BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Scott Splean

Scott Splean arrived on Maui in 1979. Previously, he lived on the Big Island, Oʻahu, as well as in Oregon and California. He began working at the summit of Haleakalā with the Air Force detachment up at Science City in their satellite tracking station. He connected with the park as a volunteer. He was eventually hired as a seasonal resource management specialist in 1983 and continued in that position until 1987. Later, he worked at Hawaiʻi Volcanoes National Park in the same position, as a resource management specialist. Splean retired in 2014 with the National Resource Conservation Service and started volunteering back with Haleakalā National Park at that time. He continues to volunteer in the Interpretation Division, as well as with the Kiaʻi Ala Hele program.



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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW
with
Scott Splean (SS)
April 20, 2021
Via Zoom
Interviewed by Alana Kanahele (AK)

AK: I think just to get started, would you mind telling me your name, where you're from and a little bit about your connections with Haleakalā.

SS: Okay, my name is Scott Splean. I currently live in Wailuku, Hawai‘i. I've been on Maui now since 1979. I've spent time on Big Island for three years, O‘ahu for four years, and some areas on the mainland as well, Lake Tahoe and Oregon where I went to college. And my connection to the national park is kind of a long history. I was working at the summit of Haleakalā with the Air Force detachment up at Science City in their satellite tracking station and I connected with the park as a volunteer. This goes back 1980s or early 1980s, 1981-1982, and I found that to be more to my liking in terms of career. And so I started volunteering with the park at that time and was hired as a seasonal resource management specialist in 1983, continued on to about 1987, and then I went over to the Big Island, to University of Hawai‘i at Hilo but I also worked for the National Park at Hawai‘i Volcanoes National Park in the same position, resource management specialist.

After a period of different positions as a geographer and a cartographer, mostly geographic techniques, biogeography, island biogeography has been my career, I retired in 2014 with the National Resource Conservation Service and started volunteering back with the park at that time.

In between, I had connections with the Sierra Club and different groups, the Friends of Haleakalā. I was involved as a charter member of their organization, the Friends of Haleakalā, that would have started in the early nineties, 1991 or 1992. I was connected with them for a number of years and in recent years now, since retirement, it's been volunteering with the Interpretation Division, with the Kia‘i Ala Hele program, the trail steward program, where now I kind of use my oral history and connection with all the resources to connect with visitors, hikers, etc., as a measure for trail safety, but also just to interpret the park's resources and history etcetera with them. So it's been really, really a wonderful experience.

AK: It sounds like it, you have quite a history with the park. Do you remember your first time visiting Haleakalā or the first time in the crater?

SS: Yeah, that would have been probably during the time I was working up at Science City, so it would have been in the early 1980s. Different trips like backpack trips, staying in the cabin, staying in campgrounds, really started to develop my true passion for that environment, that place, the special light of Haleakalā to want to be involved with what I heard at that time were the critical issues such as the resource management, the protection

of native species and the eradication of invasive species, which was why I was hired because of the severe impacts that was happening at the time, especially with the invasive species, the ungulates that were destroying their native systems up on the summit. So, yeah, that was one of the first experiences that sort of led me to really wanting to be part of the staff there.

AK: Thank you, so was your first position as the volunteer coordinator, I guess, sort of first hired position?

SS: Yeah, that sort of evolved. The volunteer coordinator position was nonexistent, but it became existent right around the time I was hired and about two years later, I would say like 1984, I took over that position as a volunteer coordinator for two or three years and that was incredible. There was a lot of activity on the local level. So, these were individuals that were, I would say, like professionals in town with desk jobs or whatever. In fact, I met my future wife – she was a schoolteacher at Maui high school and used to come up on Saturdays. And those projects were around building animal exclusion, fencing and invasive species control, such as weeds, etcetera, cutting down trees. We didn't have those folks do any animal control or anything like that. It was mostly park fencing and again, like planting and eradication of plants. And so that position included local people, like I say, but also groups from around the country and the world. We had a hiking society from the US, the Sierra Club. These groups would come as vacation volunteer folks and stay like a week in the park and they'd help us with those projects I mentioned and they also had the opportunity then to go into the crater and spend time as there's more leisure time as well, as well as volunteering in the crater for invasive plant control, etc. So that that was really an incredible experience. And I kept that position until I moved to the Big Island to go to undergraduate school at UH Hilo.

AK: And so the volunteers were kind of a mix of sort of self-volunteers and organized groups or schools?

