

*Oral History Program*

*Barney Christy*

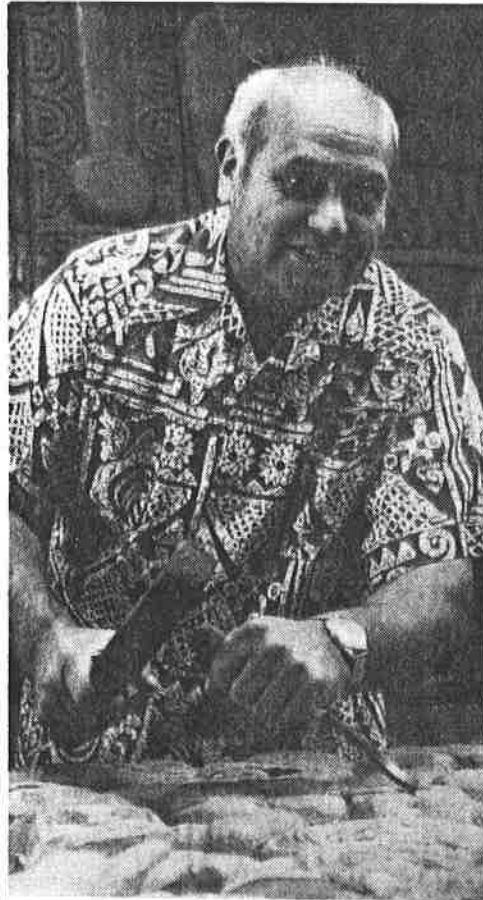


*Polynesian Cultural Center*

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# NEWS

## Center Carver In the News



**Barney Christy**

Center carver Barney Christy is earning a world-wide reputation as woodcarvers from all over the mainland as well as other countries seek him out during their visit to PCC.

The June issue of *Chip Chats*, a magazine produced by the National Wood Carvers Association, featured Barney, and its producers are excited about his work.

"Uncle Barney" smiles as he explains that the group is very interested in his work because it represents Polynesian tradition. They would like to involve him more in their goal of spreading information about the art of wood carving across the nation.

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EPANAIA WHAANGA (BARNEY) CHRISTY

INTERVIEWER: KALILI HUNT  
INTERVIEWEE: BARNEY CHRISTY  
JUNE 18, 1982  
NO. 014

INT: I'm here with Barney Christy to discuss the questionnaire of the history of the Center. I'll just ask Barney some questions pertaining to that history. Brother Christy, during what period of time and in what capacity or capacities were you involved with the Polynesian Cultural Center?

BC: Well, let me take you right back to around 1947. I think probably this is the time when I was getting prepared for the Polynesian Cultural Center. My name is Epanaia Whaanga Christy. I am a Maori from New Zealand. I was born to Sidney Whaanga Christy and Kathleen Welsh on the 16th of October 1921 in a small but historical village called Nuhaka in Hawkes Bay, New Zealand. I come from a large family of fourteen. My great-grandfather, Hirini Whaanga, and my great-grandmother, Mere, were among the first Maoris from our tribe, Ngati Kahungunu, to join the Mormon Church. Hirini was the great paramount chief or "ariki" of the tribe, and he and my great-grandmother left New Zealand about 1890 to go to the Salt Lake Temple to take their endowments. He took all the genealogy of the Ngati Kahungunu tribe and did all their temple work for them.

My dad, Sidney, was nine years of age when he was taken to America. He grew up in that great land and was educated at the University of Utah. When he was still alive in his later years, he was still rated the eleventh best in the world for American basketball. Many of his friends from America came to New Zealand to visit with him, and they would start singing their college songs right from the gate 'til they got to the inside of the house. He and my mother married in the Salt Lake Temple, which makes my brothers and sisters the first known Maori covenant children in the Church.

My great-grandfather died and was buried in the Salt Lake City cemetery. My family moved back to New Zealand towards the end of 1918 after the First World War. There was great-grandmother, Mere, Mom and Dad, and six children -- two boys and four sisters. There were another two boys who died in America. I was the second one of eight who was born in New Zealand, making a total of fourteen children. Great grandmother returned to America at the age of ninety-three. She wanted to be buried next to her husband, Hirini.

She died four years later at the age of ninety-seven.

I grew up in the Church and had a very happy upbringing. There was a lot of happiness and laughter in my family. With my father's education, he was an asset to the community. He worked a lot in land courts and was able to help many of his people in getting their lands back. In the year 1947, the Mission President, President Halverson, made me an Elder. It was about this time that the Church decided to build a very large carved house in my village in Nuhaka. This was like a thank-you to the people of Nuhaka and the Mahia district for their faith and fortitude in the past years. The annual Church conference was held in Nuhaka many times, and there was a period of time when it was held in Nuhaka for five years in succession. However, there were complications. There were no carvers in the Church. The Church selected eight young men to work and learn under two master carvers, Pine and John Taiapa, who were two brothers. I was one of the eight. Also, there was my brother Benjamin, who was a Major in the Maori Battalion, and my brother Angus, who was a returned missionary. There was Taka Panere, Dempsey Greening, Anaru Kohu, Oliphant McKay, and Riki Smith. These were the boys who were selected from our district that learned to carve under these two great Master carvers.

We were apprentices working for a wage. We were told that sometime at a later date we would be asked to do some work for the Church. It came about fourteen years later in the form of a labor mission in Temple View, Hamilton.

We were to do some carvings for a Polynesian Cultural Center to be built in Laie, Hawaii. This was exciting! I had recently been made Bishop of the Nuhaka Ward. I was left alone for about six months. The carving wasn't going fast enough. One evening while my family and I sat around the living room fire, there was a knock on the door. I was surprised to see Brother Les Hawthorne, who was head of the Church building program in New Zealand under President Mendenhall. He had with him John Elkington and Brother Goodwin. I was asked to come on a Labor Mission to help do the carvings for Hawaii. I told them I was preparing to go to Salt Lake City to General Conference. However, I made my decision and told them I would go where the Church needed me most. I realized that the Church helped me to get the talent that I do have now. My family and I would go to Temple View.

A big truck was sent to pick up my belongings and soon we found ourselves in Temple View and working with the other carvers. Out of the class of eight in 1947, four turned up on a Labor Mission in Temple View--myself, Anaru Kohu, Taka Panere and Oliphant McKay. We taught another boy. His name was Taka Walker. The other one was the Master Carver that taught us in 1947, John Taiapa.

