



# TALK STORY

with

BRIAN FAGAN



**Joined HTMC:** 2003

**Favorite hike currently:**

Aiea Loop and Ridge, and Kalawahine

**Favorite trail food:** Spam musubi. And a side of Snickers will give that energy boost we all need.

**Favorite hiking/Hawai'i book:**

A Walk in the Woods, by Bill Bryson.  
My Bible on hiking is Stuart Ball's first book.  
Outdoor adventure movies: Into Thin Air  
and Free Solo.

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**WHEN did you first start hiking  
and WHY did you join HTMC?**

I started hiking in the 60s. I was on active duty in the Marine Corps, stationed at Kaneohe Marine Corps Air Station. I was a platoon commander in the infantry and we hiked. We hiked to Bellows via Kailua and Lanikai hills, we hiked to Waikane, we hiked all over Kahuku, and Molokai and Pohakuloa on the Big Island. My commander was "Walkin' Tom" Thomas, a legend then as an endurance guy. Whew.

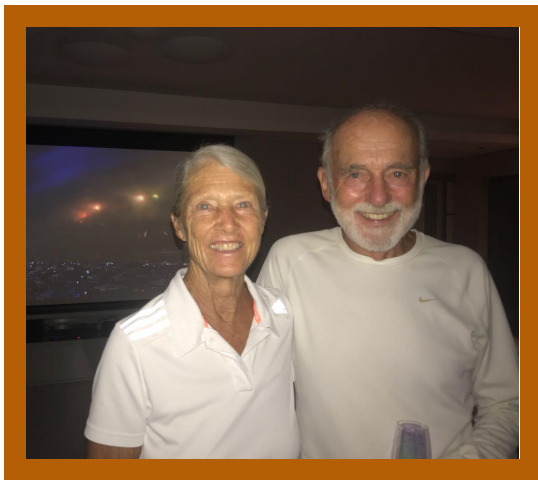
So, I was hiking Hawaii in the 60's: Sacred Falls. Haiku Stairs. Lanikai. No Club, just the enjoyment of outdoors and hiking. And enjoying being a newlywed.

I retired from active duty in the Marines in 1990, in California. The 4 kids were gone to their own lives, we had the "empty nest" so we would break out the California map and head for a "green spot" (usually a park or monument) and hike. My wife Caryll and I moved back to Hawaii in 2002, and soon thereafter we attended a wedding in Kailua and met Tom Mendes, whose kids went to the same high school (Maryknoll), so we had that in common...and he was a hiker!!! The rest is history, unwritten.

I joined HTMC in 2003 and soon after I became a Life Member. Best money I ever spent except for a wedding ring...



Why did I join? The organized treks, the social aspect, the payoff vista or waterfalls. The “quality of life”. **Now I hike for the social, cultural, personal aspects, as well as the fitness.** Hikers are optimists, I like that. Hikers are also adventurous travelers. Many “talk story” sessions after hikes and a cold drink. Wonderful people.



*Brian and Caryll*

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**WHY is HTMC important to you?  
What is your extent of involvement with HTMC over the years?**

Caryll and I travel. A lot. All over, “foreign and domestic”. But we really like the “foreign”. We hike when we travel, and enjoy the interplay with other hikers and travelers. Independent people. But we were gone so often I never considered running for a committee or the Board for HTMC.

I did become a sort of ambassador for HTMC when I would go to Iolani Palace early Sunday mornings to greet and brief interested hikers on the HTMC hike. Fun. I would do that at the request of the hike coordinators.

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**Can you think of one MEMORABLE HTMC hike experience that you would like to share?**

We have all fallen off the trail at least once. Memorable events. **I recall one hike when I went to kick a rock off the trail and out of the way, missed, and fell off the trail and down the steep slope about 20 feet; now I stop walking when I want to kick a rock.**

One other time, the hiker behind me suddenly was silent and had slipped off the trail down the slope where I could not even see him. Big Hawaiian guy. Thankfully he was fine, as we little guys could never have hauled him back up.

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**What is your FAVORITE hike on O'ahu?**

I am 81 years old, with a pacemaker and condition heart monitoring. My favorite hikes are now Beginner or Intermediate. But I think I have done all the hikes on Oahu in the last 20 years,



great efforts and great vistas. (I am in it for the vistas, and the camaraderie.) I hike on Wednesdays and Sundays, with a small group of club members and close friends. I watch my weight and health, and my wife of 58 years takes very good care of me.