SS: That's correct. Yes, both. Yeah. And in fact, some future employees just like me, I got excited about volunteering in the park or had a long careers at Haleakalā national Park by their participation in these volunteer programs.

AK: Were most of the volunteers day trips or was it like---I know you mentioned they would have kind of vacation volunteers. . .

SS: Yeah, the local volunteers were day trips and those were mostly west boundary, which is our front country or areas that we could get to easily by vehicle to help us build a fence there. We didn't have volunteers obviously fly into the back country by helicopter any of that, so it was all easy access work around headquarters on up to the summit on the west boundary. Those were day trips, mostly just like times that people could come up or on weekends, etc.. Now, the organized trips, those were, like I say, a week long. So there was individual days of doing different activities, including the crater. So both.

AK: Thanks. Have you noticed if there's been kind of a shift in focus of the group springing up? It sounds like they had school groups, at least now I think of a lot of the outreach programs up there being in schools. Was it always that way or has it kind of involved?

SS: The projects at that time were really critical towards trying to construct this boundary fencing, eradication programs, and again, I'm not involved with that process, but I've witnessed a lot of participation in schools here in the last decade or so. And what I witnessed mostly involved with, with outplantings of native species like around the summit, such as the ʻahinahina and others, and that they connect with the resource management biology staff and set up a days where school groups come up and and help with the outplantings of those species. So that's been really, really nice. I've been able to witness some of that and be involved, at least in terms of hanging around with the folks and seeing what they're up to, and this is mostly middle school age, I would say, maybe some high school as well. But the middle school is about twelve- to sixteen-year-old students up there. And it's, it's great because it gives them the opportunity to understand and to have an appreciation for and have a stake in helping to protect the park and add to the, you know, the species that were critically endangered, that they have a connection now culturally and physically with those resources.

AK: Can you talk a little bit more about under your tenure, what were some of the maybe more specific activities that were involved in the volunteer programs? I know you mentioned just resource management and. . .

SS: Yes, primarily those activities that involve the protection of endangered species. So, we were mostly using volunteers and staff. I mean, this was just a connection and an extension of staff activities that we were doing at that time. A lot of it also is why we enhanced the participation in the volunteer program is to sort of do an interpretive view of that as well and give the visitors and the volunteers a sense of really connecting with this, not just that we need your labor or any of that, but how vitally important it is, and I felt that it was really important to educate them on all the critical needs up there and how important they are to solving some of the problems that we had up there. So it was a combination of both the labor which was necessary, but also the sort of education process that went along with helping them to feel really connected and had a stake in the solutions we were doing.

AK: Great, thank you. And could you also talk a little bit about your work with the construction on the fence, I was told you worked a lot with the Kaupō Gap and Kuiki summit as well?

SS: Correct. Yeah, let's see, we had a staff it sort of fluctuated, but we had a male and female staff working the fences. I was just a phase in time at that. Other people continued on for many more years after that. And we constructed over a total of about almost fifty miles of fence around the rim and other wing fences. Some of it was done by staff, like we said, like to set up in Kaupō Gap. We were out there for almost a year out in Kaupō Gap. These were helicopters fly-in and stay in for a week to eight days, I think it was. And then we'd come out and have a few days off and get ready for the next trip. So it was a

constant ebb and flow of resources and people out to Kaupō to construct that fence. We did animal control at that time as well, mostly goats out on that side and plant control – any weeds that we saw as well.

Let's see, a lot of the other work was done in some of the remote areas. We surveyed the fence and did brushing, in other words, cleared some of the vegetation for the fence in Koʻolau Gap, Hanakauhi, Hāna Mountain all the way out towards above Palikū. A lot of that work was done by the staff, but the actual fencing work was contracted. We had numerous contractors, local and mainland contractors, that we used to fly in and they'd stay a week or more at a time constructing fence out there. So some of the more remote, inaccessible areas we use contractors for some of the closer in areas and areas that we could easily get to in terms of helicopters and or four wheel drive vehicles, the staff took part in most of that.

So, it was like I said, it was a male/female staff, so we had a supervisor, of course Ron Nagata was our overall resource management superintendent up there, not superintendent, but the director – lead – at that time and we had the fencing crew operations as a lead. So it was quite, quite difficult work, physical out there in many different environments, many different kinds of scenarios in terms of trying to construct this fence in easy terrain and very rough terrain and in substrate as well and we used mostly helicopters to get the material, our camping equipment, all our food sources, the whole camp we moved back and forth, and people so that was vital because that was the only way to logistically do to complete that project.

