

A Promise Kept

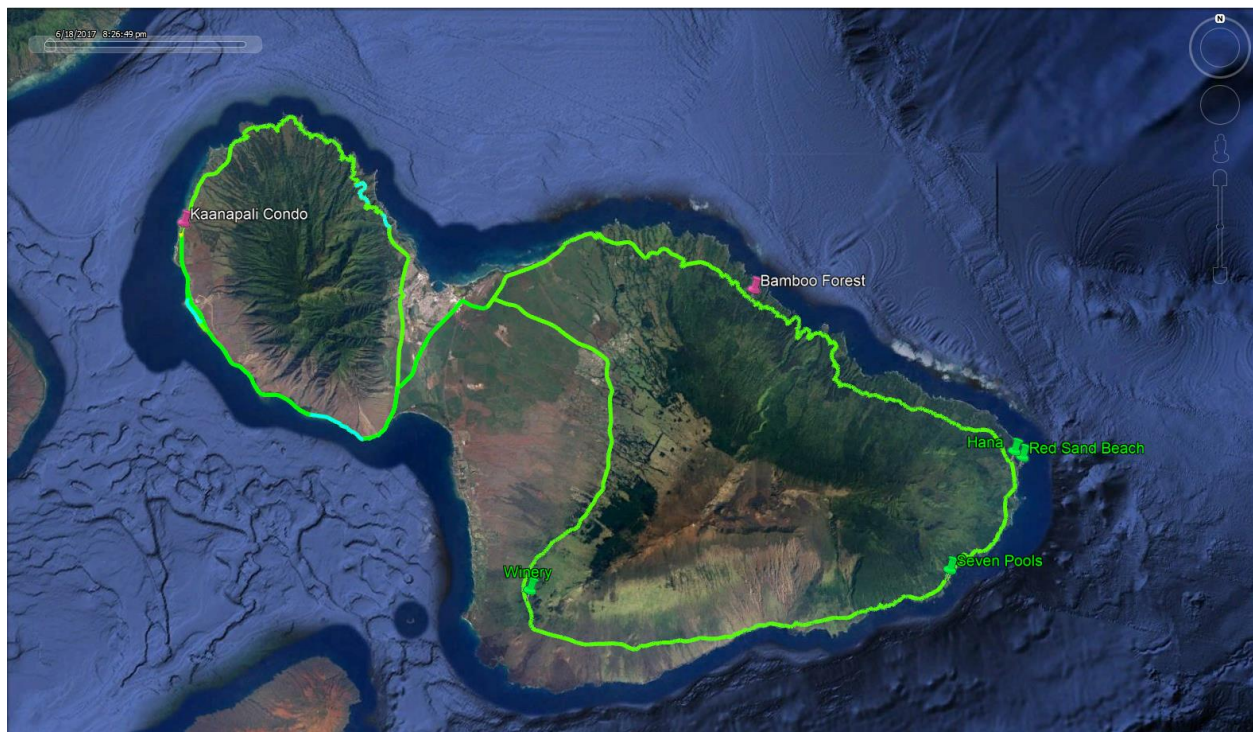
By Peter J. Neild w/ Mike Smith

It is my hope that some will read this. With the full knowledge that most won't, I will make this a video as well. But for now read on, you're here. The story I will tell has dozens of tangents leading off in many different directions, but it all comes back to my desire to illustrate and document a trip that is an adventure on a tropical isle in the mid pacific. A location packed with the raw power of the volcanic action that created this paradise.

Coupled together in the story are moments; Eureka moments, that changed two guys lives, and those moments form concentric circles of two lives forever inter-twined together with the commonality of instants of time.

Mike Smith and I have traveled together many times over the last two decades to the island of Maui. These trips afforded by mutual friendships and our own self initiative; especially the most recent, have made possible some amazing adventures, and yes two with consequences.

Shown below is the route of several circumnavigations, the first by a tour guide, a couple by car and several on Harley Davidson motorcycles, the last one, in Mike's case on an exact match of his own bike. On each occasion our knowledge and appreciation of the ride grew, and initially guided by our desire to ride. Never were maps used, just the feel of the road and the sites to see and experience planted by a wonderful tour guide that showed us the way a very long time ago. To this day when in conversation with other "bikers", I will encourage them to take the "Ride of a Lifetime". A ride that lets them enjoy seven different climate zones in one day's ride. Yes, Maui is less than 100 miles around, but I promise you that is will be a one DAY trip of countless adventures and inspiration.