It was a great task. The lumber--totara is the name of the lumber--was donated by a Church member. His name was Taite Davis from

North Auckland. Some of these logs were massive and looked impossible to carve. Every day was started with a prayer and a hymn. We were required to put in an eight hour day. Many times we worked ten to twelve hours a day. Sometimes of an evening I would look up at the workshop from my lodgings and see the shop lights on. I would walk up to the workshop to find someone carving. Then I would start. And before long, the whole crew would be working. This happened very frequently, and this was how we were able to complete the tremendous task. We not only finished what originally was expected of us, but we also did carvings for another building, the Chief's house.

We also worked on a war canoe. This canoe was being built for King George's visit to New Zealand. But before the canoe was completed, the King died. The unfinished canoe was left in the forest and it was covered with tree branches. Thirty years later we acquired it with the idea of completing it and sending it as a display piece to the Maori village in the Polynesian Cultural Center. One problem was that no one knew how to work on a canoe. We got the help of an old retired carver by the name of Bill Whautapu, who had a very bad heart condition. However, he said he would come and supervise the work and show us what to do. I remember doubting his capabilities when he told us that the first thing we had to do was to fill it up with water. We were eager to take to it with mallet and chisel. As the water rose, this old master carver marked the high spots inside the canoe with a crayon, as he watched the contour of the water. He then told us to let the water out. When it was dry, he told us to get inside the canoe and edge out the high spots, which made the inside evenly balanced. I had no more doubts and found him to be a very learned man and a great master carver or a tohunga.

When the carvings were completed, we put them through the Church treatment plant at Temple View to help preserve the carvings against the Hawaiian climatic conditions. About this time my wife, Marjorie, had an operation for cancer. The Stake President, President Wiser, called a Stake fast, and the Stake family gathered into the Stake house at six o'clock in the morning and opened the fast. The Stake house was filled to capacity. The operation was going to be performed without cutting her open. At the scheduled time, the Doctors changed their program and decided to cut her open. Just as well, for one of her ovaries was affected and would have been left in had she not been cut open. The operation was a great success, and she recovered very quickly and was riding a bicycle soon after. Had she not had the operation, the Dr. told me later that she may have lived for about ten years or less. However, it is now twenty-one years later.

In 1972, I was asked by the Church to come to work in the Maori village in the Polynesian Cultural Center. My wife and I met with President Mendenhall in Brother John Elkington and Sister Wai Elkington's house, and were interviewed by President Mendenhall and

later by the Stake President, President Douglas Martin of the Hamilton Stake. I was then Stake Executive Secretary. By April of 1973, we were on our way to Hawaii, bringing with us our youngest daughter, Marino, and two younger sons, Angus and Douglas.

Our status with immigration was H-1 Visa, and my status at the Polynesian Cultural Center was to be Master carver and Assistant Chief in the Maori village. President Mendenhall said to me in our interview to help in all areas as much as I can, to help the Center grow.

On our arrival, our house was not quite finished, so we were put up in the Laniloa Lodge for two weeks and meals were available at the Cultural Center for my family. I started working immediately. The Manager then was Brother Vern Hardisty. I was summoned to his office and he made me very welcome. He asked me if the Maori canoe, which was in bad repair, could be restored. I replied, "Yes." The canoe had two three-inch wide cracks running down the middle of the hull. Some of the carvings on the gun whale were rotted and needed replacing. Brother Hardisty said to me, "Maybe I should have asked if you would fix it." I replied, "No, I will not." Brother Hardisty's face went red and I thought, "Oh, oh, I'm going to be sent back to New Zealand." However, I said to him, "I'll make a bargain with you. Build a shelter over it and I will restore it." Brother Hardisty said to me, "Fair enough." In no time, the building was completed with the canoe installed in it. It took me two weeks to restore the canoe to its original state, and it looked beautiful once again.

I lectured and demonstrated carvings for two years in the Maori village. Marjorie worked as a demonstrator also in the Maori village, and she gave very good lectures. I was carving two Maori tail pieces for the Maori canoe to be used in the canoe pageant. It was going to take me four weeks to complete. I was asked by Tom Kershaw, who was the Chief of the Maori village, how long it would take me and I told him. He said to me to do it in two weeks. I thought he was joking, but found that he meant it. I told him to go jump in the lagoon. He did not know what he was talking about. I was taken before the Manager, Brother Newell, and Brother Kershaw proceeded to tell him what had happened. The Manager asked me if this was true and I said, "Yes, and if you had told me the same thing, I would have told you to jump in the lagoon also." Brother Newell said to me that I probably had the right to tell him so and proceeded to tell me that he respected my knowledge and judgement as to how long it would take to finish the carvings. This was a blow to Brother Tom Kershaw, but I turned to him and put my hand out to him and told him that I still respected him as my Chief and would try my best to complete the canoe tail pieces in two weeks, knowing it to be impossible. However, this broke the barrier, and we worked well together.

Marj and I wrote a thank-you letter to President Mendenhall for the

opportunity of coming to the Polynesian Cultural Center--that we had a wonderful time and experience and at the end of the two years were happy to go back to New Zealand. President Mendenhall received a letter from Tom Kershaw before mine stating that I was a trouble-maker and did not listen to or cooperate with management. President Mendenhall did not take kindly to this information and showed me his disapproval on his next visit, but I did not know what was wrong. When he returned to New Zealand my letter was waiting for him which seemed to contradict Tom's letter. He showed both of these letters to Tom Edmonds, and Tom held my letter and stated, "This sounds more like the man I know."

We had partly packed some of our bags in preparation to go back to New Zealand when President Mendenhall came back to Hawaii and asked me if I would stay back and do some carvings for the very large orientation building and also the new main entrance to the Polynesian Cultural Center. I happily said, "Yes."

INT: Barney, what year was this now?

BC: This would be at the end of 1975. I happily said, "Yes." He then proceeded to tell me that I would also be doing the carvings of the islands represented in the PCC. I swallowed and thought, "Well, the Maori carvings were more intricate, so I should not have any problems doing the other cultural carvings." John Elkington was made my supervisor for this job, and a crew was formed. I had to teach the boys as I went along. The crew was Inoke Langi, Iona Teripaia, Angus Christy and Clayton Au. I did some research at the Brigham Young University-Hawaii and also at the Bishop Museum. The lumber used was Philippine mahogany and it was obtained from Tacoma, Washington. President Cravens and the members of the Board of Directors were very impressed with our work and we continued until we completed the project.