AK: Wow, could you talk a little bit about the actual fence design and sort of what, kind of what, was involved with the brushing and the posts?

SS: Right. The fence design itself, the actual design of the fence was basically to exclude the animals, the feral animals that were encroaching into the park. So for pigs, we had a design a skirt system on the ground to keep them from---because pigs really like eroded (unclear) and grub underneath things. They're not climbers or anything like that, the ground and diggers. So, we had to design that so they would keep them out as sort of a ground skirt on the bottom of a fence.

And for goats, you have to have it higher, obviously it was a farm fence. It was about a four-foot mesh fence, but we had barbed wire on top, two layers up to about six feet. And of course, we went down into gulches, back up the other side of other side of the gulch and within the gulch, we built like a breakaway system where we tie all of fence together, but it would break away during flood time – flash flood times. Some of these areas, especially our dry areas like Kaupō and Hāna mountain and what not would flash flood and we didn't want the fence to fall down, so we would make sure it could breach out without tearing the fence down. Of course, that required maintenance after the event to go back up there and to tie it all back together again. But it seemed to work pretty well.

All these projects were done in the late 1970s, through the 1980s and whatnot. It's an ongoing thing. I mean, they're replacing fence and maintaining the fence that we built

back then nowadays. It's the same conditions, the same concerns today that we even had back then, although I guess a lot of the feral animals are outside park boundaries now. So that's more of a maintenance thing than a critical need to exclude them out of the park itself.

AK: So is the fence design the same for the entire park, I know you mentioned the barbed wire?

SS: Yeah, I'm sure there are areas like in Kīpahulu Valley rainforest areas that are dense vegetation. I am sure there's different styles that they did, obviously different practices in terms of eradication in areas. The area work that we did that I mentioned in those areas before was a lot of the same type of construction, at least as I recall, although certain things were done differently, depending on the vegetation in the area, except it was a dense forest area, which certainly would design a lot differently if it was just shrublands or in Kaupō was pretty much down to just about nothing because of the feral animals took out most of everything.

You go there now, and the vegetation is back to almost normal conditions there. So, it was an extreme success as something was designed on the Big Island by the resource management staff, and our future superintendent, Don Reeser, was in charge of that on the Big Island. He brought the sort of the design and the technology and the protocols and all that with him when he came over to Haleakalā to be the superintendent over there. So, we had tremendous expertise and previous design success basically from Hawai‘i Volcanoes Park that came to our park.

AK: Do you remember some of the folks who were involved with the fencing around that time you were there, some of your peers?

SS: Yes, well, I'm sure you've interviewed some already, but Ron Nagata was our supervisor. We had people just involved with fence, we also had biologists involved, we had botanists involved, we had other folks that were obviously doing surveys along the way because the biota of the national park was just becoming cataloged and becoming research. In fact, new species were being found. So, we had a host of disciplines involved. Key people such as Betsy Gagne and Wayne Gagne, folks that were botanists and biologists. Art Medeiros and the USGS staff, Lloyd Loope, those were folks involved with basically inventorying and cataloging our resources and the impacts of invasive species on those systems as well. The actual fencing, though, the actual construction crew, we had Chris Alexander, Eric Andersen, Freddy Freitas, oh a host of folks. We had people came over part time from the mainland, a couple individuals from the East Coast, Robin Diggle and a few others that came just for a season or two to help us with this project as well. We had people like Ted Rodrigues that was involved in the resource management is more of a backcountry ranger type guy. He helped us with some of the fencing, but he was also critical in a lot of backcountry assessments of goat damage and pig damage, etc., as is his role was primarily as a horseman in the wilderness area – the crater – to assess a lot of the needs and focus on where we should be. So, yeah, so those are some of the key players.

AK: That's great. Yeah, we got a number of them that we've interviewed, so it sounds like we're on the right page. Do you mind, I'm going to share my screen and bring up a map of sort of the fences. And I was wondering if you could maybe point to the areas that you worked on to see it as more of a visual?

SS: All right. My cursor will point on screen as well?

AK: Yes, I'll show you how to do that.

SS: Okay.

AK: And if not, you can just tell me if you prefer.

SS: Sure.

AK: Because there is there's labels on them. All right. let me share your screen here. Can you see this okay?

SS: Oh, yeah.

AK: Oh, good. Okay. So, I'm wondering if first you can talk about the areas of fencing that you were involved with?

