

SB 9/28/79

Wahines to Paddle Also

At dawn tomorrow, the most important event in Hawaiian outrigger canoe paddling will begin on a Molokai beach—the annual Aloha Week race across the Kaiwi channel to Oahu. The race crews, as they have been for the past 27 years of the grueling contest, are all men.

But for the first time, the women paddlers will have a race of their own. They call themselves Na Wahine O Ke Kai, women of the sea, and they'll have their chance to earn that name Oct. 14 in the choppy water between Molokai and Oahu.

There are 22 canoes entered, representing teams from Oahu, Kauai, Maui, Hawaii and the Mainland. There are six seats in each boat and a crew of 12 from each club. A chase boat accompanies each canoe to carry the extra crew members and to pick up the paddlers

as they change places with each other during the race.

Four years ago, two boats using the best women paddlers, from four local canoe clubs made the crossing to demonstrate that it could be done. It took them about one hour longer than the male crews took on the same course.

The Oct. 14 race, which is planned to be an annual event, is dedicated by the paddlers to Leinani Faria, who died of cancer in March. She was one of the first and most dedicated promoters of the idea of a channel race for women paddlers.

The first canoes are expected to touch the beach at Ft. DeRussy about 1:30 p.m. if the seas are calm—the first time in history 264 women will have made the round trip to Kauai on a one-way airplane ticket.