So, now I like Aiea Loop and Ridge, and Kalawahine. I enjoy the forest and the rain. **And I have a sense of “forest bathing” as the Japanese put it, to embrace the simple nature of hiking in the rain forest.** Mud, schmud, who really cares...

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### **Where have you hiked OUTSIDE of Hawaii? Can you share an experience hiking overseas?**

We have probably been to 50 countries with hikes or walks or treks or trails. We enjoy the third world. The pandemic really slowed us down in terms of travel and adventure, but we did get to hike part of the Shenandoah this past summer. We are usually in guesthouses and hostels, and airbnb places. Hiking is a very popular pastime for many people in many countries. With interesting spinoffs...

We started a 365-day open flight ticket with Star Alliance (read: United Airlines) in the summer of 2001. We figured we could go from one continent to another

every three months. Starting in Hawaii, we flew to Tahiti, on to the Cook Islands, then to New Zealand en route to seeing our daughter in Australia (she lives there). In New Zealand we rented a car and started driving on the wrong side of the road, roads getting more and more narrow, and minimal signage. We were looking for a small guesthouse on a sheep ranch in the middle of lambing season that had hiking and a cave network. We found it as the sun was setting; the owner was out fishing from some cliff and the hostess helped us settle in. Charming beyond description.

Early the next morning as we prepared to go hike to the caves, the owner told us to sit down and watch the TV, that our country was under attack. Date; September 11, 2001. 9-11. We were watching it with them in mild shock, they advised us we could stay with them for as long as we liked, that there is perhaps no more safe place for an American than their sheep ranch. We are friends to this day...

**Another time, another trek:** A few years ago, we were going overland from Costa Rica to Panama, and booked an eco-lodge in some part of the jungle, pulling our luggage (we travel with one small bag each and one backpack). We realized we had to leave our jitney bus and walk across an abandoned railroad trestle bridge to the other side, pass through immigration at this dirt stop,



get in another jitney that would drop us at some road junction. It starts to rain. We started to walk across the broken rail track (think Koko Crater trestle) and observed an 18-wheeler coming the other way. But wait, there is a pedestrian walkway! But wait, it is broken in several places. And we are pulling our luggage.

Anyway, we make it and we get on the bus and he drops us in the middle of God-Awful, and we see nothing. Walking up a dirt track, we hear someone call our names. In English no less. The proprietor, and the husband was out killing snakes or something. Another wonderful, "faith in mankind" kind of visit, learning how they were homeschooling their kids in the rainforest. We did not hike much there, but we enjoyed ourselves. Worth 20,000 steps at least...

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### **What do you BRING ALONG when you go on a hike?**

I am a one-pole hiker; I find it especially helpful when crossing streams. I usually bring lunch, not just a snack. I wear Lowa boots, high tops, that are very comfortable and have good ankle support; they are good on the rooty trails and for rock hopping. I carry a walkie talkie and keep it on, all day. I have a cellphone but often there is no coverage on the hike.

I carry at least 2 liters of water for a hike, in a bladder in my day pack. And a cold beer at the end.

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### **What do you think is the key to staying FIT and ACTIVE as you age?**

**We all age, and the inclination is to slow down. Resist that.** Stay safe but try to achieve and not simply try. I still hike twice a week for about 4 hours each time. I also play tennis. It keeps the mind nimble and sharp, and keeps me humble!

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### **Is there anything else you would like to SHARE with the members?**

My membership with the club goes back about 20 years. Social involvement is a key to membership, not simply hiking hard and going home - that is my approach.



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## About Brian Fagan



I was born in Warren, Ohio, one of 7 children and grew up in northern Ohio. I went to college at Marquette university in Milwaukee, Wisconsin for Engineering on a NROTC scholarship. I took the Marine Corps option and was commissioned a brown bar 2nd Lt. Married my college sweetheart in December 1963 (yes, we've been married 58+ years!!! ?) I was assigned to the Infantry (of course) and kept hiking. I had a career in the Marines with a second tour at K-Bay from 1982-85, and retired in 1990 in California. We had four children, all loved the outdoors. We usually hike when we get together for a visit or a reunion.