President Cravens had not been in office very long, and while I was carving he came right out and asked me, "Do you have to go back to New Zealand?" I replied, "No." Then he said, "Well, why don't you stay on?" I replied, "Well, that's up to you." Then he said, "Why?" I replied again, "Well, because you're my boss." He then said, "Okay then, you stay." I smiled and said, "Well, it's not that easy. You have to make a recommendation to immigration to change my visa status from H-1 to Permanent Resident." Then he said, "Okay, we'll do that. How do we go about it?" I then replied, "Let Josephine Moeai handle it." And she did.

I am grateful to President Cravens for this recommendation in allowing me to carry on working in the Center and having my family here. I have always admired President Cravens' enthusiasm in promoting and uplifting the Polynesian Cultural Center, and I have found him to be a very loving man and one who recognizes people's problems and feelings.



When the Orientation building was completed, I moved to the old orientation building close to the Samoan Village. I have been there since. I was given my own budget and five workers learning under me.

Later, I started to teach students from Brigham Young University-Hawaii in that area. This came under the Fine Arts program at BYU-H. It was initiated through President Cravens who passed it on to Carl Fonoimoana, who helped me set it up. Brigham Young University has recently provided carving tools for the classes. I taught for some time without any remuneration. However, later President Andersen before leaving BYU-H suggested I be given something for my services. Before he went to Provo he ask me if he could purchase one of the sixteen-foot carvings in my area. I said to him that a man of his standing should be presented with one and that I would find out if it was possible. I asked Kalili Hunt, Cultural Presentation Manager, and he gave me the go ahead. President Andersen received his gift in the Maori Village in front of a large gathering, with the presence of President Cravens. President Andersen treasures the gift, which fits in his home from the base of the staircase to the ceiling of his house, with an inch to spare.

I am now preparing to move my carvers into the village areas. We are moving out of the old orientation building. Haunani Kaanaana is now our new Manager and she wants the carvers to move into the village areas. We are making the move, and I will be placed on her staff. I will still work with the carvers, going from village to village.

Both Marjorie and I and our family hope to carry on and continue as much as possible to work at the Cultural Center. I am grateful to the Lord for making it possible for us to be here. Marjorie has had three operations since she has been in Hawaii. We have always been a step ahead of the cancer. She is a tower of strength to me, and a woman of great faith and knowledge. I want to pay tribute to the Chiefs and all of those who fasted when my wife underwent her operation for cancer two years ago. Marjorie had it in her mind that she was not going to pull through. I came home from work and told her that the Chiefs had wanted to go on a fast for her and were praying for her well-being. Cleo Smith and I gave her a blessing, which gave her added faith and strength. She's still with me today. I love her dearly. She also said to me, "How can I lose faith when all the Chiefs want to fast and pray for me?" This really gave her the strength to fight for her life.

INT: Barney, I just want to ask a question pertaining to that early building of the house. How many actual carved pieces did you folks carve during that time? Now you were talking about it being started...When did you actually start?

BC: About 1960.

INT: 1960.

BC: That's when I was called on a mission.

INT: Okay. Then how many pieces did you start carving and when did you start shipping those pieces over?

BC: Actually, there's too many pieces to count. There were hundreds of pieces. And we worked with a blueprint, and all of the carvings had to just fit in. We had to work according to the measurements. Not only to the measurements, but also, the bevel, the bevel of the building. Everything had to fit in. We couldn't carve a piece of lumber and have it too long because, you know, when the carpenter goes to fit it in, he'll cut the carvings. He'll cut the top of the head off or cut the feet off. So everything had to be precise so that when it was fitted in there was no actual carving wasted. As for the shipping of the carvings, these were shipped all together at one time. All of the carvings, the canoe, and we shipped other things, too, like some weapons, some taiahas and whatever would be helpful to the Maori Village.

INT: This period of time, now, when you actually started the carving and the time you shipped it. How long was that time?

BC: It was about two and a half years.

INT: Two years. So you started in 1960 and had everything shipped over by 1962?

BC: No, we...I was called on a mission about 1960. The other carvers had already started before me, and then they weren't doing too well. The carving was very slow. So they wanted me to come there and help to boost the carvings. And I think I did. I remember the Master carver saying to me, "Thank goodness you're here". I think I was able to set a pace for the other carvers.

INT: So you started. Do you remember what month it would have been?

BC: Oh, I think it was about September, 1960. I think that when the truck came down and picked us up it was about September. I remember that the truck went ahead of us, and we went on the Waikaremoana Road. This road wasn't used very often. Many times you'd go through the forest, through the bush, and as we traveled, I came in my car with my family about a half an hour later. And we saw something on the road and I said to my wife, "Oh look, that's a vacuum cleaner." But when we picked it up, it was our vacuum cleaner. We went along further and we picked up a half a bag of potatoes, and it was ours. We picked up several things, and I said to Marj, "If this carries on we won't have room," because we had our family in the car too. However, this just gives you an

idea of how desolate the road was. Not many people used it. Otherwise, they would have picked those things up. Somebody would have picked them up. However, we arrived in Temple View with everything. We didn't lose anything.

INT: Barney, the pieces that you did, that you carved with some of the other carvers. Tell us about some of those pieces and its significant meaning as it is now in the village.

BC: Let me tell you what we call the "pou tahu" or two center pieces. As you enter the door to the large building, the center piece is to the right hand side of the door and there's another one opposite, down at the far end of the building. These are about the largest pieces of carving that we did. We actually took pictures of the actual carvings that were in the Dominion Museum in Wellington, New Zealand, and it was in the carved house that was re-erected in the museum. The name of this carved house was the Hau-ki-Turanga, which was carved under the master carver Raharuhi Rukupo, and he had eighteen carvers. These carvings are about the best carvings you will find anywhere in the world, and we wanted to duplicate these exactly. And we started, we started these two pieces. Oliphant McKay and I were on one carving, and Anaru Kohu and Taka Panere were on the other one. Oli started on the top end, and then I started at the bottom. These carvings were about ten to twelve inches thick. It was massive. And I would say, I guess, about thirty feet long, between twenty-five and thirty feet in length. There were four figures on this piece. But I ended up doing two full figures and the body of the third one. Oli McKay did one figure and the head of the other one. But that just gives you an idea of how much faster I was than the other carvers. And these were beautifully carved. And as for the carvings on the walls of the building, these were the carved uprights. We called them "Poupous". These represent ancestors. You know, the Maori carvings were depicted for historical purposes as well as for decorative purposes. The Maoris never ever worshipped their carvings. I will tell you this, when the missionaries came to the Pacific Basin, some of the island groups, like Hawaii here, were worshipping their carvings. So the Christian missionaries burnt their carvings, and when they came to New Zealand they started burning without asking, you see. They found later, to their dismay, that we didn't worship our carvings. They were there for historical purposes. And I'm going to tell you now how history is depicted on Maori carvings.