SS: Wow, first of all, I'd love to have this map, you know. I've never seen a completed map of all the fence, fencing, positioning, and whatnot. But the areas that I was involved in, again, we used the parks staff and volunteers in the northeast or excuse me, northwest and western corners of Kilohana from Hosmer Grove all the way up to the the summit of Haleakalā. So, we consider. . . . you see my cursor at all?

AK: I can't see your cursor, no.

SS: Anyway. It's the boundary area of Kilohana to the east and then all the way up to the summit area that was done by staff and a lot of volunteers. So that extends from Puʻuniniau at the park entrance near Hosmer Grove to the summit. So that's a gain of 3,000 foot elevation along that boundary right there.

AK: Right about here?

SS: Yes, that's right. And further upslope to the west and south, up to Kilohana, up to the summit of Haleakalā, which is in the sort of the far left.

AK: Here yeah, okay.

SS: Yeah. And you know, the original fencing started from Hosmer Grove up to Koʻolau Gap up the north boundary. That was the original fencing. I had some involvement there,

especially in the sections.... what do you have, the Leleiwi section and down towards Koʻolau Gap. We certainly were involved in that as well. Those, again, were all day trips, easy to get to on the road. So, the Leleiwi to Hosmer Grove in the north west here.

AK: Right around this area?

SS: Yeah that area and then towards Koʻolau Gap.

AK: Over here.

SS: Yeah, that's the Halemaʻu trail area. Yeah. Okay, so the big project that took a lot of the resources, time and staffing was the Kaupō section and the Kuiki section. So, the section across Kaupō Gap from West Kaupō actually it went from east Kaupō to west Kaupō. The fencing construction chronologically was from east right there all the way across west Kaupō to where Jobs there. That's a big gulch and up a section up towards the Nuʻu, Haleakalā and some of that. Don't go too far.

(Laughter)

AK: Oh okay. Yeah.

SS: Yeah. And of course and then we focused then after that from above Paliku. So it's Kuiki it's above on the right side of Kaupō Gap up into the crater, a place called Kuiki. Yeah. You already put the blue there down towards Manawainui and Kaupō. We did that section as well while I was there.

AK: Oh over here. Oh interesting.

SS: And the other section I spent some time at, we had different phases where we used staff was near the summit all the way out Haupaʻakea. And that's the very west end over there towards the summit. Keep going south to the summits, the top of Kilohana stretch there.

AK: Up here?

SS: No, that's Hosmer Grove. That's low.

AK: Oh, that's low, okay.

SS: You keep going down. You get to the summit area all the way to the top, all the way to the top. That's the summit area. And we did that section to the east there towards Haupaʻakea as well.

AK: Okay, right around here?

SS: Yes, that's just cinder. So that was a fairly simple way of getting a fence up because again, it was easy to keep moving quickly. There's the substrate that was just a small rock

and cinders up there at the summit area. Now that's 8,000 - 9,000 feet elevation, most of that.

Other areas where I was involved in, in terms of creating the camps and the areas for drop off, etc., etc., some of the brushing, was in Kīpahulu Valley where it says Charlie Camp right there in Kīpahulu and towards Palikea up above that. We did a lot of the surveys and construction for camps up there so they could move material and people could stay up there, camp up there. So we didn't do any actual fencing, but again, preparation for fencing. Other areas that we did preparation for the construction folks then took on was on the north side of Haleakalā National Park above the crater, it's called Kalapawili, that ridge up there, Kalapawili ridge. Yeah, we did all the brushing, the pathway to get through. So we cleared the vegetation all the way down towards Waikau to the left.

AK: Up here?

SS: Yeah, in that area, going up upslope and that's upslope Hanakauhi mountain. And then across Kalapawili, really, which is a ridge overlooking the crater. Yeah, so that pretty much is the areas that I was involved with staff and with volunteers from 1983 to about 1987 about four years.

AK: Wow, and these so was the volunteers, because I know this is fencing, the volunteers didn't have a lot to do with fencing, but did they have anything to do with brushing?

SS: No, they did not. No, they didn't. We didn't really want to empower them with a lot of power tools per say, whether it was chainsaws or weed, weed whackers or any of that. Oh, we pretty much had things prepared for them prior to their involvement. We thought the focus would be that we could train them to do certain things and be fine with that. We did. Again, I guess with liability nowadays, nobody could touch anything but back then, or at least we gave them some access to power tools, but not much. And it was mostly a staff operation there.

AK: Got it. And are there particular places in the park that you feel kind of most connected to or that some of your favorite areas on this map?