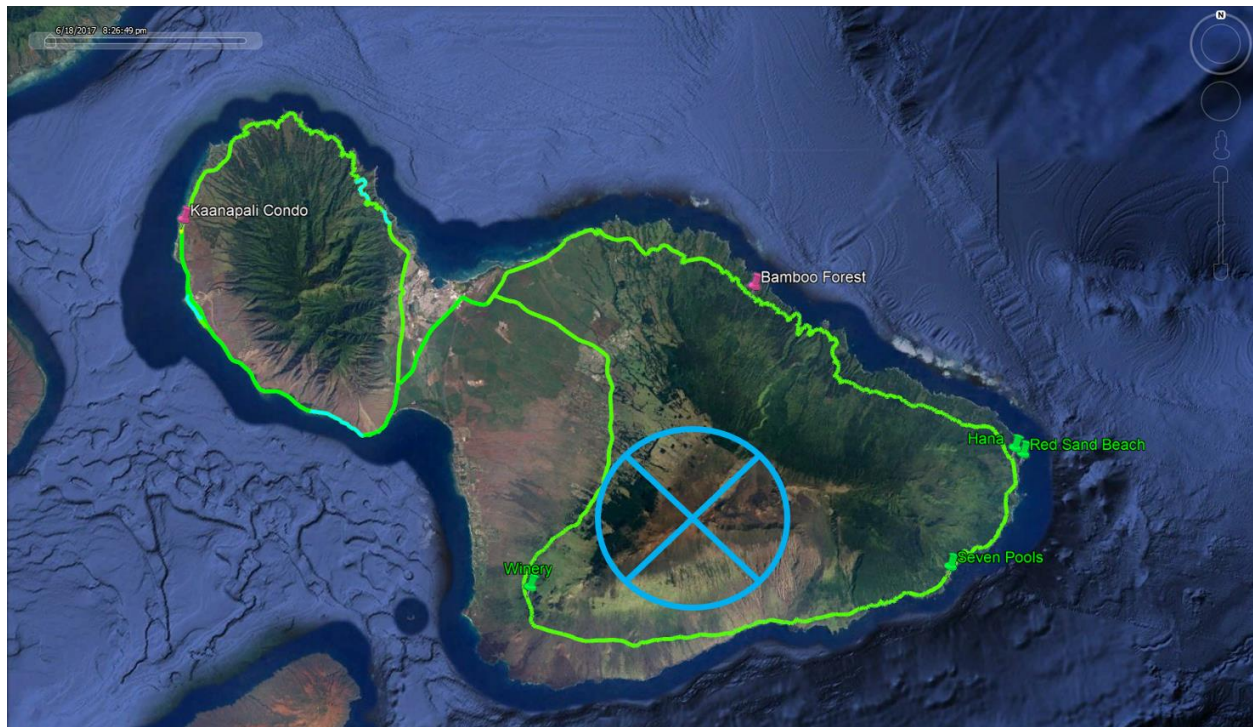


While many times we have been “around” the island, trips across the island were the “must do” rides only, meaning getting back and forth to the airport, and major stores only. With the dozens and dozens of things to do “around” the island, those things in the interior just didn’t measure up somehow. But there came a point where the ever-present mountain peaks started to work their way into the agenda. Particularly Haleakala, because of its height and the crater. On the other hand, Pu’u Kukui’s peak was formed by a volcano whose caldera eroded into what is now the I’ao Valley. It did this because Pu’u Kukui is one of the wettest spots on Earth and the third wettest in the state after Big Bog, Maui and Mount Wai’ale’ale, receiving an average of 386.5 inches (9,820 mm) of rain a year. With the I’ao Valley [being easy to get to Mike and I took](#) that as just a side trip; the Haleakala trip was much more of a challenge so in June of 2017 the trip was planned.

Haleakala also has a mystical story behind it with a connection to the summer solstice, which skyrocketed the trip even more in my thinking. Haleakala means **"house of the sun"** in Hawaiian, and legend goes that the demigod Maui lassooed the sun from its journey across the sky as he stood on the volcano's summit, slowing its descent to make the day last longer. Major dividends when on vacation.

It seemed to me that if this were true, then going to the top of Haleakala on the summer solstice was the thing to do. The trip to Maui that year encompassed June 21st the Solstice, and it would be very poetic for us to make that trip focused on Solar Noon – the middle of the longest day, in the middle of our trip, aligned well with the demigod Maui’s desires.