First of all, if I was the Master carver who was asked to do the job, I would sit down with the Chiefs of the village, with the elder people of the village, and listen to the ancestral stories to be depicted in the carvings. And then from there, I would glean this knowledge, and then I would make suggestions as to what symbols to put on them. And with their approval, I would go ahead and do it.

Just for example, I'm going to tell you the story of one of my own ancestors that's depicted in the large meeting house. This one has a crayfish between the legs. Now there is a purpose for the crayfish being there. I'm going to proceed to tell you the story. This ancestor's name was Hikairo. He was walking through the forest one day with two of his warriors. As they got to the edge of the forest, they saw a war party coming to attack his village. So he sent the two warriors to alert the village and to set up a trap on a certain path. He gave them time. When he thought everything was ready, he jumped out of hiding and he proceeded to antagonize the enemy. He poked his tongue out. He did a haka. He even bared his bare bottom at them and made insulting remarks. And they called out to him, "Oh, there's a nice fat juicy one for the pot, or for the imu." And of course Hikairo replied in a similar European saying, "Don't count your chickens before they're hatched." But in actual fact he said, "He manako te kaura e kore ai", which means when it is interpreted, "You have to catch your crayfish before you can taste it." Now this is the reason why the crayfish is depicted on the carvings.

However, to finish off the story, Hikairo was a short nuggety man, thick set, but he was the fastest running man in the tribe. He ran fast enough to draw away the very fast men of the war party, then he would turn around and slay one. This happened repeatedly until he had slain about six of these people. Then he led them right into the trap where his warriors were hiding in the fern. And when the trap was sprung, they killed many of the warriors and took the rest prisoners. So this is how history is depicted. Then again, the tribe may cover an estimated area of 700 square miles. There may be as many as two or three hundred villages to the tribe. But the man we're talking about, Hikairo, may be depicted in three or four villages. And each of these other villages would depict the history that was pertinent to that village. But when you went to collect your history of a particular ancestor, you would get different stories of his lifetime.

INT: And so this, because of these...what did you call that?

BC: The uprights or the poupous?

INT: No, the crayfish.

BC: The crayfish.

INT: ...became the symbol of Hikairo and that's how it's depicted in the carvings.

BC: That's right. The purpose would be, you see, un...Let me say that the history was verbal, was handed down verbally from father to son or from family to family. But when he pointed out the crayfish it would remind all that "This is Hikairo." If you saw the crayfish there, you would be reminded of Hikairo. Some

other tribe may use the same symbol, but see, they would have their own history.

INT: Barney, I wanted to ask a question on something you mentioned on a discussion earlier and that was the thought of leaving that history off the carving, because as you mentioned, President Mendenhall wanted these things to go earlier. Would you tell us the story of that please?

BC: Oh yes. Well, when we were about to start the carvings for the Polynesian Cultural Center, us being the carvers, we were excited and we wanted to depict the history of the different ancestors from all over New Zealand, and we put this to President Mendenhall and we were refused. I think the main purpose why he refused was because they were afraid it may cause a lot of complications, and a lot of jealousy with different tribes. You may select an ancestor from a certain tribe and it may cause a family dispute. Some other family might say, "We should have had so-and-so", you know, "And not so-and-so." So because of this reason, this is why many of the carvings do not have history. However, as carvers we thought, "Who's to know?" So we went ahead and did some of the history of some of the ancestors.

I've just related to you one of my ancestors, Hikairo. I have another ancestor there. His name is Teotane. He was a great man. He was a tall man. He was a giant. I remember in a story that was told me by my grandmother, he and his war party went to attack this village. And as they crossed the stream, many of the warriors, all of the warriors were tiptoeing to keep their noses out of the water. And as for Teotani, the water came to his bellybutton. So this gives you an idea of how tall this man was, you know. When the enemy saw this giant coming, they opened the doors of the fort and fled into the forest. They didn't want to take on a giant. However, Teotani used a taiaha as his weapon. And he never ever handled the taiaha unless he was using it. He had two slaves to carry his taiaha if they were on the march or wherever. He never handled it unless he was fighting with it. And when he was not fighting, he returned it to the slaves. So that is another ancestor depicted.

INT: Now, you mentioned there were some other ancestors. Give us just what you know of some other ancestors that are in the Maori carvings in the Polynesian Center.

BC: Oh, there are some there. We have another ancestor there. His name doesn't come to mind right now, but you have the story of Hinemoa as depicted in there, Hinemoa and Tutanekai. Tutanekai is there depicted playing his flute and this story is in there too.

INT: What is that story? Would you give us the story?

BC: Well, Tutanekai, was a commoner and Hinemoa was a Princess

of the Auroa tribe. And they fell in love. And, of course, Hinemoa's father didn't want his daughter to marry a commoner, so Tutanekai was exiled on this island on Lake Taupo. It's the island of Mokoia, Mokoia Island. And he was taken on that island and left there. At night he would play his flute and sometimes the wind would blow towards the land, to the shores where Hinemoa was and she would hear his flute and she'd just yearn and long to be with Tutanekai. Her father sent her to get some water in the calabashes. She longed so much to be with Tutanekai and she decided she was going to swim. So she got some calabashes. These were used as floats, and she swam to Mokoia Island. When she wanted to rest, she just rested on these floats, and then she swam. I forget how many miles it is to the Mokoia Islands, but it was a fair way. Anyway, she got there, and they were united and, of course, they made love. This is the story of Hinemoa and Tutanekai, how love, because of her great love, they were reunited.

INT: So all of these histories are depicted in the carvings?

BC: We also have the Tutanekai and Hinemoa story depicted on tukutuku, on tukutuku panels.

INT: Did you folks do the tukutuku in New Zealand or was that done here?

BC: The Tukutuku panels were done in New Zealand. Of course, my wife was on a labor mission too, and this is where she learned the skill. The....I'm trying to remember the expert on tukutuku, because she's a lady from the east coast. And she came...Oh, Roa was the name of the lady. And she taught two other ladies.

INT: Roa. What was her last name?

BC: I only know her by that name, Roa. And she is an expert in the tukutuku. I don't know if she's still alive today. If she is, she'd be fairly old. At that time she was the Maori expert.

