the mainland for six years. I've been back on Maui full time since 1981.
- AK: What brought you to Hawai'i?
- CA: My mom got a teaching job. I was in high school, so it was a family move. I moved to Hawai'i first time as a resident, so I got to experience all the cultural nuances before. So it was very interesting. I liked it a lot. I mean, it was really loose and fun, and I had a great time. I lived in Kailua, which was kind of a nice break into Hawai'i being from the mainland and everything. So, yeah, that was I really enjoyed it, it was really good.
- AK: When you moved back here permanently was that when you were in Kailua or did you move straight to Maui?
- CA: I moved back to Maui. I lived in Kailua for two years. My mom married somebody over here in 1970. I lived here for another year, moved back back to Honolulu to go to college. And that's when I moved from there to mainland and then I moved back 1981 because my mom was selling the house. She needed a house sitter. So I started volunteering for the Sierra Club---I started going on Sierra Club hikes.
- MM: Do you mind if I pause you right there for a second? The lavalier isn't picking up so I need to troubleshoot it.
- CA: Ha, is it the birds?
- AK: Your mic isn't picking up for some reason.
- MM: I'm going to try and plug it in directly and see if that works.
- CA: Oh, sure, just lay it in front of me or something.

MM: Oh, no, I'm sorry about that.

CA: No, you got to do what you got to do, you know.

AK: Thanks for telling us. It will make the transcription easier if it's not lip reading.

MM: Yeah, I think it's picking up a lot better so thank you for that.

CA: Do we start over or something?

MM: Oh no, you can maybe go over what you just said and continue. It picked up enough, but then it kind of cut out.

CA: I could talk about when I came back to Hawai'i in 1981. Yeah, that sounds like a good breakpoint. Okay, are we good?

MM: Yeah.

CA: So, in 1981 I moved back because my mom needed a house sitter because she was selling a house and I got pulled out. So, I started going on Sierra Club hikes and then I went on a Sierra Club hike once and I met Mary Evanson. She was a real famous environmentalist from Maui. And I said on the hike that it was sort of overgrown. And I said, "Is it okay if we volunteer and clear the trails?"

And she turned around giving this really weird look. She goes, "Oh, you'd like to volunteer?"

And I was like, "Yes."

So, the next week I went up to Haleakalā National Park and we were loading fence materials to be flown out to Kaupō Gap. I was a volunteer---it was my first volunteering day in the park and there were people out there already accepting the loads and all that kind of stuff. And, you know, a helicopter came, I actually was able to hook up the load under a helicopter from the first day as a volunteer, which I found out later was kind of illegal but anyway so he flew stuff out and it was like "yeah this is kind of cool."

And on the way back on the helicopter skids, there were like five goats hanging from the skid, and I was like, this is very interesting. Apparently, while they were waiting, the crew was out there shooting goats. And then Tom Hauptman, a helicopter pilot, who will do anything I found out later, flew them back in and I met Terry Quisenberry and a few other guys. And, you know, it was it was like, wow, this is a really interesting place.

So I kept volunteering there. This is like in 1982 and I had sold the house, my mom's house, and I was ready to go back to the mainland. And Ron Nagata had said, "Oh, would you like to work here doing what you've been doing this whole time?"

“You mean, I'll get paid for what I was there for free? Okay!”

So I went back to mainland got some stuff together and came back in 1983, and that's when I started being a seasonal labor at Haleakalā National Park. My first assignment was in Kaupō Gap. Right here, we were building a fence line across the Kaupō Gap. Is that okay? Can you see that alright? Okay. Yeah, you got that?

And it was a really interesting assignment because there were two crews and the way Ron Nagata set this up was that we would fly in on Tuesday—one crew would fly in on Tuesday and the other crew would fly out on Tuesday. We'd replace them. We could use the same tents, the same commissary set up, and then we'd fly in and then they'd fly out, and then we'd fly out and they would fly in, and we'd work I guess it was eight days straight. So, you'd work Tuesday through Tuesday and then Wednesday. The first seven days were nine-hour days and you know. No, it was nine days, eight days was Tuesday to Tuesday. Those were nine-hour days, so that makes 72 hours and then we'd have a front country day on Wednesday, it was a half day actually it was a full day, eight hours. That's when we'd get ready for the next trip or do miscellaneous things around the park.

So it's pretty intense. I mean, nine days on, four to five days off, which is kind of nice because we always had a five-day weekend, but then it was like having two lives. You know, you'd have a back country life on the fence line and a front country life. So you'd say, “Oh, how did that happen so quickly?” You know, you were only really living five days in the front country and all of a sudden, the month was over, what happened?

AK: And when you say front country. . .

CA: That's out of the park, not working---or not in the gap, not in the back country. Back country is anything where you're, you know, inside the crater district, inside these red lines. So that was pretty interesting. I got some pictures to kind of represent that whole situation. This is the fence line that we brushed and installed going across the Gap.

AK: Oh wow.

CA: That's heading I guess it would be southwest direction.