With the target established as shown below in the cross hairs. There were issues to deal with; Haleakala is a very popular tourist location, additionally the height of 10,000 ft makes it a very desirable location for bike riders, and the tourist companies thrive on it. On the technical side, questions of the double backs, tourist sites, and weather all came into play. The target, and its approach, and the distractions were analyzed for a good deal of time. The bicyclists were easily accounted for, as were the tourists, it turns out both groups tackled their desires in the very early morning and would not conflict with Solar Noon. So planning for the “double-backs” and the weather began.



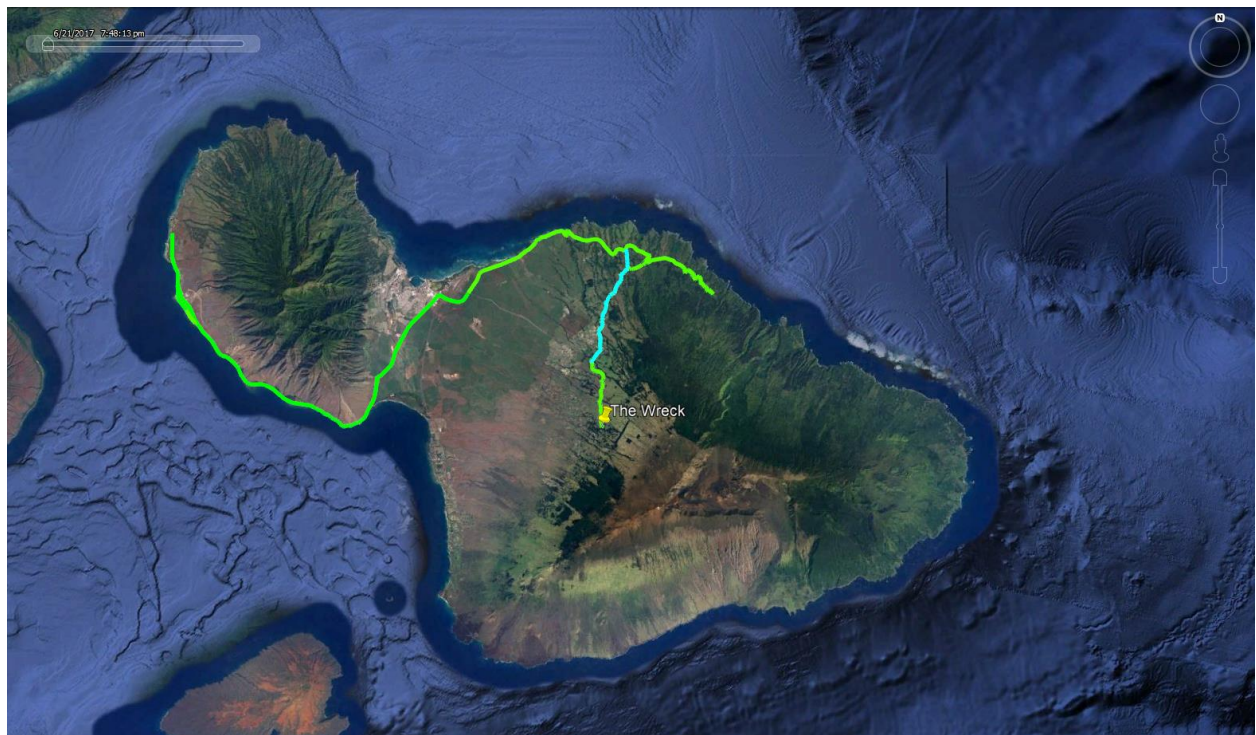
The most difficult aspect of making this trip we learned from the trips to Hana through the tropical forests – Maui's roads in the wet are NOT GOOD. So we had to work around the rain and cloud cover. Our trip had to allow for the possibility of rain and that us two 67 year-olds could still handle driving bikes on "double backs" – so we practiced and scoped it out. On the 20th We went to the West end's North side and tackled the tightest double-backs we could. We mastered them in short order. Then on the way back to the condo for the day; Mike led to the ride up the I'ao Valley as a practice run. It was awe inspiring, and many return trips have been made.

Then in the morning of the 21st we went to the Bamboo Forest to scope out the rain for the ascent. It looked good – the target was established.