I'm going to say this. One of the arts in the Maori village is not displayed. We have displayed in the Maori village the carvings. We also have displayed the tukutuku and also the kowhaiwhai. Now there is one art which is not displayed there which is the pukakaho. Pukakaho is the pampas--stalks from the pampas grass. Now these grow in abundance in New Zealand. And they would gather these pampas stalks and these were used as panels for the walls and the tukutuku art work was done on these panels. And it acted as a, let me say it kept the building cool on a hot day and on a cold day it kept the building warm. We do not have pukakaho in this building. So you will notice in the building it is very hot. We improvised and used dowelling, wooden dowelling. Now the reason why the pukakaho wasn't used was because of the agricultural restrictions that was made here in the United States. I think it's the same with any country. You cannot take any kind

of material, like plants and whatever, into another country. So this is why we didn't use the pukakaho.

INT: Although it would have kept those houses very cool on warm days.

BC: Also, we used to thatch the roofs of our buildings with a plant that is known here in America as the cattail. Now in New Zealand, the Maoris call it raupo, and it looks much like the sugar cane, but it's a more durable material than the sugar cane and much easier to work with.

INT: Barney, when you arrived here in 1973 was everything according to the plan as you folks had carved in New Zealand?

BC: I was very pleased with the way the carvings fitted. Now, I've seen many carved houses where the carvings were made. The carvers followed the blueprint, and then the carpenters decided to change the height of the building. Now this is drastic. There has to be a close communication with the carvers and the builders. If the builders change anything, they must let the carvers know because this is going to throw the carvings out. If the builders, for instance, decided to make the building six inches lower, you're going to lose six inches on your carvings, you see, and it's not going to look nice. But if you look in that carved house, the big carved house, everything was according to plan. Everything fitted so well. It was beautiful. And I feel happy.

I feel that the experience, past experiences, that we've had and many of the wrong things that we have done, have benefited us here in the Cultural Center. We had learned many things. We had made many mistakes in the past to the benefit of the Cultural Center because we were able to counteract those mistakes.

INT: But when the time came for the carved house, everything seemed to have been done perfectly.

BC: Oh, perfectly. I was so happy when I saw it, how it fitted in. We didn't have to cut the actual carvings to make it fit. You see, the thing was if a piece of carving, according to the blueprint was, say, twelve feet long, it had to fit in twelve feet. We had learned it was better to make the carvings a little shorter. But the relief, leave it as long as twelve feet or more. The carvings, make it six inches shorter. And you still have the relief piece there, which is the part that will fit in. And we learned that and it paid off.

But the other thing was the Chief's house. That was never completed and I was very disappointed. And to the Maori, to the old Maori people, when you don't complete a house, it's a bad omen. And I mentioned that to President Cravens. He said, "Well, we can't have that. What needs to be done?" I said, "Well, I need



some paua shells." Kalili, do you remember you helped me to go to New Zealand, and the trouble I had to get those shells. You can't just go to New Zealand and bring shells out. You have to get permission of the government to bring shells out. And the shells were used for the eyes of the carvings and the Chief's house was never done.

I'm happy to say now that we did all that we did. It's completed. But the third building had no carvings whatever. It had temporary painted carvings on there. They weren't actually carvings. They were painted kowhaiwhai. And right now, I am in the process of doing those carvings. But when I came here, one of the barge boards or facial boards was finished, and one was partly finished. So I completed that, and then had the two uprights in the front. We call those "amas." Now those are the only carvings that are on that building now. We need to finish it off.

INT: So besides all the materials of the carvings that were sent over from New Zealand, you will be actually doing some right here in Laie to complete that?

BC: Oh, very much so. As a matter of fact, we did not have a pataka when we came here. And since then, we have built the pataka. When we finished the carvings for the orientation building, we started to do the carvings. We started to build a pataka and do the carvings for it. We used the same crew. But, you know, in building a pataka, it's quite a task. And the theme on the building is "Food in abundance", okay? A pataka is a food storehouse. We used for the motif, for the theme, a whale. When a whale is stranded on the beach or when some of the whalers kill the whale, it provides a lot of food for the tribe, for the whale is very large. So we used this as a motif to depict food in abundance. And this is on there. Someone who doesn't understand the carvings and the culture will not see the whale on there. But when he's told by the master carver how the whale is depicted through the eyes of the craftsman, then he can proceed to tell it to the world -- tell it to the visitors that might come to the Center. I have been doing this. I have told the trainer in the Maori village. I have given them the information, and he's working on this now in the lecture.

INT: Just within what we have so far in the past nineteen years, you know, twentieth year upcoming, we have a great deal of history and tradition already established right here, you know, within the Center. And it's during this time of inception and on until today. Tell us, now that you're here -- you're here now in 1973 -- what were some of the projects that you need to work on? You mentioned that President Cravens wanted you to do the carvings for the restaurant and some of the new entrance areas. Tell us a little about that project.

BC: Oh yes. We did the carvings for the main entrance and these



were beautifully done. Of course, my crew was new. They didn't do too much. I had to do most of the drawing and the mapping out and deciding what designs. I remember one boy, Clayton Au. He was an art major student at the University, Brigham Young University. Very talented boy. He had drawn a Marquesas design on the arm of the figure. It was a Marquesas carving. And I said to him, "Oh, Clayton, that design is too small. It will not show." It looked very nice, but I could see it in my mind's eye as a carver that when it was cut, it would not look nice. And I went away. About half an hour later I came back. He had not listened to me. He went ahead and carved it, and he was looking very sick. I didn't say to him, "I told you so." I just said to him, "Well, get your big chisel and shave it off, and do it like I told you." So he re-did the whole thing, and that's how it is today. It looks beautiful.

So we did a Maori carving, a Marquesas carving, and a Tahitian carving in the front. Now this is something interesting, something that I learned. I was looking at a Samoan book, and it had a picture of a talking chief and he was standing with his staff and his fu'e. I said, "Good, I'm going to carve a talking chief." But the lumber that we had to work with and the space wasn't tall enough to be standing. So I planned and carved the talking chief sitting down with his fu'e and with his toto. Now this was interesting to me. I had already told many of the people of the villages, the old people, to come and help me to do the things of their culture. I was no expert at the carvings of the Samoan culture, of the Tahitian culture, or the Marquesas culture. I needed their help. As I said before, I made some studies and research work in the museum and at these other universities. However, one of the older Samoans came over and he says, "You know, Brother Christy. You never carve, you never have the talking chief sitting down holding his fu'e and his toto at the same time." I said, "Oh, well, thank you very much. How am I supposed to do it?" He said, "He can sit down with the fu'e, but not the toto." I said, "I thank you very much, brother." So I cut the toto out. And that was a learning moment for me. See, I don't profess to know all of the finer points of the other cultures, and I appreciate what was told to me. And many of the other elders came and helped me with their cultures. And I was able to do all the carvings for the orientation building.

INT: That was a big job too, huh?