AK: Can you talk a little bit, a little bit about the terrain of Kaupō Gap and what it was like working on that fence line?

CA: Well, it is very rocky. Here's another picture, this will pretty much show you what kind of substrate it was. This is Cynthia and Janet building a fence, I took a picture of that. And you'll notice that there's two levels of fence. And as I remember, the situation was we could only buy American products, and apparently at the time, as I remember it, maybe be a five-foot fence. And they didn't make American five-foot hogwire, at least that's what I was told, so we had to string two sets of hogwire, a thirty-two inch, and then

whatever it takes—thirty-two and twenty-eight, I think, whatever it took to make five feet.

And so, we basically built two fences: we'd stretch one, and then we'd stretch the other one on top of it. Of course, when you do that, you know the difference in tension and stuff made it very difficult to build a fence, but we did it. And you can kind of see, I don't know if you can see that there's two levels of fence? So, that's what the terrain looked like. It's just dirt, lava. We had to drill some of the lava, the system of drilling was a generator with electric drills. So we had to carry the generator and the electric drills and gas and extension cords all around with us all over the place. We initially had something called a pionjar which is a gas-powered drill. It's all self-contained but they had some kind of problems with it, they couldn't get it to work, so they ended up doing this electrical system. I don't have any pictures of that, but. . .

AK: And the drill is to put the posts in?

CA: Yeah, we'd drill a hole and then the hole was a little bit smaller than the fencepost. So then we'd pound it in with a pole pounder. This wasn't necessarily one of the drill holes, we don't we use a pole pounder in areas where we didn't need to drill as well. You just, you know, smash it through the rock and the dirt and it was strong enough, you know, it was good. The terrain was kind of loose lava. So it wasn't like, you know, a real solid, consistent ground. So sometimes we had to cement the post in because it was just so loose. And then we use all kinds of methods of securing the fence down, like using wire and putting anchors. There's a lot of different techniques. Here's some more pictures of Janet and Cynthia working together.

AK: How, I guess, what is the distance of Kaupō Gap fence?

CA: Well, you know, I used to know that. But I'd say basically about a mile. That's what we did that year, that summer. I'm going to put these down (puts photos down). And, yeah, it was about a mile and we started pretty much on this side and we worked our way towards that end.

AK: And the fence posts, they look like they're five or six feet a part?

CA: They are ten feet apart. And the fence, I think, was five feet with two strands of barbed wire on top of it, making it probably six feet. So, that's the basic nature of the fence. We'd have to put in gates and climbovers. Basically a climbover is just, you put two fence posts next to each other, and then you'd like put an extra strength of hogwire in between, so that you can use it as footholds. So we'd put them in whenever, you know, we found it necessary to climb over the fence to go somewhere. Some places there's trails and things we would do that. Some of the major trails we would actually put in full-on cemented gates and things which are. . . .

(Holds up photo) That's me working with our bucket method of cement mixing to put in the galvanized post to put in the actual chain link gate, so that would be in major trails

and things so that, you know, people could take horses through or hike through without having to climb over and things like that. I don't know exactly where this one was, but we did build one down at the koa tree, which is on the other end of the gap, the direction toward where we were building the fence. So that's what that was about.

And the thing I remember the most or cherish the most was was the camp life. So here's some examples of that. This is Cynthia our resident camp counselor; she would play music and conduct art lessons and if you notice, there's a little flagging right next to her. What happened was during the first or second trip, the other crew decided that the campsite that we were in was really terrible. So they moved the entire campsite to one ridge over and when they did that, we had a commissary, which is basically a big box with all our cooking utensils. We also had, as you can see, she's sitting on a park bench, so that was nice. And then when they attached the tarp for the commissary so we could eat in or something, the people, the people that built it were somewhat short. So for them was great. They would pass underneath this limb that was attached—it was kind of permanently attached to the tarp. And tall people like me, or taller people like me, would hit our heads on the limb and we'd get really mad and throw things. So she came up with this behavior modification device where everybody would have a different flag hanging from the limb and then we had a hole puncher that was hanging on the limbs. So the thing was, every time you hit your head on the limb, you'd have to take the hole puncher and punch a hole in your ribbon and by then you wouldn't be mad anymore. And at the end, the person with the most holes---I can't remember if we ever did anything about it, but the main thing was she was tired of us going, swearing and throwing things. She was like “Aw man, these guys, I got to fix this.”

She was also an artist and let's see if I have a picture of it. . .

AK: And this was during your nine days?

CA: This is the nine-day session. Yeah, I've got a picture of our initial flight out to Kaupō. We used to fly out of Hosmer Grover. You know where that is?

AK: I believe so.

CA: On the map, it's right near the headquarters. It would be, let's see. . . . let me look at this a little better, Hosmer Grove. . . . Okay, so this is the boundary. So Hosmer Grove is just right about here. It's actually outside the park boundary. It's a little shelter where you have picnics and camping and stuff like that. But the road to it was a nice, paved road; it had a lot of room and we could stage and do our helicopter operations and direct traffic so people wouldn't run into us.

