

Dad Center Race Celebrates 25th Year

By Marilyn Kali

When the Dad Center Memorial Canoe Race for Women started in 1974, it was the only open-ocean, long distance canoe race for women. It became the forerunner of all other long-distance women's races, including the Na Wahine O Ke Kai, women's Molokai to Oahu race, which started in 1979.

"The men had been racing distance for more than 20 years, and Tom Conner, Mark Buck and Archie Kaaua were sitting on the Terrace one afternoon debating whether women could paddle long distance too," recalls OHCRA official and member Joan Kaaua. "They were all convinced that women could, and decided they wanted to put on a long-distance women's race," she added.

The trio went to the OCC Board of Directors and proposed the race. It was approved "without any dissent that I can recall," Buck said. The first race was held on August 18, 1974.

The race is still sponsored by OCC and this year's event on Sunday, August 23 will be the 25th annual race, with paddlers from more than 30 clubs expected to participate in koa and fiberglass classes and in open and masters divisions.

The first five races started in front of Marshall Rosa's house in Hawaii Kai and finished at the Club, about 10 miles.

Today, the race is more than double that distance, beginning at Kailua Beach Park and following the south shore past Hawaii Kai to

the finish line at Outrigger some 22+ miles later.

"Women had never done water changes before, so all the coaches really worked with them before the first race," Kaaua recalled.

"We actually allowed coaches to be in the water to help the women with the changes in the first race," said Buck.

"I remember some coaches actually pushing women over the top of the canoe to the other side during the race," Kaaua added. "It was really funny to watch."

Tommy Conner coached the Outrigger women's crew, and they learned water changes quickly. In fact, they were one of the few crews that didn't need coaches in the water helping them with the changes during the first race.

Outrigger has dominated the race from the first running, winning 17 times. Outrigger's inaugural winning crew was Kristy Muller, Stephany Sofos, Moira Scully, Maile Morgan, Laurie Cundall, Tracy Haworth, Heidi Hemmings, Jill Maguire and Lynn Mason.

Each crew is made up of nine paddlers who rotate in and out of the boat during the race.

The race has also grown in popularity from the six crews in the first race to 33 last year.

A search of Club records, newspaper sports sections and phone calls to other clubs has failed to reveal the winners of the races in 1981 and 1983. None of the Outrigger girls has a trophy from those years so we're pretty sure

Outrigger didn't win. Neither Hui Nalu or Kailua women paddlers have been able to find a trophy from those years either. If you have any information about who might have won, or whether the race was canceled, please leave a note for the Editor at the Front Desk.

The race honors the late George "Dad" Center, longtime popular Club Captain who encouraged, guided and taught many of the Club's young members in swimming, canoeing and surfing. Dad Center's leadership inspired all of his charges to do their utmost, not only for the Club and themselves, but to earn a "well done" from him.

In the early years of the race, Dad's sister, Peggy Anderson, often came to the race to give out the trophies.

In 1985, Tiare Finney donated the perpetual trophy for the Dad Center Race. It was dedicated to the memory of her dad, Dr. Thomas H. Richert, and was originally won by her mother, Loretta Turnbull in 1932, when she was representing the United States in a speed boat race in Italy.

The trophy bears the names of the winning crews.

This is one of those races that you can watch from a variety of locations, from Lanikai to Diamond Head, as it travels along the southern coast of Oahu. Many people even follow it from viewpoint to viewpoint.

Of course, the best place to be is on the Outrigger beach when the race finishes around lunchtime to see the happy, excited faces of the

novice and experienced paddlers as they sprint to the finish line.

Dad Center Race Winning Crews Hawaii Kai to Outrigger

1974	Outrigger	1:21:00
1975	Outrigger	1:10:19*
1976	Outrigger	1:19:00
1977	Outrigger	1:21:00
1978	Outrigger	1:13:10

Kailua Beach Park to OCC

1979	Hui Nalu	3:20:45
1980	Outrigger	3:44:45
1981	Unknown	
1982	Hui Nalu	3:37:27
1983	Unknown	
1984	Outrigger	N.T.
1985	Outrigger	3:18:58
1986	Outrigger	3:36:04
1987	Outrigger	3:19:15
1988	Outrigger	3:25:26
1989	Outrigger	3:03:53
1990	Outrigger	3:33:34
1991	Healani	3:21:46
1992	Outrigger	3:10:47
1993	Kailua	3:09:20
1994	Canceled due to Surf & Wind	
1995	Outrigger	3:21:17
1996	Outrigger	2:57:31**
1997	Outrigger	3:35:41

* Record set by Jill Andersen, Maile Morgan, Julie Morgan, Ann Nichol, Connie Maguire, Heidi Hemmings, Kristy Muller, Joy McGee and Tracy Haworth.

**Record set by Nicole Wilcox, Donna Kahakui, Traci Phillips, Lisa Livingston, Sara Ackerman, Kisi Haine, Mary Smolenski, Diana Clifford and Pam Clifford.



The 1985 winners were Norma Santiago, Muffer Scully, Tiare Finney, Lesline Conner, Traci Phillips, Sandra Stanley, Jeannie Jenkins, Katie Bourne, Mary Franco and Coach Tom Conner.



Holding the Dad Center record of 2:57:31 were the 1996 crew of Nicole Wilcox, Mary Smolenski, Diana Clifford, Lisa Livingston, Traci Phillips, Pam Clifford, Donna Kahakui, Kisi Haine, Sara Ackerman and Coach Steve Scott.