BC: That was a massive undertaking. And the carvings were about sixteen feet and we did about fifty-six of those pillars. This was fascinating. As we went along, some of the uprights, we had three figures. And as I looked, I felt that these figures were too elongated. So I changed it. Some of them were to have four figures, and I made the figures shorter and more squat and they looked better.

INT: Now as you were beginning to diversify, you needed to get some of the other, for example, ethnic group carvers. Well, you had Iona doing most of the Tahitian carvings.

BC: Yes.

INT: And I'm sure you had Inoke doing some of the Tongan carvings, and Clayton doing the Hawaiian carvings and, of course - did you have any Samoans or Fijians?

BC: Yes, I had the now Samoan master carver. He was working in my crew too. This is Tumu Purcell. He was part of the crew. I left him out. He is a very learned carver and I have the greatest respect for Brother Purcell. I would call him a Master carver. And he has great knowledge of the carvings of Samoa. I have the highest esteem for him.

INT: And who did you have doing the Fijian carving at the time? Milek was on the crew at that time?

BC: That's right, that's another one. Meleke. I need to mention Meleke too. Meleke did most of the Fijian carvings.

INT: So you had one for every ethnic group?

BC: This is right, yes. And as I said before, I did most of the drawings, and I put crosses where I wanted them to dig out and how far to go, yes.

INT: Now at a later time, some of the carvings from the, that Orientation building had to be taken down.

BC: Yes, the status of the building was going to be changed. They were going to turn it into a restaurant, and it is now the Gateway Restaurant. Of course, they had the builders come in, and they had to take some of the carvings in because the floor had to be raised. It was a concrete floor and they raised it to a point where the carvings no longer fit. And I was asked if it was okay if they would cut the carvings. And I said, "No. It would look very amateurish if the carvings were cut." And I, to this day, had hoped that I would have been told to replace the carvings, to do other carvings for those places where there's no carvings. As I go past there today, I see the spaces that need carvings, and I hope someday that they would ask me to do that. Maybe I should make the recommendation.

INT: Yes, I think that would be better.

BC: Yes. There's one other thing I wanted to tell you. In the Samoan carving, the Tongan carving and the Fijian carving, they did not have too much in the books in the libraries. Now Samoa has a lot of history. They've got a lot of books, and they're in German.

I found this out. I don't know about these German people. They did not photograph enough, and I'm sure that the Samoans had some beautiful stuff way back. But they didn't put it in pictures. They didn't show it. It only showed maybe five or six different carvings in the books. And I had to go by these carvings, by these pictures. I know today that there are some carvings in Samoa, in the buildings, which I would very much like to see. One of the things I said to the Samoan carver and to the Fijian carver and to the Tongan carver, was, "Not many of your carvings have surface decorations, not like the Marquesses or the Maori that had a lot of surface decorations on their carvings. This makes their carving look more artistic. It's not that you were lacking designs. You have the designs. How do you feel if we introduce your designs onto your carving?" They got excited. I said, "Well, you could be the first one to introduce it on carvings." And yet, I have seen wooden clubs. They seem to have designs on their clubs. So what we did was to introduce a lot of the tapa designs onto the carvings of the Tongan and Samoan and Fijian. So this is where we got the designs from. It still belongs to that culture, and we didn't mix any of the carvings of the different ethnic groups. We didn't mix them. I wouldn't allow it. They had to keep the carvings of that culture.

INT: If it was Fijian, it was going to stay Fijian all the way?

BC: Just Fijian all the way. But I know years ago, some of the island groups who visited one another a lot, copied from one another. Like, for instance, Tahiti, they copied a lot of the Marquesses carvings. And I think the Samoan, Tongan and Fijian interchanged, too, ideas from time to time.

INT: Barney, I remember when President Rodgers and Brother Dayley were here visiting with us and we had a party over in the Maori village. You told a story of the carving.

BC: Yes.

INT: Is this the story here?

BC: That's the story there. There is another story of another ancestor. His name doesn't come to mind right now, but maybe while I'm telling you the story, his name will come. However, this carving has the lizard between the legs. Okay, why the lizard? Well, this ancestor, he married a lady from my tribe. And this man, he owned land as far as the eye can see. It doesn't matter which direction he looked, he owned it. And he had a lot of land. Okay, that was the great thing about this man. He owned a lot of land. He was a man of means. How do we depict land on carvings? After we talked about it and we discussed it with the master carver, and discussed it amongst ourselves, we came to the conclusion that we would use the tuatara. In actual fact, it's not a lizard. It's a tuatara. The tuatara was here before man came

to New Zealand. When I say tuatara was here, tuatara was in New Zealand before man came to New Zealand. So tuatara was of the land. This is why the tuatara was depicted on there, to portray land, which this ancestor had plenty of. It didn't matter which direction he looked, he had land. This is how our history is depicted.

INT: Okay, Barney. Let me get into some of these questions in the questionnaire now. Now you've seen the Center grow in the matter of time that you've been here. Are there any special feelings or insights that you have about the Center that you'd like to share? And by this, special stories of special experiences that you've...I know this is kind of an unfair question, because, for you, there are so many people that you meet. You've related one already of the chiefs holding a special fast, and I remember that day when Marj was going to be operated on and we had a special fast. Are there any other special, special stories with some special feelings that you would like to relate?

BC: Let me talk to you from the visitor's point of view, from the tourists as I meet them. I've learned a lot from the visitors, too. I love meeting people, especially people from all over the world. I've talked to all of them. There was one person in particular. He was what we call a "haole." I don't know his name, but he lived in Tahiti for a number of years, and he came into my area just for a brief moment. I've never forgotten it. And he said to me, "You know..." Excuse me. He told me that he was a linguist. He studied the languages. And he was especially studying the Polynesian language. And then he proceeded to tell me, "Do you know that the Polynesian language is Egyptian related?" I said, "Well, no I didn't." And he said to me, "Well, where are you from?" I said, "I'm from New Zealand." He said, "Well, the Maoris are the highest. They're eighty-six percent Egyptian-related, like their language is." And I felt kind of excited because we read a lot of books of different authors telling us where we came from. We have our own feelings where we come from. We kind of keep close to the Book of Mormon history, and it kind of coincides with part of our legends, part of our poetry, part of our songs. And then we have a man come here and says our language is Egyptian-related. That takes us right back to the beginning just about, doesn't it? And so, I felt good when he told me that. And I meet many people who, when they see what I'm doing, they feel so envious of the work that I do. And many times, I would be teaching a class from the University and people would line up and they'd get so excited. And, of course, the person that was giving the lectures would explain what we were doing in that area. Then we could explain what was going into the carving area. And then when they realized that we were teaching classes from the University, straightaway they could see the tie-in. When we tell the people that the money that is earned by the students helps them through their school, they think this is fantastic. They think this is just wonderful. And I have had many people wish that they

could come back and take my classes in the Center. They ask me, "Is the University or is the Polynesian Cultural Center only for Church members?" I say, "No! No! We have people from all over every part of the world." Then I point to a Spanish guide and say, "See that student there? She's Spanish. And this is why we're so able to take care of the visitors that come to the Center. There are very many different languages that come to the Center, and we're able to take care of the people because of the students that come from all over the world." And they're amazed. There's not too many situations like this in the world.