But this is like the first day when we flew out to Kaupō. And this is the portable toilet. The significance of that was when I first worked for the Park, I lived in a housing there, which we call the barracks, and I shared a room with somebody who had bunk beds, everything. And Ron Nagata's plan for going to the bathroom was to fly out masses amount of sand or cinder, and we would dig slit trenches and bury it, you know, because

the there's no cinder out there and you can't just bury it with lava rocks. So he's like, yeah, we're going to do slit trenches and you got to squat and all this kind of stuff. And meanwhile, right outside my window where I was living in the Park, I kept seeing this portable toilet and it had a handicap sign on it. And it looked like it was not being used. It's kind of like the door was open and it had padded seating and a handrail. And I asked one of the guys, I said, "What are you going to do with that?"

And he said, "Well, it's really not good because you can't get a wheelchair in, so we don't we're just about to throw it away."

So, I talked to Ron and I said, "Hey, Ron, how about we fly that out there and we can make. . . ."

One of our crew members, actually the supervisor, the crew leader was a welder and he welded a little thing on a 35 gallon oil drum and we made a tube that went out of it and went into this thing. And we'd fly it out every week and then there's a sewage place at the Park and we would dump it in there. So it was like, oh, I mean, it was just me looking out the window going like there's got to be a better way. And it worked out.

So it flew out there and we used it for many years and our resident artist created the "Lua Gallery." She had her watercolor paints and she would paint and we would paint and we would make, you know, in our spare time the rest of the remaining fifteen hours of sleeping, eating and leisurely painting. So that was the Lua Gallery, and it was lots of fun.

AK: Is the porta potty still the system today or is there anything that's more...

CA: Oh well, these were temporary camp sites like we flew out to Kaupō, we were there for - started in March. My season went from March to November and we were done by then and then we moved up to Kuiki. And then here's Cynthia and Janet enjoying the artwork. And then we also made—like on MASH—you know, where they have those signs saying how far it is to San Francisco. This one says, let's see it says Guriguri twenty-nine miles. This one says koa tree, one mile, can't read it. . . . yeah, just local things, and there you can see the toilet in the background.

And the thing was with the showering rule was everyone took a shower behind the toilet and everybody had to be, you know, discreet about it like "Okay, I'm taking a shower," and you know, don't go back there. And then we had different hooks for different heights of people. We would use what's called a sun shower, which is basically a plastic bag with black on the back of it, you'd lay it out in the sun and it would heat up. And so because people had differing heights, we made hooks for different people. So I was the tallest and then Tex and, you know, because the guy who made the little short thing we hit our head on, his name was Ray. We said this was his and this was a soap rack so it was like two feet tall.

AK: Can you explain a little bit more about how the hot water system works?

CA: It's basically what they call a sun shower, and that's where you take. . . . It's a marketed thing and it's for backcountry showering. It's a plastic bag, it's clear on the front, black on the bottom. You lay it out, the sun heats it up and it's got a tube and it's got like a showerhead, you know, little holes and you pull it down, it opens and you shower and you close it, but it has to be high enough for you to get under. So that's why we had all these different hooks.

And we would also boil some water to make it hotter if you wanted too, because it'd be like, yeah, it's hot, but it's not hot enough. And it kind of became a craft to say how much water should I put in. "Feels like this, a little bit more in and okay, now it's too hot put some more cold water in." But you get used to it. But yeah that's how it worked. And we flew the water out there so we had a hundred gallon water tank that was above the camp and we had a lot of garden hose and it was hooked up for us washing dishes and stuff like that and filling our shower or sun showers and whatever else we needed water for. And we would also fly out our food.

Now, I was able to convince Maui Star Soda and Ice that we need to reserve two seventy-five pound blocks of ice. And they said, "Oh, we don't do that—first come, first serve," and all of this kind of stuff.

And I was like, "You know what, we're not fishing; we're living out in the middle of nowhere."

And the guy said, "Okay, you can do it."

So we would take one cooler---we'd have an entire seventy-five block in it. And we'd split another seventy-five block into the other two coolers, and we'd put everything in there. And in one of the coolers that didn't have a lot of food in it, we'd actually drain the water out, which makes the ice last longer and we would fill our sun showers with that sort of. . . . water was scarce. It cost a lot of money to fly it out there. So anyway, that's part of what happened.

But you can kind of see from the commissary, which is this thing here, you know, it was like a plywood box that shut up and you would put all your cooking utensils, food, you know, to keep the rats out of it. We all had old military ammo boxes that were very sealable and that's where we keep most of our, you know, precious materials like foods and oil and stuff that we don't want the rats getting into. But so, yeah, it was pretty neat, it was fun just camping out there. You know, we had you know, we had art projects, music and, you know, just fun. So that was Kaupō.

