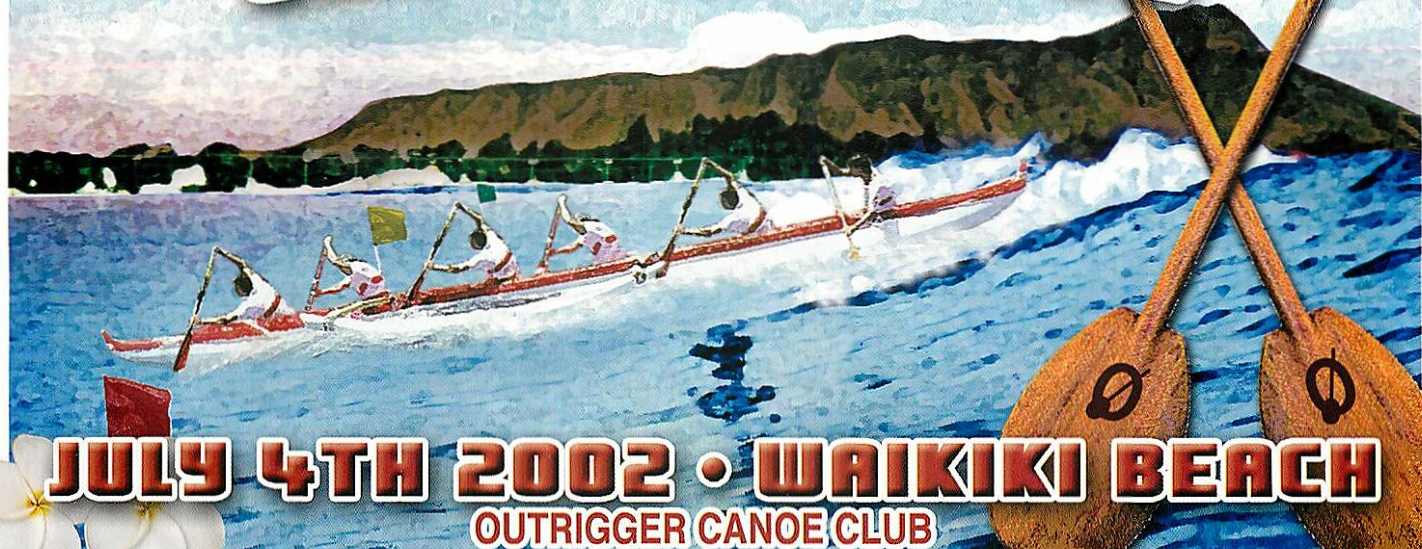


the Outrigger

JULY 2002

WALTER J. MACFARLANE CANOE REGATTA



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OUTRIGGER CANOE CLUB

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IF YOU'VE EVER PADDLED



The 1951 women in the Macfarlane Regatta were, from rear, Pam Anderson, Helen Haxton Bode, Pat Honl, Joan Cooper Kaaua, Doris Berg Nye, Anita Berg Whiting.

By Barbara Del Piano

...it's something you'll never forget! The fun, camaraderie, and most of all, the competition. And the color, too. The sky is always blue and the ocean a collage of countless shades of cobalt and aqua and green.... not to mention the reds and oranges and yellows of the beach towels, umbrellas, sailboats, bathing suits and, of course the canoes.

Back in the "old days" before the sky-scraping hotels blocked the view, the purple-green Koolau provided a magnificent backdrop to the whole kaleidoscopic scene.

Whether it was 50 years ago or just a couple, the thrill of paddling in a Macfarlane Regatta conjures up memories that last a lifetime. Doris Berg Nye and her husband Arnold grow coffee on their farm outside Kailua-Kona on Hawaii Island. Doris hasn't paddled a canoe in years, but get her started on the subject of outrigger canoeing, especially the Macfarlane, and her eyes light up and her face breaks into a broad grin.

Find someone to share those memories with, and off they go! Not long before his death, Tommy O'Brien visited the Nyes and they had a great time reminiscing. He encouraged Doris to write "memoirs" of those wonderful days and to send them back to the

Outrigger. When Tommy passed away, she felt it was a promise she had to keep.

