

The "DAD" Center Memorial Race

By Barbara Del Piano

Thirty two years ago, on a bright, sunny, summer morning, 18 outrigger canoes set out from the exit of Hawaii Kai Harbor. It was August 14, 1974, and the all-wahine crews were embarking on the first official long distance race for women.

Named after Outrigger's great water sportsman, George "Dad" Center, the "Dad" Center Memorial Race is one of the most popular races for women on the annual Oahu Hawaiian Canoe Racing Association paddling schedule.

Sponsored by Outrigger Canoe Club, the "Dad" Center originally began at Hawaii Kai and finished at the Outrigger beach, a distance of 10 miles.

The inaugural race drew crews from around the islands and the mainland, including an exceptional California team from Balboa Beach Club. Outrigger's crew of Stephany Sofos, Laurie Cundall, Tracy Haworth, Moira Scully, Kristy Muller, Lynn Mason, Maile Morgan and steersman Jill Maguire, moved ahead at the start, never relinquishing the lead. Outrigger won the race four consecutive years until Hui Nalu crew claimed victory in 1979.

The race helped convince canoe clubs and officials that women were capable of long distance paddling, and in 1979 Na Wahine O Ke Kai, the women's Molokai to



George "Dad" Center

Oahu race, was held for the first time. After proving wahine could master the strenuous channel crossing, the 10 mile "Dad" Center seemed child's play.

In 1980, the start of the "Dad" Center race was moved to Kailua Beach Park. The route around Makapuu Point to Outrigger increased the distance to 22 miles, more than doubling the previous distance. That year, Outrigger won a close race. Opting for the inshore course hugging the coastline, they paddled furiously from a distant third to overtake Kailua and Healani.

The winning crew of Anita Minter, Sue Oldt, Kaiulu Downing, Tiare Richert (Finney), Diana Smart, Tracy Phillips, Suzie Johnston, Robin Smith, Michelle St. John, Muffer Scully, Sharon Bintliff, and steersman Anne Hogan (Perry), relished their hard wrought victory.

After losing to Hui Nalu in 1981 and 1982, Outrigger went on to win the "Dad" Center 16 times between 1983 and 2005, the most outstanding record of any crew.

In 1986, with high surf prevailing throughout the race, Outrigger's crew of Nina Williams, Muffer Scully, Mary Franco, Sandra Haine, Tiare Finney, Pii Schneider, Donna Kahakui, Kaiulu Downing, and Jeanne Jenkins took first place while a second Club crew came in third.

The following year, high surf caused several canoes to capsize. Outrigger won but its second crew, hit by an enormous wave off Koko Head, was unable to complete the race. With a damaged ama, it was towed to shore. In 1990, three Outrigger crews participated, battling choppy waters and powerful waves. Although several canoes swamped and equipment was damaged, Outrigger managed to post wins in the open and masters divisions; a second team garnered fifth place.

In 2004, a record 38 canoes entered the "Dad" Center race in open, masters and youth divisions; Outrigger again took first place. It defended its championship again last year, completing the race in two hours, 57 minutes, 31 seconds in relatively calm seas. Steersman Kisi Haine was quoted in the Honolulu Star Bulletin, "It was a paddler's race - only a few bumps in which to surf."

Approaching Portlock, the crew caught a few small waves, increasing its lead to over two minutes ahead of second place Kailua.

Until 1985, no prize was awarded to "Dad" Center's winning crew. That year, Mrs. Thomas Richert, former world-champion speed boat racer, donated a handsome silver trophy won in Italy in 1932 and presented to her by Carlo Rossi. When her daughter, Tiare, paddled on Outrigger's "Dad" Center crew, she donated the trophy in memory of her deceased husband; it has been awarded as a perpetual trophy to the winning crew ever since.

This year, the 32nd annual "Dad" Center Memorial Race begins at Kailua Beach Park at 8 a.m., Sunday, August 27. Go girls!

Duke Kahanamoku Race

By Genie Kincaid

The regatta season quickly transitions to the 2006 long distance racing season one week after the State Championships with the Kaena Challenge on August 13 and the Duke Kahanamoku Race on August 20. Both are races for the men. The Kaena Challenge course starts from Sunset Beach to beautiful Makaha Beach Park.

But the popular Duke race, 24 miles from Lanikai to Waikiki, will likely be the setting for Outrigger to go head to head with its strongest competition. In the past 10 years, Outrigger's men have consistently placed in the top three seven times, winning four times. Outrigger will return to defend its 2005 championship with as strong a crew of men as it has ever had.