And then let's see what else happened there. . . . Oh, yeah, there's another thing and this picture came out really terrible, but we had told the other crew when they were coming out that we left them some notes on the fence about, you know, certain things, and actually what it was, was—you can't see it very well—but this little piece of cardboard actually had musical notes on it. And so me, Cynthia and I think Tex took this picture we

were playing fence instruments. Janet was playing the sledge bass and Cynthia was playing the rebar flute, which is a section of fence post, and that thing I'm playing with is the stretcher violin—that's what we stretched the wire—which we affectionately called Gumby, because one of the attachments had a sloped, kind of rounded end to it with two rivets and it looked like Gumby. So I said, "Give me the Gumby." So that was some of our humor.

And then this kind of shows you what our camp looks like. We had the two tents, this tent and that tent and this is the commissary. And this, of course, was the helipad; that's where we flew in and flew out. And this is our helicopter pilot, Tom Hauptman, who thought it would be really nice if he dropped the slingload. This is a slingload, basically a huge cargo net that attached to the bottom of the helicopter and that's where we put all our gear, you know, camping equipment, food, water, whatever. And he thought, "Oh, I'll make it easy for you guys, I'll drop it right down near your tents so you don't have to carry it."

But what he wasn't aware of is that the prop wash, you can probably see that that tent is not up as much as it used to be. And he like collapsed the tent and he felt so bad about it he was like "What do I do, I don't know what to do?"

And then for some reason, and the toilet was like over here somewhere, and it had a large black pipe that extended to the thirty-five-gallon oil that accepted the doo-doo. And we had, you know, just disassembled it so that we could get the, you know, the thing to be flown out. And he didn't know what it was. So he picked it up and he started blowing through it and he goes "Oh look it's a didgeridoo."

And I go, "No, Tom, it's a didgeridoodoo." I told him, it was like oh okay, that's not good. But originally it was so funny.

I mean, I still can't believe we did this. . . . We would fly the can of matter and it was only with a chain link that was welded to the edge of the thing—not in a net—fly it from there all the way to the crater and I just had these visions of it breaking and, you know, plummeting to the earth and having a huge. . . . well, they use this blue stuff, right? To make it better and more, I guess it breaks it down. I don't know, and I just had visions of this blue bomb landing in the middle of a crater, but it never did so. . . . but after that, we did start putting in the net.

So anyway, so that was Kaupō. And then also the koa tree that I talked about, which is over here....

AK: Can you point to where the camp was?

CA: The camp was right about, I would say under the "A" see where it says west Kaupō, right under the "A" that's about where the camp was located.

AK: And what is the Kaupō shelter?

CA: Oh, that I think, a long time ago---and this is the crew that brushed that swath of land. You see that, all hand brushed. So that's what we did as RCUH crew, on one of my gap seasons where I wasn't a national park employee. So that's just kind of the stuff we did when I was in RCUH. And eventually we finished the fence, and that's when—I really don't have this well organized. But that's when we did the final fence stretch was from the top of Kuiki down to the koa tree, which is like right here—there was a section that went from here down to there, and that's where we did the last clip. This is a picture that commemorates—that's me—putting the last clip of the completed crater district fencing project in 1986.

AK: And that was where?

CA: By the koa tree, right there by the koa tree. He's down there and this is at that time, our chief ranger was named Pete Sanchez, and he made me a poster made out of curly koa. It's like a commemoration.

AK: On Halloween.

CA: Yes, end of my season and it says “Mahalo to Chris from Pete Sanchez,” on the back which is kind of hard to read. So, yeah, that was it. But the ironic thing is---I don't know if you need to look at it anymore. As you can see, this is just hogwire, okay? The barb wire had not been put on yet, so it really wasn't the last clip. It is kind of a commemoration of the last clip. So the last clip and the only people left alive to know this would be me (and I forgot) and Eric Andersen and Pete Connolly, who passed away, and Matt Roth who works for the National Parks somewhere else in America, and whoever took this picture, I can't remember who that was.

But anyway, the deal was we don't know who put the real last clip, it's kind of like the Everest thing, you know, like Hillary or Tenzing Norgay, or whatever his name was, it's like no one really knows who stood up. So anyway, that was the end of the crater district fencing project, to my knowledge. But I have heard that the Kaupō gap fence has been replaced and rebuilt because it just got too old, it was falling apart. So apparently they're rebuilding the fence sections as needed, but I don't really know which ones were redone when and how and things like that.

But there was one thing that was interesting, after this was done, we started maintaining the fence. My last two seasons—1987 and 1988—was spent walking around the crater district fence every month, doing a complete inspection every month, just to make sure it was okay. And I'm pretty sure remember the order of this because I actually devised the sections. So this is like the very top, this is the summit, you know, top of the mountain and the first leg was leg one and it went to, from there, all the way to this point, which is called Haleakalā Peak. And that's the picture where you know, Ansel Adams took the picture of Kaupō. That's where that is and that was section one. When we did this, we would start in the morning, walk here and then we we'd hike down and spend a night in Kapalaoa cabin. That was like one.

Leg two was Haleakalā Peak down to the koa tree. So, the next day, Tuesday morning, I guess you would get up, hike back to Haleakalā Peak, go down to the gap, over to the koa tree and hike up to Palikū Cabin which was right there, spend the night, you know.

