

TV star ends season by doing stage play

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'I'm not much for laying around on the beach. I want to skydive and I want to learn how to pilot a glider — all these things that are unique to Hawaii.'

— Alan Campbell

ON THE TV SHOW, he plays assistant P.A. (prosecuting attorney) Derek Mitchell, who works with the P.A., J.L. McCabe (the Fatman), played by William Conrad. Of his character, Mitchell, "He is very bright and book-learned," Campbell said.

This portrayal seems a far cry from another character, E.Z. Taylor, whom he previously played, in the TV sitcom "Three's a Crowd" starring John Ritter. Campbell calls E.Z. "a zanked-out surfer."

He was doing a play in Washington, D.C., when the director of Ritter's series asked him to audition for the part of E.Z. "They couldn't find anyone in California to play a surfer, which I think is kind of bizarre," Campbell said. He was enjoying the theater but, "TV loomed up as this great big carrot," with lots of money.

At the try-out in New York, "I decided I'd just do this big bizarre goof. I really didn't care." Meeting Ritter, "We hit it off immediately. We both have the same sense of humor."

"I read with John," he continued. "The chemistry worked so well be-



DAN DEAN/staff photographer

Backstage at the Birmingham Theatre, Campbell talks about his roles on CBS's "Jake and the Fatman" and ABC's "Three's a Crowd." He also played on NBC's daytime soap "Another World."

tween us, John said, "This is the guy!"

CAMPBELL PLAYED the kitchen helper to restaurant owner Jack Tripper (Ritter) during the show's first season. Although he enjoyed being E.Z., he

believes "like Henry Winkler and Fonzie, I would have been typecast if I'd played it longer."

Instead, with Bill Conrad and Joe Penny he did a double episode of "Matlock," which was planned as a potential spinoff. "They liked the way the characters came off," he

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said. It became "Jake and the Fatman," which filmed 22 episodes the first season. Last season, after the writers' strike, only 13 episodes were filmed. However, the series was moved to Hawaii, to give it extra impact.

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The actor is delighted to be working in Hawaii. "It's fabulous. It's just great," he said. His work schedule leaves him plenty of leisure time. "I play a lot of tennis and golf and spend a lot of time at the gym. I'm not much for laying around on the beach. I want to skydive and I want to learn how to pilot a glider — all these things that are unique to Hawaii."

IN "THE NERD," he stars as William Cubbert, an architect who is visited unexpectedly by the fellow sol-

dier who saved his life 10 years ago. "This nightmare visitor" is the Nerd, and William lacks the gumption to tell the guy to leave.

"I'm kind of the center around which the craziness revolves," he said. "It works on several levels" — one of these about people who can't commit to each other (William and his girlfriend).

"I am this character," Campbell said of William. "I have had trouble committing. I am a nice guy who goes past the point you should. Some people mistake kindness for weakness in me."

Campbell praised the efforts made by the Birmingham Theatre, for the actors coming to town. He spoke highly of everything from the theater's dressing rooms to housing facilities provided for the cast.

He also pointed out that the Birmingham Theatre is a treat for the public. "I hope people realize what a jewel they have here and hope they support it."

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