



Macfarlane Regatta is 4th of July Tradition

By Marilyn Kali

The 46th annual Walter J. Macfarlane Regatta, scheduled for the 4th of July at Waikiki Beach, has come a long way since the inaugural event in 1943.

From the original 13 events, the day's activities have grown to 31 races with nearly 1,000 paddlers from 15 canoe clubs, ranging in age from 10 year olds to 70 year olds.

The Macfarlane Regatta is the only wave race in the Oahu Hawaiian Canoe Racing schedule. It is also the only race in which clubs have the option of using fiberglass canoes instead of their prized koa canoes because of the danger posed by surfing the waves.

The Macfarlane Regatta commemorates the memory of Walter James Macfarlane, president of Outrigger Canoe Club, at the time of his death in 1943.

At the time of his death, the Club was planning the regular 4th of July outrigger canoe races, the big event in canoeing each year, and the suggestion was made by Henry DeGorog, then manager of OCC, that these races be dedicated to the memory of Walter "Mac" and be known in the future as the Walter J. Macfarlane Memorial Canoe Races. The idea was adopted and races have been held on the 4th of July each year since.

In commemoration of the life and activities of Walter, the Hawaiian Hotels division of Matson Navigation Company donated a magnificent trophy, a great silver bowl as perpetual trophy to be competed for by the Senior Men's Six Paddle crew.

The Macfarlane family continues to actively support this regatta. In 1972, Walter Mac's sister, Muriel Flanders, donated the beautiful koa wave trophy that is presented to the club that wins the regatta.

In 1980, Walter Mac's grand-nephew, Walter Guild, dedicated a handcrafted koa canoe trophy to his grandmother Muriel Flanders. This trophy is presented each year to the winning Boys 18 crew.

In 1984, Mrs. Flanders donated a

sterling silver bowl for the Senior Women and milo bowls for the Junior and Senior Masters Women winners.

The premiere event of the regatta has always been the Senior Men's race. In the early years of the race, the course was 4 1/2 miles and OCC dominated at this distance.

The first winning crew was Thad

**"Big waves can always
be counted on to add to
the thrill of the
Macfarlane Regatta..."**

Ekstrand, John Beaumont, Tom Arnott, Jim Fernie and Bob Bush and was steered by the legendary Duke Kahanamoku.

Over the years, the course has been shortened, most recently in 1969, to its present 2 1/2 miles. Outrigger has continued to dominate, with 10 wins, including last year, followed by Hui Nalu, with 5 and Waikiki Surf Club and Kailua, 2 each.

OCC holds the record for the distance at 15:08.9 set in 1981.

Bob Fischer, always popular with the ladies, steered Outrigger to victory in the 1943 girl's six race. Members of that crew were Greta Ross, Nita Hayes, Marcia Bowers, Anna Morris and Roselle Robinson.

The Macfarlane race allows open steering, where a club can elect to have an experienced wave steersman replace the crew's regular flatwater steersman.

Big waves can always be counted on to add to the thrill of the Macfarlane Regatta for spectators and participants alike. And a wave can often decide who wins and who doesn't.

There have also been a lot of "interesting" things happen in the races.

In 1950, two Outrigger crews raced each other when Hui Nalu and Waikiki Surf Club withdrew just prior to the starting of the event.

In 1954, there was high summer

surf and in the senior girls race, the winning canoe paddled by Waikiki Surf Club finished stern first. It had swamped about 100 yards off the finish line, and instead of giving up and bailing, the girls kept paddling with only the ama above water until they crossed the finish line.

In 1956, the races were postponed because of really high surf and held four days later when the ocean calmed down.

In 1969, the 4th of July was also First Break and at times the entire Waikiki Beach closed out. At least 30 canoes swamped during the day's races. For those that got out through the surf, caught a wave and stayed dry, there were some spectacular rides to shore. However, few did. The junior men caught the biggest wave of the day, an 8-footer, which wiped them out. "We were in the tube with no place to go," paddler Henry Ayau was quoted as saying.

In 1977, 12 canoes swamped or capsized, or both, in the heavy surf and two of the koa boats suffered structural damage as well. Bailing buckets replaced paddlers in several events.

In 1979, Waikiki Surf Club's 46-year-old koa canoe, Malia, lost its bow in a collision with another canoe. Miraculously, with temporary repairs, she finished the regatta. She was repaired and is still being used today.

In 1980, OHCRA decided to allow clubs the option of using koa or fiberglass canoes in the Macfarlane race. The newly repaired Malia was the only koa canoe in the regatta.

In 1981, the Malia was damaged again when another canoe rammed into her causing four 30-foot and three 20-foot cracks in her side.

In 1985, Fred Hemmings was steering the Boys 18 crew when he yelled at them to jump out of the boat just before they hit a big wave. The canoe, suddenly some 1,000 pounds lighter without its crew, eased over the wave. The boys scrambled back in and won the race. ☺