And the next day you would go up to what they called a notch, which was, you know, you would hike up to what's called a notch, which is a little low spot above Palikū Cabin and hike up to the top of Kuiki. So this is Wednesday, right? Walk down to the koa tree, inspect all that and walk back to the cabin. Okay, go to bed, have food and all the stuff would be delivered by other rangers so we wouldn't have to carry it. When you got there, your food would be there, your extra clothes would be there, your soap, towels, whatever you know, you'd have a place for that.

The next day, Thursday, you hike up to there's a trail that goes through Pohaku Palaha is a trail goes all the way up to Hāna Mountain. Then you would walk from Hāna Mountain down to the notch and then down to Palikū cabin again.

Friday, you would hike up to Hāna Mountain and then you'd hike down Hāna Mountain and then you'd hike down through the Ko'olau Gap and up to the trail that takes you back to the to the headquarters. Or you hike up to Halemau trailhead parking lot and someone would pick you up. So that was kind of hard, and that's why I have a bad knee. My knee is shot.

So we would do that every day and then we do the rest of the from the summit all the way down to Pu'u Ko'olau, it actually ended at Waikau and there was a Waikau trail that took us up to Hōlua Cabin and hike out the Halemau trail up to the place where someone could give you a ride home. And then we do from Waikau to the summit, on front country days it would be like, you know, one day you do summit down to headquarters, then headquarters to Hosmer's grove, and then you do that during the day—drive and be dropped off. But the campout part, that was a week, five days of pretty heavy-duty hiking.

And so section one—and I was the one who came up with—section one, section two, section three, section four, section five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten. I made all those decisions and apparently, they're still being used that way.

AK: During your time when you were out in the back country, were there any incidents that occurred in terms of safety precautions?

CA: Yes, there was a famous helicopter crash. Tom Hauptman was our regular helicopter pilot who was really good and really talented, who would do crazy things. But he was the only helicopter pilot I know that could live through multiple crashes, and mostly because he was trying to beat the fuel clock. Because his way of thinking was, well, if I have less fuel, I can carry more stuff.

Anyway, well, he was fighting a fire on the Big Island---or no, it wasn't a fire, it was a volcanic eruption. In fact, I got to tell you about this it was pretty amazing. I was in Kuiki and I got up in the middle of the night to go to the bathroom. And as I walked out, Kuiki is right here, well as you can imagine looking in this direction, you can see the Big Island. And I, I looked and I saw this orange line in the middle of the sky right where the Big Island was. I was going like, "Oh, wait, you can't see Kīlauea from here." And as I'm sort of becoming conscious, I was like, "Oh, that's because it's Mauna Loa." I saw the Mauna Loa eruption from Kuiki.

At this point, we were at, I think we're at six-thousand-foot camp, and it was like a straight shot. I could see the whole thing apparently was an eight-mile-long eruption. And it was just like in the middle of the night, this orange line, it was just fantastic. I tried to wake people up. They wouldn't do it, by the time I did, I said, "Hey, guys there's an eruption."

"Oh boy, what are we going to do?" So we were supposed to fly out that morning later but Tom was over on the Big Island because they needed him there to do a few more things. So like, oh, wow. So how are we going to get home?

Apparently, there's this new helicopter pilot who'd never flown the crater at all. This person, it was a clear day, he took off from the summit area, I think the Palahaku Parking lot. As soon as he got up above the rim and I could see him over the knockers I started radioing him, and they kind of like pointed to him like, you've got to go in that direction. So, okay, so he's flying, and I see him. I go, "Okay, I'm here at your 2:00 to 1:00, 3:00 o'clock." And I walked him in and he'd never flown in the crater before he landed which was amazing.

But anyway, during the time Tom was there, his helicopter crashed because I think there was too much cinder in his intakes or something anyway. So, he couldn't fly because his helicopter was broke. So they had this other guy from Maui helicopters do the. . . . now that was a different one, anyway I chronologically messed up.

But anyway, I was still in Kaupō---that's another story about the volcano. But he was also on the Big Island when he had a crash, so his helicopter was down. Tony was flying in Kaupō and we were flying around, dropping things off, picking things up. And in Kaupō as I said we had to make cement posts, we had to cement it in. So, it was a bag of cement that was sitting out there and we're going to leave. And I asked him if it was okay if he landed and I put this bag of cement in the back of the helicopter so it wouldn't go bad. He goes, "Oh, sure, go ahead."

So, he's flying around, flying around and flying around, and I don't know what he's doing and so we, we touched down, but he's only touching the front of his skids on the ground, he says, "Go get it."

I said, "Okay."

And he kind of look funny. And I notice the skids are way up in the back. I'm like, "What's he doing?" So, I get out and I'm trying to close the door because of the Hughes 500 it's got kind of a weird door system. We've got to pull the lever up, push it down. I was trying to do that as I was exiting the helicopter and all of a sudden, the helicopter started taking off in the air, like going up and a kind of like the door. The skid hit my arm and kind of dinged it a little bit. So, I'm walking away going like, "What's going on?" And I kind of get my footing to see if I close the door as a first thing I thought. And he's like sixty feet in the air and all of a sudden, he's doing a spinning like a top. I've just been in while I was going like I got. What's he doing? When I got about the 'what' part of it. I went, Oh, he's not doing it. It's happening. So he crashed.