SS: Wow, yeah, that's hard. Yeah, I guess Kaupō, of course was always going to be really special for me. It's time I spent in the gap out there on the south boundary there, Kaupō and yeah Kaupō Gap is in the middle. On the south side, on the lower end there.

AK: Yeah. Yeah. Sorry I'm just trying to get my. . . (technical difficulties).

SS: And the areas along the ridges there, Kuiki, Kalapawili are really all just, just spectacular locations. I always felt just so privileged to be in places that probably hardly anybody on the island's ever been to. You know, not to say that that's important or anything, but just how special that is to be in places that you, you know, that are very inaccessible to anybody. And you're very privileged to be part of a group that could be in these beautiful locations and and also do this kind of work.

Nowadays, most of my activity is between the summit and down the Hosmer Grove. And, you know, because I'm meeting visitors and mostly hiking on the trails and meeting visitors on the trail and at trail heads. So it's all west boundary stuff, mostly up to the summit area, around the summit and down to some of the view areas along Kilohana Pali there towards to Kalahaku and Leleiwi. So I'm spending more of my time there, and there's a few spots, obviously, along there that are just extremely special to me. I just always try to visit some of these special spots every time I'm up there just to reconnect.

AK: Were there any additions made to the park? I know they've acquired like Waikamoe and Nuʻu, was that around the time you were?

SS: Yeah, actually Nuʻu came later. Nuʻu was in the 1990s, I think late 1990s, early 2000s. That's the south end below Haleakalā peak there.

AK: At this area?

SS: Yeah, that area. I was also involved mostly with the Friends of Haleakalā. So that would have been in early19 90s in the Kalepa Ala Lele section which I don't think its fenced, it's not on this fencing, but it's along the shoreline and up into the park just below Kīpahulu, south of Kīpahulu, where it says Kaʻapahu. Kaʻapahu and then down towards the coastline there, that section was added in the I would say early 1990s, that was at late 1980s, early 1990s that was added. So I remember being involved in some of the ceremonial stuff and some of it being involved, at least in terms of knowledge, in terms of that acquisition, etc. at that time. So, yeah, Nuʻu came along later after I was already, like I say, late 1990s, early, 2000s. So not involved in that part.

AK: What are kind of some of the places that are most accessed or used by that by the visitors?

SS: Well, it's two sections. I mean, the summit district, obviously, all the trail access, Sliding Sands trail, the Halemauʻu trail are the most common places that visitors access, all the view areas along the road heading down Hosmer Grove, you know, the west boundary and summit district features that people access. People sometimes come up to the summit and also access the skyline trail, which goes out of the park, actually down to the you see the trail, actually the very top of Kilohana near the summit heading west out of the park. Yeah, right there. People access that trail as well. A lot of people don't know how to access it, so I get those questions once in a while from people at the summit. So that's the primary connection I have with visitors.

And that section, of course, Kīpahulu section folks out there, there's numerous trails, there's numerous short hikes to the to the ʻOheʻo Gulch, the pools, and also up into the valley itself, to Waimoku Falls, et cetera. So that's a separate section. I want to volunteer out there, but they are kind of only doing a nine to five right now during the pandemic, and they were closed for quite a long time during a pandemic because it's just an area that's easily accessed by a lot of people and so that was closed and has reopened. The

Park now is reopened pretty much 24/7 and although backcountry camping and cabin reservations are closed right now, but I've recently heard that they're going to start reservations for the camping. So that will increase visitation, obviously, in terms of backcountry use. So that's coming soon.

AK: Oh great, before I put the map away, is there anything or any other areas you want to talk about here or anything you want to share?

SS: Yeah, only I would say we would go out to Palikū, which is at the far east end of the crater itself and go up on Kuiki Ridge and we would---we surveyed and brushed that area just to the north of Kuiki there along the ridge above Palikū and that is a boundary, a natural boundary on either side. One side looks into the crater and the other side will view into Kīpahulu Valley. And it's probably one of the most spectacular spots on Earth to look in both directions and see the environment, the environments, the ecosystems on either side. We're talking rainforest, dense rainforest on the Kīpahulu side and of course, the summit alpine stone desert on the other side, just in a short distance like that, and so that's another place that I don't know if there's even any access to that right now. There's a short trail that goes up from the Palikū campground/cabin there that goes along that ridge was just a place I always loved to go to, it's hard to access but once you're there, there's no place on earth.

AK: I bet. When you were doing the fences, I guess the materials had to be suitable for all of the kind of ecosystem climates. Was all of the fence made with the same materials, whether you were in the rainforest or. . .?