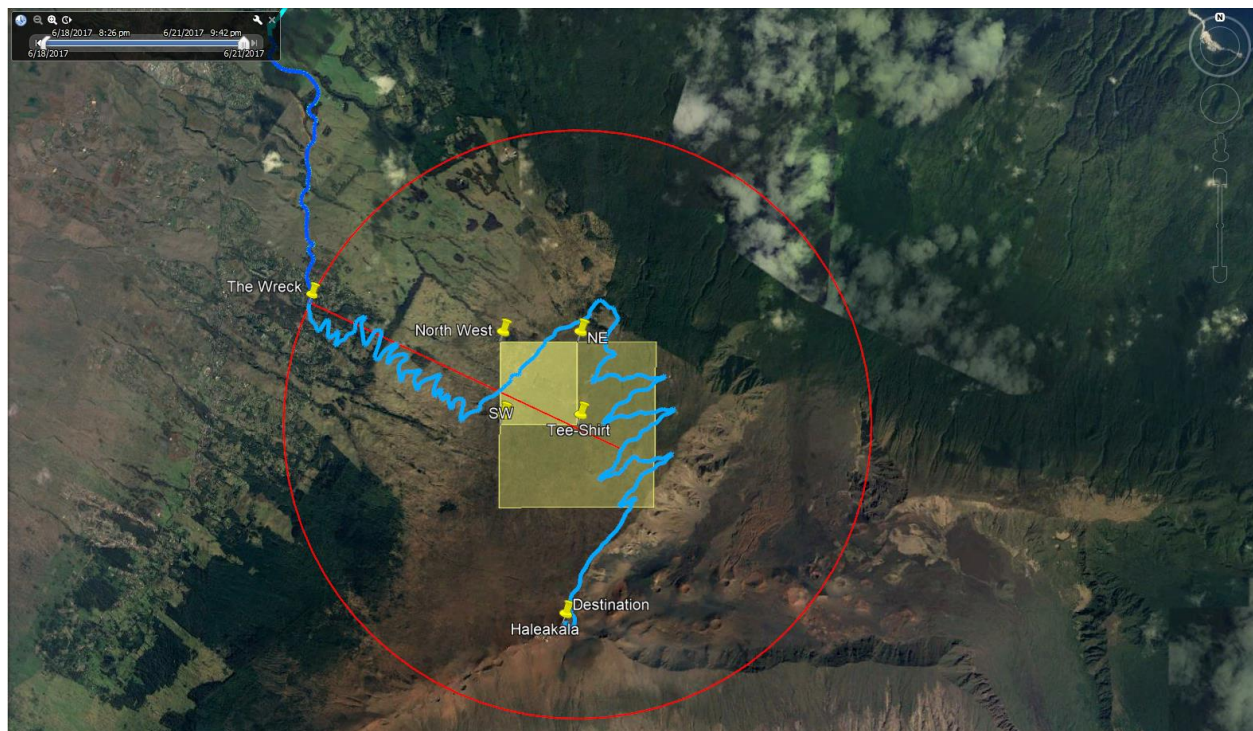
We back tracked from the Bamboo Forest and made the turn for the back way up to the Haleakala grade. And along that road "The Wreck" happened. You can learn more about that end of the 2017 trip by listening to the John Riley Project Podcast "[Near Death Experience](#)".

(I apologize for screwing up MY audio – but Mike's part is more important.)



As you would have heard the “Wreck” created a huge healing process for Mike. They not only saved his leg, but he had 3 occasions in the first few weeks when his life was at stake. This led to a huge healing process that went on and goes on month after month. The ever-present issues with his leg and feet following that 1/3rd of a second Eureka Moment will continue for a very long time.

For me, I kept feeling powerless to assist and yes, some guilt was manifesting. Two years later a moment came while waiting for the “shoppers” to come out of the store in Lahaina that they were checking out. I was out front when I saw it. [A Tee-shirt](#) with maps of all the major roads on it. I felt it was very cool looking, as it did not draw attention to the road to Hana as many do. This one was just Maui and its roads. I went in and checked for one in my size. I found one and bought it. Later that evening I was admiring it further, and that is when I noticed the LATITUDE and LONGITUDE numbers below the picture. They showed a specific spot, supposedly ON Maui. So I started to dig into it.