And I remember in our radio thing, I think 10-33 was like there's an accident. And I was screaming on my phone, 10-33. And so it was like he crashed a helicopter. Apparently what he did was he should have said, "No, no I can't do it." And I would have said, "Oh, that's fine."

But he wanted to be--I guess when you're a helicopter pilot, you try to be macho or something. So what he did is he apparently was having a hard time. . . . I don't know if you know how helicopters work. They have a tail rotor and stabilizer and if you didn't have a tail rotor, the helicopter would spin around like a top - the tail rotor pushes air to make you turn.

So what happened was, according to Tom, that he was not getting enough air pressure to stabilize the helicopter. So he had his tail rotor up where he could get the air, and then when he started losing control, he flew straight up and he got too much and it ruined it. So he crashed. Anyway, so yeah, that was a big incident. That was like the major incident of my fencing career up there. You know, the helicopter crashed. We had to get some other tourist helicopter pick us up. You know, we had people watch the crash site.

We tried to go take the investigators up to the koa tree. There's a road that goes up to the koa tree. There's a ranch road you drive all the way up to the koa tree. And we're trying to drive up to that, to walk over to the site. And then the person that was taking us up apparently had only hiked down from the koa tree and had never hiked up. Apparently, when you're going down, there's roads that go in, and you don't notice them. And so when we went up, we didn't know where we were going. So that was a total loss. But eventually they got there.

And of course, by then Tom had a helicopter that worked and he was able to fly it out. And he he didn't say anything to me. He grabbed my arm and looked at where I had the thing, and he goes, "You're so lucky."

And then a few weeks after that or a week after that well, when we finally got out there, we got shut down for a month, the next trip we went out there was one of the fence crew guys I was working with, he found something. Now, the main rotor or the main blades of a helicopter, the big ones, they have these counterweights and they have a screw on it. So

you can, you know, tune it so the weight is proper. He found one just that weight, a lead slug, weighed about four pounds, a half a mile from the crash site.

So basically, what Tom was saying that when that helicopter flew apart and was just going all over the place, I was standing there like a dummy watching it happen. And even after the crash, I looked at my helmet to see if there was any parts of it, because that thing just went flying. If that thing had hit me, I would I mean, it would have cut me in half. So I still have that somewhere in my mind. I couldn't find it for this one, but I still got that thing. But so that was that was a big deal.

And of course, the next time I flew a helicopter with Tom, it was sort of, I don't know whether he did as a purpose, but it definitely had an impression on me. We were flying back from the site for some reason and this guy was with us named Billy Han, who was a bull rider, kind of a wild guy. And him and Tom are talking together. He's in the front seat. He goes right over there, and Tom hovers next to a cliff like over here somewhere. And there's a little goat walking along the cliff. Billy climbs out of the helicopter next to the cliff, gets the goat, brings it back in and we fly away. So it's like, "Okay, Chris, you're getting back in the helicopter craziness right now. We're not going to mess around." It's just like, all right, it's Tom. I have to trust him because if I don't, I just can't think about the alternatives. But then there was another incident---how are we doing on time?

AK: We have about twenty minutes or so.

CA: In Kaupō Gap, we had a high school hiking group from the Sierra Club bring out some high school kids to work with us, help us out and work on the fence. And they had like four or five kids and three supervisors—the main supervisor and then there's two other guys. And one of the other guys whose name is Billy, they hiked to the crater, they went to Kapalaoa Cabin, they went to Palikū Cabin, and finally they walked across the gap to the koa tree. We met them, "Hey, how's it going?" And the one guy the first day stayed in the tent all day because apparently he hadn't slept for three days. So, okay.

And then so we started working with the people and for some reason, he was just working with me and he was seeing all kinds of really strange stuff and it was like, okay, whatever. And mostly about the head person, who was a Japanese lady. And I was just like trying to downplay it.

And then one time for lunch---I showed you that picture of Kaupō Gap that was brushed, yeah? It was wide like ten feet wide. And other than that, I mean, it's just brush and you can't go anywhere. And all of a sudden his lunchtime people were just getting ready to get out of lunch and go back to work, and he comes crawling out of the bushes and goes, "I got lost."

Like, how do you get lost? It's like this ten-foot-wide thing. Where did you go? It's just sort of actively weird. It turns out he was having a mental breakdown. So it was really weird. We had to call it in and say, "You know, this guy is kind of. . . . He's losing it. So he's got to come out."

And say, “Okay, walk him over to the koa tree, we’ll pick him up.” But then they decided to fly.