Doris saw her first canoe race in 1946 when she watched the Macfarlane from the second floor dining room at the Old Club. She vowed to learn to paddle and make the team the following year. And she did! From '47 through '51 Doris and her sister, Anita Berg Whiting, were mainstays of the OCC wahine crew, along with Yvonne "Blondie" Boyd Erickson, Pat Honl, Rusty Thomas, Gaynor Lloyd, Helen Haxton Bode and Joan Cooper Kaaua.

When wahine were allowed to steer, Pam Anderson took that job over from such icons as Johnny Hollinger, Toots Minvielle, Charley Martin and Turkey Love. "There were only two teams in those days," Doris related, "Outrigger and Hui Nalu. Healanani was still into rowing and Waikiki Surf had not been organized yet."

Doris recalls the rigorous training they went through. "Condition and endurance were everything! Someone told me that the carbonated water in sodas was not good for endurance. That was it...out went the sodas and everything else that I thought might be a detriment."

Surfing was one way to keep in condition so the crew members could often be seen out riding the waves. Doris well remembers the heavy boards they used. "Anita surfed on a shaped, solid redwood plank while Helen, Pat and I used heavy "hollows"...mine was a very steady 90 pounder. If women surfers wanted to be treated with respect and to surf where the waves were larger, 'invading' the space where the guys surfed, they had to not only know how to surf, follow the unwritten rules (e.g. not sliding right when everyone on your right was sliding left), but they had to be able to carry their own boards down to and from the ocean. We refused to be considered a bunch of wimps so we always carried our boards," Doris says with a chuckle.

"Also, back then, Outrigger did not have one main coach for the women. A couple of days before a race, a group of officials from the Club would decide who stroked, who paddled in which seat, and what canoe they would use.

"For training, our crew checked on each other and made sure that each of us got down to the beach on time. Back then, koa canoes were the only kind used for both training and racing. (Neither fins on boards or fiberglass canoes had come into common usage.)

The canoes were carried down to the sea and back so that the bottoms would not be scratched or marred. We tried to get our favorite canoe, the *Kakina*, but most of the time we lost out to the senior men's crew who had first choice."

Doris wistfully recalls that "we were left with the *Leilani* or the *Hanakeoki*. That is, until we decided to get down to the Club very early before the men's team arrived. Our strategy worked sometimes but it was a problem to find a steersman at that hour so we were not always successful.

"Our training course," Doris continues, "was usually from the Outrigger down to the Ala Wai Club House and then up the Ala Wai Canal. Then we'd paddle back down the canal and home. We never used our three-pound racing paddles for practice until just two

IN A MACFARLANE....

or three days before a race. We always used the heavy, water-logged 'clunker, whiskered ones.' After training with those, the lightweight racing paddles nearly flew from our hands on the 'change.'"

One "sore" point in paddling in those days was discomfort caused by the chafing of the heavy cotton bathing suit straps which were tied both at the neck and back.

After paddling for awhile, the straps would need adjusting; but, said Doris, "Our teammates had a verbal agreement regarding stopping and adjusting the straps. Once was okay during training only. More than that was considered loafing. Of course we quickly learned to tie the bottom straps very loosely or to wear a tee shirt and let the straps drop unbound. Otherwise, we had to quietly endure the raw spots caused by the rubbing. For years, most of us had scars under our arms... 'chevrons' we called them!"

A special memory of Doris' is the time she and her crew were coming home from a long training session and were taking a breather on the Ewa side of Kuhio Beach. "The Hui Nalu men's junior team pulled up beside us and challenged us to a race back to the Club. We were hesitant at first, but after much good-natured taunting, we accepted the challenge. One of the Hui Nalu crew yelled 'one, two, three, GO!'

"Our paddles dug in and our canoe burst forward, all of us in sync with Anita's fast 'sewing machine' stroke. We gave it our all! At first, the canoes were neck and neck but gradually we pulled away until we led by a full boat length. When the race ended there was a profound hush from the Hui Nalu team as they slowly paddled back to shore.