SS: I think so, although, you know, obviously certain parts of it probably had to be more, say, immune to certain weather conditions because the upper Kīpahulu Valley like this Charlie and Palikea sections right there, I mean, we're talking three hundred inches of rain a year up there. And so you had all these different kinds of environments. As far as fencing material and whatnot, I don't recall if there was much different in terms of the actual equipment styles or anything like that.

One thing we did notice as we were obviously trying to exclude feral animals, that some of the fencing would come in with spider webs, sometimes in a little T-post and we were always concerned with we're introducing invasive species here from just the post themselves we're really, really careful in sort of identifying that and inspecting some of this stuff. Not always---you couldn't, it was just too much work. But that was kind of a funny side thing that we knew between ourselves and some of the equipment that we had to be very mindful of what we're introducing in these wilderness areas as well.

AK: I'm sure, I didn't even think about that, but yeah.

Have you noticed kind of over your time being there any sort of conflicts between the resource conservation and the recreational uses of the park? I know there's been so many tourists coming in, they put caps on....

SS: Yeah, well, even early on, I would say in the late 1980s, early 1990s, helicopter travel around the crater was becoming an impact. And Don Reeser, the superintendent at that time, placed a moratorium finally at the direction and the, I guess, advice of a lot of visitors that were complaining about noise within the crater in the wilderness. In other words, we're coming to a wilderness area, we deserve quiet and peace. And so he took that to heart. And so now helicopter tours have to skirt the oblique outside areas of the crater around, and of course, the north shore, they do not come around the north boundary at all but this is along the south boundary along Haleakalā peak down towards Kaupō. They're kept away. And so the sound impacts are much less than they used to be, so that's been an improvement.

Let's see, other conflicts. We used to allow bicyclers – these bicycle tours – that go from the summit to the sea. We used to allow them to start at the summit of Haleakalā and ride all the way to the coast. They are no longer able to do so. They have to start outside the park boundary just below Hosmer Grove. So that was another impact, I think, that was addressed by the park as far as just too much access too many bicycles coming into conflict with cars and hikers, etc.

In recent times, let's see. . . . I guess, yeah, the sheer numbers of visitors have increased. We've had, I wouldn't say there's that much of a detriment other than the sunrise time, we had to create a policy and a regulation that folks get permits to come up for sunrise because it was such a popular thing. It was in all the tour books this is what you got to do when you come to Haleakalā is to come for sunrise. They decided, after years of probably study and testimony, decided to go ahead and set a regulation to keep the parking lots full, but that was as much as you could have liked about two hundred cars and during a pandemic now, I think it's less than 50 cars can be in these lots. So we're limiting the number of people that can come up via permit to be at the summit area at sunrise. So that's been recent years. That's maybe been five years now or so that that's been regulated. And it seems to be working, as far as we know.

And I guess the impacts there were just people walking everywhere. Of course, it's sunrise. They're up there walking on endangered species or getting off the view areas and whatnot. And the environment, the ground and soil around some of these areas is very fragile. It's obviously home to a lot of microorganisms and small insect species and people were just trampling on everything, including silverswords and whatnot, and we saw impacts in terms of ahu, little piles of rocks everywhere that people thought was nice to do, but obviously the park does not encourage that to alter the environment at all. So that that was something that was addressed as well. And that's something I still clean up once in a while when I'm up near the summit is to dismantle some of these things that people leave.

So, yeah, I guess just with more activity, you just have more things that people impact the systems in terms of getting off trail. We see a lot more erosion in some of these spots that we didn't see before. We see more rubbish, obviously picking up more rubbish. It just really impacts it more people visiting the park. We see drones up there now, too, as well and there's a regulation against drones. The fact that, again, the reason for that and I have

visitors ask me, “How come you don't allow drones up here?” Well, I guess in terms of the, the Park Service, I don't think any park allows drones within their boundaries and that has a lot to do with just impacts to obviously our ecosystems and our endangered species up there that we just won't allow. So, I come across that periodically where I just have to tell a drone operator to please pack up and remove the drone from the area.

AK: Thank you. And I know I want to be respectful of your time and just have like two or three more questions, if that's OK. And I guess one thing I'm kind of interested in - a sort of switching gears a little bit, is during your time when you were working as a volunteer coordinator or community outreach, could you talk about maybe some of the native Hawaiian relationships or cultural practices that were done in the park?