But the night before, it was a vigil. It was like me and two other crew members and the lady and her partner were all over and in one tent. And all the girls—and they’re all girl volunteers—high school girls and the other, Janet and Cynthia, were sitting on the other side and, you know, protecting them. And Tex, who’s the guy who got the goat earlier, he was like, “Okay, this guy’s crazy, you know? So let’s take all the bolts out of the rifles and lock it up in the toolbox and put it underneath the toilet.” And he was just, like, totally paranoid. So, you know, “He might go crazy. Kill us all.”

I was like, “Tex it’s okay.”

So we were out with him. He’s talking crazy and all this kind of stuff. So we fly him out the next day. And Tom was like, you know, it was it was Ron Nagata, Ted Rodrigues in the back seat, which is only made for two people. And the guy was to sit between them and no one in the front seat, just Tom.

And Tom comes over, he says, “What’s with this guy? Is he dangerous?”

I go, “No, I just don’t know what’s wrong with him.”

And then Tom kind of opens this little thing under the seat and pulls out his forty-five. He goes, “Oh, I’m ready.”

I go, “Don’t do that,” but he was okay. I mean he, he had some kind of flashback or something but yeah. So those are the two most intense incidents in my fence career with the National Park.

AK: Well I think transitioning to the other side of things. What are some of the places in the park that you felt kind of the closest connection to or a special connection with while you were working?

CA: I like Kuiki. I mean, Kuiki was very nice. It was very—as far as a fencing area—I really like that. I mean, I love Kaupō because, you know, there’s more things going on. But Kuiki was really beautiful. I mean, it was right on the edge of the rainforest and you can walk out to the edge. Our helipad was right at the edge of the drop off and you could see the whole crater and sometimes at night you could go see it in the moonlight. It’s really, really nice. I liked that.

But as far as the whole Park, probably a few times I got to go into Kīpahulu Valley. I never spent a night there, but we did some day trips and stuff. Yeah. So I like flying around in helicopters that was always. . . . I never get tired of that as crazy as it might have been.

I remember the first time we rode in a helicopter with Tom we flew from Hosmer's and then we flew over this drop off, Leleiwi drop off, and he says to us, "How'd you like to lose a hundred pounds?" He just nosedives. And he goes, "How would you like to gain a hundred pounds?" And he pulls up so we're pulling Gs, like, okay, this guy is nuts, but, you know, he knows what he's doing, so anyway. I like flying around a lot, you know, the whole thing was kind of fun. I like everything about it pretty much.

AK: What would you say would maybe one or two kind of biggest contributions that you felt that you made at the park?

CA: Me?

AK: Yeah.

CA: Well, I put the last clip in. That was significant. And I also organized the legs of the of the crater fence. So that was like a lasting legacy thing that I did. I don't know, I had a good time, helped build a fence. Yeah. Those were about the only two things I'd say that memory wise the most impressive to me. But, you know. . . .

AK: Is there any sort of future direction you'd like to see for the Park? I know its been several years since you worked there.

CA: Well, you know, the last time I hiked in the crater, actually, I started working for the State of Hawai'i in 1989. I worked at the Olinda facility right up there. It was a captive bird propagation facility, but then they gave it over to the Paragon fund and I had to work downtown and the rest of the first year in wildlife division and, we actually used to go in and do nēnē surveys in the Park. The last one I did was like the week before Thanksgiving 2010. I was sixty years old. So what directions I would like the park to go in? I think it's okay. I don't know. I'm not really too much in touch with what's going on there. But yeah, I mean, I can't think of anything specific.

I just hope they continue to, you know, maintain the fence and keep the native plants growing and try to maintain Haleakalā as the place Mary Evanson wanted it to be. Mary Evanson is a person who basically got me into this business because she got me to volunteer and started, you know, kind of got me on this path. But, you know, her vision was to keep Haleakalā and Hawai'i as Hawai'i as possible. You know, keep everything in the park as Hawaiian as it ever could be. Whatever is gone, you know, try to keep anything else from happening to make it disappear. You know, the fauna, the flora, the geology and the, you know, the visitor impact and all that kind of stuff. You know, they face a lot of challenges. But since I've been going there since 1970, it's pretty much intact. I mean, there's some things that changed. But I mean, the whole landscape is pretty, improved, of course, because of the fence which has allowed a lot of the vegetation to reestablish itself, which is great, you know. So I just think if they just continue doing what they're doing, I think it should be great personally.

And of course, adding more areas of significance. You know, cultural biological significance is always important. You don't want to, you know, trash the past. You want to maintain it and preserve it and respect and honor it. So I think that's important to, to maintain that whole legacy, I guess. Haleakalā and everything in it and or about it, hopefully that's going to continue doing that.

AK: Alright. Is there any other final stories or photos that you didn't get to that you'd like to share?

CA: Let me riffle through these.

AK: We have about seven minutes.

CA: Yeah, we had a rainbow in Kaupō so we went crazy and took pictures. I don't know if you can see that. . . . I took a picture of Tex and Janet and Cynthia and we go "Oh, there's a rainbow!"

