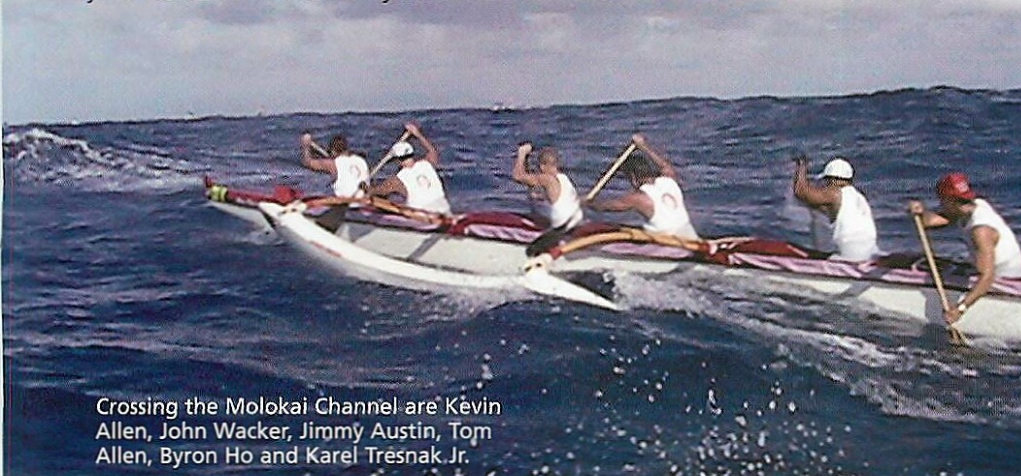


MOLOKAI *eludes* Outrigger Men

By Genie Kincaid. Photos by Diana Allen



Crossing the Molokai Channel are Kévin Allen, John Wacker, Jimmy Austin, Tom Allen, Byron Ho and Karel Tresnak Jr.



Nearing Waikiki and the finish line are OCC paddlers are Scott Hendricks, Byron Ho, Bret Chuckovich, Tim Twigg-Smith, Tom Allen and Karel Tresnak Jr.

Outrigger's men found themselves in fourth place after the end of the 2003 Molokai Ho'e, the international championships of six-man Hawaiian outrigger canoe racing. A very respectable result, but not the one the men were seeking.

So fast forward to 2004. The men were going to do things a little differently, and keep their hopes cautiously optimistic. Practices were changed to early morning work outs, which had a positive effect on the men's productivity. Of the five races Outrigger entered prior to the Molokai championship, the men finished second twice, and won the other three, including the Catalina and Henry long distance races.

Another ponderous change was the addition of Karel Tresnak Jr. to the ranks. At only 23 years old, Tresnak is a five-time Kanaka Ikaika solo Molokai one-man canoe champion (1999-2001, 2003-2004), and a three-time Molokai Ho'e champion, having previously won with Lanikai Canoe Club (2000) and Team Hawaii/New Zealand (2001 and 2003). His talent as a paddler and open ocean steersman is widely acclaimed, and for the Outrigger men's program an auspicious addition.

One thing that never changes, however, is the unpredictability of the Kaiwi Channel. It is considered one of the deepest, most challenging navigable channels in the world. For this reason, it is also the most compelling of ocean sports challenges.

On October 10, the channel was especially difficult with some five-foot swells, but mainly choppy conditions which made catching runners and surfing the swells perplexing for the steersmen.

Lanikai Canoe Club won the 53rd annual Molokai Ho'e in 4:54:05, the third fastest time in the history of the race (Lanikai owns all three of the fastest times). Two Tahitian crews, including Rai Tahiti, the 2002 champion, finished second and third.

Outrigger's first crew finished seventh overall in a time of 5:07:34., and made no excuses. As exhausted coach, Kala Judd had said, "No one made a mistake, no

one lost his composure. Today just wasn't our day."

They had been cautiously optimistic about their chances as the distance season progressed, but each man always maintained that the Molokai race was incomparable. Members of the first crew included: Kevin Allen, Tom Allen, Jimmy Austin, Bret Chuckovich, Scott Hendricks, Byron Ho, Karel Tresnak Jr., Tim Twigg-Smith and John Wacker.

Outrigger's second crew finished in a time of 5:30:32, 15th out of the 90 crews entered. No other second crew had beaten them to the finish, and they out-raced many solid first crews from other canoe clubs.

The crew paddled especially well in the fourth hour, when the physical and mental stresses of the race are particularly acute. They were virtually even with other local nemeses from Lanikai, Beach Boys, and Hui Nalu, but the crew of Jim Beaton, Kapono Brown, John Eveleth, Mike Kane, Ben Komer, Mike Nakano, Zak Payne, Evan Rhodes, Robi Solmssen pulled away and never looked back.

Although disappointed with their Molokai finish, the men could reflect on the many successes they had built upon all summer, and upon the many Club members, family and friends who helped them every step of the way.

The men of the canoe racing program recognize that all the moral, financial, and physical support of the Outrigger Canoe Club membership are the difference in their success. The men's program is especially grateful to Club President, Jaren Hancock, the entire Board of Directors, to Club Captain George Wessberg, and to Chair, Courtney Seto, and the Canoe Racing Committee for their unqualified support.

The men also recognize and appreciate the staff and employees of the Club who lent their support through the care and maintenance of the escort boats, the racing canoes, and racing equipment.

And last but not least, a sincere mahalo to the women's program and their coach, John Puakea, for all their help with race preparation and logistics.