"On the beach, their coach, John D. Kaupiko, was livid! He got his crew together under the hau tree and really read them the 'riot act.' They walked away humiliated. Needless to say, they never again asked us to race."

When the '47 paddling season rolled around, Doris' dream came true and she made the senior women's team. "That year, 'Blondie' was stroke" she related, "and we won both the Kamehameha Day races and the Macfarlane Regatta."

The next year, the senior women were again victorious on June 11 and were eagerly anticipating a repeat performance on the Fourth of July. The day before the races, the crew was informed that Outrigger would be entering two teams.

"Anita was the stroke in the *Kakina* and I was to stroke in the *Leilani*. At first, I was perturbed because I had trained in the number two seat and now my new second team had not even had time to train together. But, as it turned out, we didn't have to worry. Outrigger was the only club to enter and we had no competition."

The next couple of years were great for the Outrigger senior women, despite the added competition from the newly founded Waikiki Surf Club. "But," Doris recounted, "1951 is the year that really stands out. It was my last year of racing because I was transferring from UH to UCLA and Anita and Helen were going to Mills College in Oakland, California." It was also the first year that women were allowed to steer.

"As the Fourth of July approached, everyone practiced diligently and it became obvious that the Surf Club, with Wanda 'Sci' Holt as

stroke, was the team to beat. Our crew consisted of Anita as stroke, with me in the number two seat. Helen Haxton Bode paddled in seat number three, Pat Honl in number four, and Joan Cooper Kaaua in number five. Pam Anderson was steering. A second Outrigger crew which 'Blondie' Boyd Erickson would be steering, was also going to enter."

As Doris tells the heart-breaking story, "The day of the race finally arrived and much to our dismay, both Hui Nalu and Waikiki Surf vehemently protested the Outrigger's two entries, so one team was selected to represent the Club. Our team was the fortunate one but I felt badly for the other crew for they were good and had practiced really hard.

"The race course lanes extended from flags near the beach in front of the Moana out to flags past the surf; then back to a turn flag at the Diamond Head side of the Moana with a straight-away to finish in front of the Outrigger, just as they do today."

"We got ready and off went the gun! We dug in and started off with a great burst of speed. We led Waikiki Surf at the far flag by a good five lengths. We made a quick turn then headed back into the wind which was blowing in from the Koolau pretty strong that day, still well in the lead. It was then that we realized we had gone around the wrong flag. We turned around again and paddled back out to the farthest flag and made yet another turn...our third, with two of them hard, tight and into the wind. Our saliva had long since turned to 'white cotton' as we called it."

"By this time we were in third place with both Waikiki Surf and Hui Nalu ahead of us. But with our adrenaline up, our muscles straining and our backs practically breaking, we didn't miss a stroke. We were in top condition with lots of stamina, and we were determined to win."

"Within a short time we had gained back all of our lost distance. We passed Hui Nalu, and finally, Waikiki Surf. We thought for sure we were home free. Then an incredible thing happened; a speed boat approached carrying Duke Kahanamoku and a group of visitors who were shouting 'paddle harder, girls!'"

To this day, Doris shudders at the memory. "I had fleeting visions of an alternative use of my paddle," she said. "Then a large wave came up and Duke urged Pam to catch it; and, against our better judgement, we decided to go for it....and royally swamped."

Although the day was a bitter disappointment, when the awards were given out, Hui Nalu coach John D. Kaupiko, presented the Outrigger wahine with a special award...a beautiful monkeypod bowl, for, as he put it, an outstanding team! For years, the bowl was on display at the Old Club, and then at the "new" one before finally being relegated to storage.

The years since 1951 have come and gone and Doris has seen all of her five children actively engage in all kinds of water sports. Now her grand children are taking over. "Except for a very brief time a few years back," she says, with a bit of nostalgia in her voice, "I never did participate in canoe racing again. My racing days are over; like that monkeypod bowl, I've gone into storage...as far as paddling is concerned....but the memories will always remain."