And I forgot to bring the "Koge Pass" picture, which is, you know, *koge* is burnt rice, right? And we were in the campsite, and somebody burnt the rice and Janet says, "You *koge* the rice. You *koge* everything. This whole place is *koge*. This place is camp *koge*." So that became the unofficial name of the Kaupō campsite, was Camp Koge, just burned. So, and then we found a cactus while we were brushing and somebody carved in Koge Pass. I got that picture, I didn't bring it. I don't know what happened to it.

And then there was one particular section was kind of interesting. There was a little gully that we had to fence through. So we had to use a ladder and then drill into the side of it so that the gully went like this, so the fence had to go like this and we had to drill like this so the fence post would come right out. That's kind of what that whole scenario was about. So, yeah, we had some interesting fencing maneuvers. And then what else? Let's see. . . .

This was another crew, and in this crew we had Scott Splean and Betsy Gagne. I first met her on the second fence crew out at Kaupō. But this is front country, but Betsy and Wayne Gagne are two biologists, very famous. She worked in the Park and she was the Executive Director or Executive Secretary of the National Natural Area Reserve System Commission, which changed its name later. But that's what she did. She was very involved in ecosystems and, you know, saving species. And she worked as a fence crew person. When I first met her, she was on my first crew. I was in charge of the fence group at that time and yeah, became good friends. She passed away last year, I believe. But, you know, really good friends. And that's how I met her and that was significant to me.

And then Robin Diggle and Mike Ing who was kind of like my boss for a while, but he retired as an enforcement officer for the national parks that started out doing fence work. And Cynthia was also. . . . let's see what else we have.

Oh, yeah, sometimes towards the end of the work there, we would go into the crater on horseback and do cabin maintenance because there's a maintenance crew and a

maintenance system and it would change as to who is doing the cabin maintenance or not. Sometimes we would do it. Sometimes someone else would do it. But every now and then, I get to ride a horse and go to the cabins, which is really, really cool. I really like that. That was fun.

And then sometimes we go out and play and do stuff. This is a swinging bridge at Waihe'e and that's the fence crew, we'd go out and do other things. Sometimes I take a break on the fence. Someone took me taking a nap. It's alright, we all have our moments at times. That's pretty much it for the photos that I have. So, yeah, anyway.

AK: Thank you for sharing all of that.

CA: Sure, no problem. Yeah, it was quite a time of my life. And I, you know, cherish it much and I had a good time doing it. And in actuality, because my knee hurt me so bad, I did leave the Park in 1988 and that was a year where I had to go to physical therapy and it was just like I just told myself, you know, I just can't do this. I'm not going to sign up for another season. And ironically, that's, I think you're going to see Ted Rodrigues next?

AK: Yeah, we talk to Rose Freitas next and then Ted Rodrigues.

CA: Oh, thank you very much. When I came back in 1988, he was a permanent employee. I was just temporary, I was seasonal. He was a permanent employee. So the powers that be decided they needed someone to be in charge of the fencing project, which is actually called Feral Animal Control, which includes, you know, animal removal, fencing, the whole thing. And he was a ranger, so he did a lot and he was very interested in goat removal. So he had a permanent job. So he decided they needed someone in the park service that was permanent to take over the fencing. So he became the guy who was in charge.

So I came back still as a seasonal but that season, my knee was really bad. And I just I took a lot of time off and I just knew that, you know, hiking around the crater like I did, like I showed you, I know I couldn't do that. So I just opted out.

And then I got a job in August of 1989, which would have been halfway through my next seasonal thing. But I got a job with the Department of Land and Natural Resources in the State of Hawai'i, which I retired from five years ago. So I had a whole career doing that and I did actually like I say, I did go in the crater occasionally, to do nēnē surveys, but it wasn't like, you know, hiking up and down the mountain the whole time. And I still had knee problems—and I still do have knee problems—but I was able to manage it, you know, I could do like a day or two but I couldn't take five days. So anyway, that's kind of what happened. And I guess I handed the baton over to him.

AK: And we look forward to talking to him.

CA: Yeah. And he can reflect on that as well, whatever.

AK: But I do want to be mindful of your time. I know we've already gone over an hour and a half.

CA: Oh, I'm sorry.

AK: No, it was wonderful, but I don't want to keep you.

CA: No, you've got to be if you said you have to meet him at one that's pretty soon. So, yeah. So you better get going.

Yeah. I'm looking forward to reading the transcript. I know I stumble a few places or I forgot things and especially about the helicopter. It was like there was one thing where the helicopter crashed during the Kaupō season, but then there was another thing where the I saw the lava flow in Kuiki but they were two separate incidents. I just slipped over.

AK: Yeah, you'll get a copy of it.

CA: But yeah, those are pretty amazing times.

AK: Yeah.

CA: So, yeah. Anyway, it's good meeting you finally.

AK: You as well.

CA: And nice meeting you Micah. I hope all of this technological things works out for your first live interview and oral history and fencing project. Yeah. Alright. Well, thank you very much.

AK: Thank you, you were a wonderful first interview to have. Everyone will have to live up to you now.

CA: Well, it's good talking to you.