INT: Not too many.

BC: And many... I've talked to Indian people, American Indians. I've talked to people who have tears come down their faces when they see the designs that I'm doing and the carving I'm doing is so much like their carvings. And, of course, I tell them that we are cousins. And they feel good, you know. I say we trace our roots back to South America, and they're amazed and they feel great. I saw an amazing thing the other day. I'm also a member of the Woodcarver's Association and I renewed my subscription and I mentioned to them where I worked. I said, "I work in the Polynesian Cultural Center, and in looking at the magazine, much of my work is so different than what they're doing. I do Polynesian carvings." They ask me to send pictures of my work. I'm going to do that. I haven't done it yet, but they want to see my work. And I also made an invitation to all of the people that are in the woodcarvers association to come up and make themselves known. Just last week one of them came. He had seen my article in the magazine "The Chip Chat." He said, "I saw your article in the Chip Chat." I said, "Oh, I haven't seen it myself." It was the latest one. I had my magazine, but I hadn't seen it. I hadn't read it. So that night I went back, and sure enough, it was there. I had the opportunity to talk to a fellow carver from way across the world, you know.

And also, I wrote to the National Geographical Society, of which I subscribe to their magazine. I asked for information on voyaging canoes, on voyaging maps, and also, on implements that were used to make these canoes. I was interested in the great voyaging canoe. I'm not talking about these little canoes that we see today. These were the giants, the great big ones. They were more like ships. This is what I was interested in and this is what I wanted to promote, you know. I have received word from the Geographical Magazine and I have some references from them. So, these are just people that I talk to.

INT: Brother Christy, your Dad and President Matthew Cowley were the best of friends it seems. Tell me about this idea of Matthew Cowley perceiving a carved house in Laie, related more to the Temple than to a Polynesian Cultural Center. Could you tell us a little about that, please?

BC: Well, President Matthew Cowley was a frequent visitor to our house. He often mentioned to my dad, in my presence, of one of his greatest dreams. It wasn't just the Maori house he visualized. He had a vision of all the Polynesians coming into one place, you know. That was to have all of the Polynesian cultures gathered together in one place and to display them to all of the world. Instead of going from island to island, bring them all together. I suppose what he could visualize was a Cultural Center, or the peoples all together with their different cultures. You know, this is a reality today; having the Polynesian Cultural Center. I think he would have been a very happy man to have seen this, the Polynesian Cultural Center.

You know, President, we had quite a lot to do with President Cowley, and you know, he was a great orator and a speaker, and so was my father, Sidney Christy. They always congratulated one another after a conference meeting. One would say, "You were better" and the other would say the same thing. President Cowley would say, "I am a lawyer and an orator. It is my profession. I trained to be that way. As for you, Sid, yours came from the heart." I was privileged to hear that conversation. This was in a conference in the LDS hall in New Zealand and I was backstage. When the conference finished, they came out and shook hands with one another and they were congratulating one another because they did give real good talks.

Another incident was when President Matthew Cowley asked my dad, Sidney Christy, to do something. At the time, Matthew Cowley was Mission President and my dad was District President of the Mahia area. My dad replied, "No! That is not right. It's against Church government." President Cowley replied, "I'm a Mission President, and I am telling you to do this thing." He was quite angry. Dad still refused and he said, "I do not think that you have the right to tell me to do what you ask." I'm afraid I did not ever find out what the request was, however, they parted in anger. My dad never stayed angry for long. He had already put the incident out of his mind. At three o'clock in the morning, dad heard someone cry in a very low monotone outside his bedroom window. He got up from his bed, opened the window, and there was President Cowley with his head bent and crying out loud. As I've said, my dad had already forgotten the incident, and thinking that something dreadful had happened to Sister Cowley or their daughter, anxiously asked President Cowley, "What in heaven's name has happened?" President Cowley proceeded to ask my dad for forgiveness for asking him to do the impossible. My dad remembered and said to him "Matthew, go home and go to bed. I forgot the incident when I left you." They embraced and said goodnight. They were the best of friends. Now these are just some of the incidents that I remember.

During the annual conference in New Zealand, people came from all

over New Zealand to attend. As many as five or six thousand people would attend. We had a large dining room. At one sitting we could feed eighteen hundred people. There would be three or more sittings for dinner. People arrived Thursday afternoon and were directed to areas designated for each district. Large marquis were erected to house the people. There were areas also for hundreds of small tents. Hot shower rooms were erected and toilets were built. Around the back of the dining room, temporary kitchens were built and five or six families catered for one or two tables and provided all the food and everything else that was needed. A butcher shop would also be erected. A big steam engine was installed and much of the food was cooked by steam. The conference was held from Thursday afternoon till Monday afternoon. This was held over the Easter period. Today, we still have holidays from Easter Friday to Easter Monday.

As a young man of about twenty-two years, I was in charge of the Christy tables, two of them. President Matthew Cowley often came around to the back kitchens. At this time people were coming into the dining room for dinner. He said to me, "Come on you Maoris. I know you keep the best food at the back." It was always a privilege to sit him down to a meal in our kitchen. He loved to visit the workers at the back. One evening our family was sitting in the kitchen. The evening meal was over, the dishes washed and put away. It was the warmest place in the house with the coal range burning. There was a box of matches on the kitchen table. All was quiet. The box of matches exploded. Everyone got a fright. We all looked up and President Cowley was standing right there in the kitchen. He walked to the kitchen mantelpiece and picked up a pack of cards that shouldn't have been there, shouldn't have been in the house. He started to shuffle them like a card shark. He then pulled his hands apart, displaying a large rainbow with the cards, then bringing the pack together again. He did this several times. As young kids, we thought he was a genius. Of course, Dad got rid of the cards when President Cowley left.

INT: So, with this type of close friendship, it's your opinion that he was referring to a Polynesian Cultural Center and not a place where the Maori people could come and stay and attend the Temple, come back and entertain at night to get money to help them pay for their lodging while they were here.