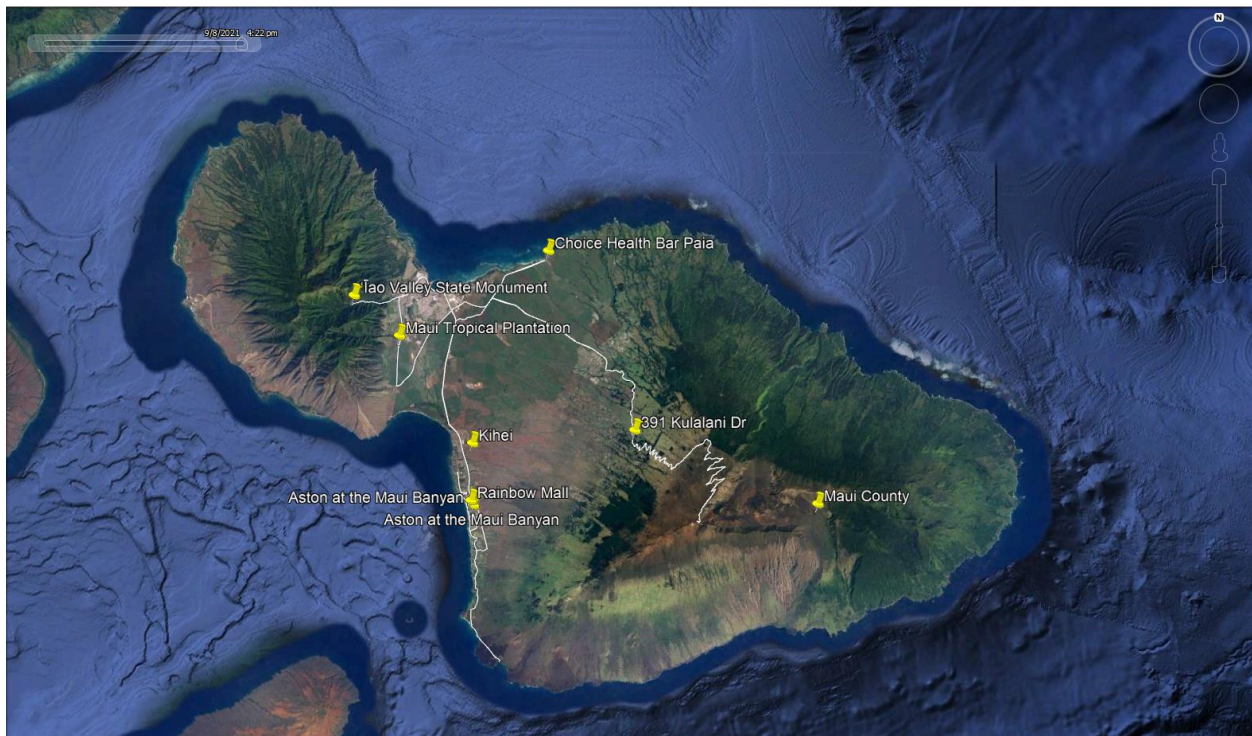
The two numbers had no accuracy what-so-ever, degrees and minutes only, no precision. No seconds nor fractions there-of. BUT even without the accuracy the set of numbers gave a location! The question was “where was it?”. Google maps quickly placed it for me at a point south east of where the wreck took place. The yellow boxes above provide the “range” of any additional accuracy would provide, plus or minus. All that could be said was that it was between the wreck and our destination that day. Taking the distance from the wreck to the location as a radius, that distance provides a “circle” that fully encompasses not only the destination – but the road in between.

I went and bought a second shirt for Mike – we have identical shirts with our future destination laid out for us by a happen chance Tee-shirt in a store in Lahaina. I made Mike the PROMISE. We would DO IT – not on motorcycles but in a NEW Corvette!!! For two years, we planned. From the Tee-shirt trip in 2019, the trip that Mike did NOT make, through COVID, to the trip of 2021.

So here we are on Maui in September of 2021, the first week encompassing Mike's 71st birthday (yes, he finally caught up with my April founded 71st). I obtained a 2020 C8 Corvette Z51 a more current version of what Calypso is to me. The perfect car to bring our 2017 trip to closure.



AND WE RODE.



THE FIRST THREE VIDEOS

THE PROMISE is the first video made regarding the Haleakala ascent. We started early in the AM before sun-rise timing our arrival at the entrance to the state park at 7AM to avoid the need for reservations. This also allowed for a stop at the scene of the wreck. Click it!



THE TRIP UP ended with the goal achieved. We parked in a handicapped spot a benefit of Mike's lasting trials and tribulation coming from that instant in time just short of mid-day on the 2017 Solstice. The 10,000 foot goal a short walk away. Click on either picture for the video of the ride up.



The background music has been selected for the steps Mike has traversed over the last four years: "The Silence" representing the period of time that Mike was placed into a state of unconsciousness to keep him stable during the initial healing. "The Monsters" presenting the drug induced dreams of the return to consciousness. "Broken Sleep" was the long period of time where consciousness and sleep were unregulated intervals of time passage. "The Winter" being the long 2 year rehabilitation to allow the completion of the trip to the top.

REDEMPTION is the ride down with the goal of reaching the peak of Haleakala now behind us. The trip was complete. Time to return to the remainder of our lives, with a trip down through the clouds.