SS: Yeah, actually, there wasn't a lot of connection there. There were some. Obviously we're very respectful for the culture and its desire to obviously work with the kahu, the caretakers of the park, the National Park Service. And so one example, in recent times when the government shut down due to fiscal, I guess, budget shutdown, that was right before the pandemic, so it would have been like 2019. A group of local citizens, a local Hawaiian group, came up and basically placed a kapu aloha on the park because they realized nobody's up there managing this. They came up and were very respectful about meeting up with some of the visitors as they were coming into the park to advise them to be mindful of what they were involved with up there in terms of hiking or on the road, and just be pono, be mindful and be respectful of the environment up here. So they were taking sort of the place of the management in a sense. And I got a chance to talk to a few of the folks in my time up there and that was really a beautiful thing that they were doing and it wasn't adversarial or anything like that; it was very respectful and taking on responsibility, kuleana, of protecting the park when the Park Service was no longer operating up there in terms of staff.

Over the years as my volunteer coordinator, there was some contact with Native Hawaiians. We certainly got a lot of advice from folks about the environment, the resources. We had obviously Native Hawaiians on staff so there was a lot to learn in terms of the cultural aspects there, their respect and their sort of the spiritual connection to all the resources and the environment up there. Most of the volunteers were---it was obviously all sorts of mixed cultures and whatnot, but again more of an advisory role in terms of the Native Hawaiian culture.

AK: Thank you. And then I think just maybe to close, would you mind maybe describing two or three special moments that you've had in Haleakalā and then I guess maybe as a follow up, what you think are maybe two or three of your most important contributions to the park that you've made throughout your time there.

Alright, special moments. . . . Well, we were in Kaupō Gap on the fence line, we were about halfway through, so we're camped in central Kaupō Gap, and we had one of the staff members get up to use the portable lua at two o'clock in the morning and she witnessed the eruption of Mauna Loa in 1984 from the summit, somewhat fountaining. And our view was right there, of course it was like eighty miles in the distance, but we

had binoculars and whatnot and she yelled and screamed that Mauna Loa was erupting. We all got out and we spent the rest of the night witnessing this eruption at the summit of Moku‘āweoweo at the summit of Mauna Loa. So that was a pretty special time.

Other times, there was one accident that happened in the Gap as well as the helicopter was moving a sling load from the fence line, it crashed right down, lost power and crashed right down. And so I wasn't out there at the time to actually witness that, but I came out later and that caused a real change in our practices in terms of safety and all that. It happened to crash right inside the National Park, so we obviously had federal agents and inspectors coming out from the air safety folks. So that was quite a big event that happened that impacted us for quite some time. And because of that, we were grounded from helicopter operations for a few months during all this investigation and changes in policy. So we built the section of wall near the headquarters and visitor's center at 7,000 feet for the nēnē viewing area. So I can always say that I walked out now and see that section that we built that wall that retains the, the park, the walking area there and during that time, so it was a time in history where an accident happened and it moved us to another section and I can see the completed project that we did at that time. So those are two things.

As far as contribution, I would say, again, witnessing some of the areas that have changed for the good in terms of the ecosystem and protection of the native systems up there is probably what I feel the most connected to in terms of feeling good about being involved in a project that has been successful at protecting our fragile native environment up there, the native ecosystems.

And nowadays, I think I really feel good about just the education and the interpretive side of things. Learning as much as I've learned, I can relate this to visitors and whoever wants to talk about things. And most of it obviously is just basic information but I do run into a lot of individuals and parties that we have really good conversation and these folks are really extremely interested in Haleakalā. And I'm able to get into deeper conversations about what we did during that time and tell them that we'll look at that fence and see what it looks like now and what we did to accomplish what you see today.

So it's gone from the actual physical labor and the actual team environment to produce something that's vital for the protection of this system. But also nowadays the sort of the interpretive and educational side of things. As I age, I'm not able to do the physical stuff, so it's more about education and outreach of those times and today to help the visitors with their experience.

AK: Thank you. And any final thoughts about the park or staff? I'm done with my questions. Or any future direction you'd like to see of the park?

SS: I would say hopefully after the pandemic, especially interpretation division gets a little more active in terms of programs, and what I know right now, it's a difficult time because just the access of connection to people and whatnot and I'm hoping that that will

obviously will improve once the pandemic is over, to have more of an active outreach type thing with visitors. And I'm sure it will. It's just a very strange time right now.

And we're really vital. I think this trail steward program is really vital. And there's about ten of us doing it now with about five of us on a regular basis. I'm up once a week. So there's about five of us doing a regular schedule. And I think they know I'm sure that it is vital to connect with the visitors because they're unable to because of these visitor centers are closed right now. So I think and hopefully they'll improve with more access to all these different resources that the park will need to reopen eventually.