BC: He may have thought that, too. He may have thought that. But I think what he wanted most of all was to have the Polynesian groups brought together someplace.

INT: The reason I say that is because, what year was the Maori Temple built? The New Zealand Temple?

BC: 1958. Oh, the New Zealand Temple? Well, around about the time I was doing the carvings, just before that, because, as I said, I was Bishop and I was instrumental in taking work crews from

my ward. I had a three ton truck that had a canopy at the back. I took as many as twenty or thirty people to Temple View to help with the concrete pour, for the big pour, you see. This was just before I came on a labor mission.

INT: So, this would have been about 1956-57, then? Because in 1960 you served your labor mission.

BC: Yes, and it was near completion. By that time the Temple was nearly completed. It wasn't quite complete, still had finishing work inside to do. Because I remember the inside getting plastered, and, of course, we have the experts in New Zealand who plastered, and they were just playing around with it. We had the experts from the mainland, from America, that came down and showed them how to do it. Man, it caused quite a friction with the experts in New Zealand, but they learned a lot from the building program in New Zealand. The people, the craftsmen in New Zealand, the builders, they learned a lot. They learned a lot from the building the Temple and building the David O. McKay building at the school and everything -- the whole Church building program. Many new ideas came to New Zealand because of that.

INT: Well, back to date now. You've seen the Center evolve from that point in time to this point. Are we living to the objectives and purposes that were originally set forth to us by President McKay, Matthew Cowley, and some of the early founders of this concept?

BC: Well, I think we are. Right now, I think we're the number one missionary tool, and I think this is great. I do not try to convert anybody. I do not try to tell them about the Gospel unless they ask me. But they are really amazed, and the first contact with the Church is right here in the Cultural Center. It gives our missionaries a great starting point, you might say. I had the greatest admiration for the workers that worked in the Polynesian Cultural Center right at the very beginning right up to now. And I think those of us who've been here for some time, our supervisors, should instill this in the new students that come here -- those workers have paved the way for them and some of them worked for nothing.

INT: Sacrifice.

BC: The sacrifices they made, and look at what we're getting today, the money we're getting today. We have a lot to thank these people for who started the Cultural Center and made it possible for them to go to school. Not so long ago we just had the graduation of some of our students at this school. This is marvelous. This is the whole program -- to upgrade the education of our people. And not only that. We are also learning about our cultures. Many of our children that come here have never had anything to do with their culture and they're learning a lot about it here. This is



great. And this is the thing that my father said to me, "My Son, 'Ma to Maoritanga koe ka mohiotia.'" In other words, "It's through being a Maori that you will be recognized throughout this world." And it's come true. If it wasn't for me learning the talent that I have now as a carver, I would be just Barney Christy and nobody would know me. I would be just a "plain Jane", you know. But in coming here, I didn't think too much of myself, you know, but the visitors that come to the Center elevate me to such a height that I think, "Oh boy, I'm not such a bad guy after all." But, you know, I don't stand up and tell the world that "I'm so and so." To me, I'm just a Church member trying to do his job. And I hope that I will be able to do this and be of use to the Polynesian Cultural Center for years to come. I love my work. I love the work I do. I love the people. I sustain the Managers, the people that I work with, and I always try to instill into the hearts of the workers that come into my area to go on a mission. I would say that most of the students that worked with me, the boys have gone on missions.

INT: So you've sent quite a few on missions?

BC: Yes, and I'm looking forward to some of them coming back and that we can infiltrate them back into the villages as carvers. Haunani wants to upgrade the carving in the villages and I'm going to do it. I give a hundred percent to what she's doing. It's kind of hard for me. Things are not easy. I don't have easy access to my tools. But I know that if it's needed, and if the Lord sees fit that the carvings should be done there, and that it should be upgraded, it will be done. It's not going to be done because we want it to be done. It will be done because it's needed.

INT: Okay, you mentioned earlier about recognition. I just wanted to mention, too, on this tape that you are a "Living Treasure", which is the highest form of award, prestigious award, that the Center offers to people who have excelled in their field. You've been one of those recognized for that. Barney, is there any other information that you would like to share at this time before we conclude?

BC: Just that I'd like to thank the Center for that, too. That gave me a very good feeling on the day that they honored the older people. Sister Fanene and many others were honored as Living Treasures. And we have many. We have so many. I am amazed at the amount of talent that we have here. There's all these old people. Let's hurry up and get them and make record of them. Lots of these people, you know. I even think of myself. Maybe I've got another ten years. But I like to give. I want to give of my knowledge to others so that they may carry on this work. I feel that the talent I have is not mine because the opportunity came through the Church. I would probably never have learned how to do carvings if I was not selected to be one of the carvers that the Church has selected. And I'm grateful to be giving of my time here at the Cultural

Center to do this work and to help teach others.

INT: Especially our young people. You mentioned that already. In teaching, because they come over. They don't know this. They don't have the skills, and we're the ones to teach them right here.

BC: I sincerely hope that some of these carvers that we've taught will stay with us and be able to carry on here at the Center so the world can see our work. I'm grateful that I taught Angus, my son, to carve. He is a very good carver. I'm teaching Douglas, too. He's my younger son. He has a long way to go. But this is good to get art major students, you know, to learn how to carve.

INT: Quickly, in summary wrap up: What is the outlook of the Center in your opinion? From your point of view, what is the future outlook of the Center?

BC: I think, myself, that the Center is going in the right direction. They're upgrading the Polynesian Cultural Center. The place never looked better. Today, it looks greener. And I can say, too, in your time, Kalili, when you were the Manager, you have done a lot in doing the grounds, in making them look greener. Water systems are being installed. The trees look better. The plants look better. I think this is great. People come here and they say to me, "What a relaxing place." And I say to them, "You want to come here at six o'clock in the morning when there's nobody here. It's beautiful! As the day goes on, by 2:30 when you get about three or four thousand people or more in here, it's different altogether. Everything is in high gear and we're trying to cater to all you people."

INT: Well, Barney, thank you very much for taking the time. It's probably the most worthwhile time we've spent together in getting some of the knowledge imparted for historical purposes and for future use. Thank you.

BC: I still have one more comment here to do. I would like, I KNOW that I want to write a book, especially one for carving, one that would be useful to upcoming carvers. That's been in my mind for a long time. Another thing, too, I have some personal histories of different ancestors which my sister wrote when she was on a labor mission. She was on a mission at the same time I was on a mission and she's written some stories that are in her handwriting. I have them and I want to put these into a book form.

INT: Thank you, Barney.

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