But otherwise, mahalo for this opportunity. This would be great to catalog this. We've had numerous articles, online and newspaper articles, written about this point in history. Books have been written on this. Jill Engledow wrote the History of Haleakalā, and so she included this period of time in the 1970s through the 1990s and these resource management projects included in a best-selling book. So that's been really good to get that out. But this is the first of its kind as far as I know for an oral history and thank you for the opportunity.

AK: Thank you and I'm sorry, just one quick follow up question, if you don't mind, I know you mentioned trail stewards as a Kiaʻi Ala Hele. Can you explain really quickly what that is? And I know you said you go up once a week. . .

SS: As far as what I do or the program itself?

AK: I guess both a little bit, if you don't mind.

SS: Yeah, well, the program was set up, I think it was through the Friends of Haleakalā. I'm not certain of the origin, but I think it was through the Friends of Haleakalā as a support group for the National Park. And the National Park came together to create this program with guidelines in terms of how we interact with the public and where we should be. I think that's sort of open. I mean, some folks like to hike far in on the trail and meet people at different sections. Others, like myself, prefer to meet as many visitors as possible so I'm at more of the trailheads or view areas or whatnot because I enjoyed talking to the public.

We're also the eyes and ears of the park as well. We're just an extension of staff that's up there watching things unfold. So we've been able to witness, obviously, violations, and also, in addition to that, just great things in terms of the environment, seeing silverswords blooming and reporting different things that you encounter in the park. So it's sort of a multiple fold program of, of visitor services in terms of interpretation and information, but also trail safety. And I think that's the primary goal, is the trail safety part of it, where we will advise visitors and inform visitors on some of the things that they will possibly encounter up there to help them have a safer time in.

And again, at the summit you're talking about, there's an intense array of different kind of conditions that go on up there from cold and wet to snow to baking sun, all that, and

visitors sometimes are – it's a fact – they are unprepared to do that because they're getting out of the car and just going for a walk, some are unprepared, some are very prepared. So we get all kinds. Again, with thousands of visitors, you'll have all sorts of of kind of conditions that people need to be aware of. And that's my job as well, just to make sure that they are aware that the ultraviolet rays and all the weather, they should have protection, water, sunscreen, hat, all these things. And also, how far do you want to go? What are your limitations or concerns about the environment because the trail systems are strenuous. And so we get a lot of questions about how far they want to go and how long it will take and that sort of thing and what to look for.

AK: Thank you so much.

SS: Alright.

AK: Yeah, thank you again, it was great having a chance to talk with you and would you prefer an email or a hard copy once I finish typing up the transcriptions?

SS: Oh, email is fine.

AK: Okay. All right. So maybe expect an email from me by mid-May. We have to get through all of them.

SS: Sure. Who are you associated with again in terms of the university?

AK: So I'm at the Center for Oral History. I'm actually a student in the Geography Department. So it was cool to hear your background about geography.

SS: Yeah, yeah. I had a little time at UH Mānoa but I switched over to Big Island. It was a really great program, an undergrad program at UH Hilo at the time and staff was wonderful. And again, doing physical and cultural geography on the Big Island was just just an amazing experience to be able to be involved in all that. So, yeah, well good.

AK: I bet, great. Well, I'll be sure to send over your transcript. And additionally, if you would like, we are also able to take any pictures if you want to include that with your archive. If you have any images of your time in the park, you can email that to me or to include with the audio and the oral history.

SS: Yeah the park does a really good job of, oh, well, somebody takes a picture of us or I take a selfie or whatever, we give it to the park and then they write up a...I guess the social media, they put it on either Facebook or it's mostly on Facebook as a little blurb on the individuals in the Kiaʻi Ala Hele program. And again, it's to promote that persay, but also maybe if people are interested in joining us. So it's sort of an outreach sort of thing, but they do a really good job of bringing highlights to the people involved and the mission of the program. So I'll get you a photo.

AK: Sounds good. Yeah, you can email me or I can check with them and some of the social media, but thank you. I'll let you enjoy the rest of your Tuesday morning and afternoon.

SS: Alright, Alright. Aloha.

AK: Aloha. Thank you.



Scott Splean at Haleakalā



Kaupō 1983



Kaupō 1983



Kaupō 1983



Kaupō 1983



Kuiki 1986 – Helicopter Operations



Kaupō Fence Stash



Helicopter Operations