

LADIES MAKE A CHANGE

By Barbara Del Piano

When Alexander Hume Ford founded the Outrigger Canoe Club in 1908, as far-sighted as he was, it never occurred to him to include women. It was strictly a place "for men and boys to ride upright on the crest of waves." In those days, all sports clubs were strictly for men.

However, that didn't stop the wahine from coming to the Club in droves. Wives, girl friends, sisters and daughters were everywhere, participating in social activities, water sports, and enjoying family picnics.

So in 1909, the far-sighted Ford decided to form a women's auxiliary. It was not to be a part of the Outrigger, although the Club did allow the women access and limited use of the premises.

And who did he choose to organize and lead the group? Not the wife of a member, not a wahine athlete, not someone who had ever been on the premises or who had ever owned a bathing suit! Ford's choice was Julie Judd Swanzy, a 50-year-old missionary descendent, wife of Francis Mills Swanzy.

She was an avid supporter of community groups, and someone well experienced leading both private and county organizations dedicated to the support of worthwhile causes. She had a dominating personality and exceptional bargaining skills.

The Auxiliary was a success from day one. Mrs. Swanzy

was soon able to talk the men into giving the women exclusive use of the Hau Terrace, a dressing room, and a kitchen to prepare meals for friends and family. Under her leadership, the Auxiliary planned social events of all kinds, including elegant balls, casual dances, and family picnics on the beach.

At the time, Club facilities consisted of grass houses purchased from a defunct zoo in Kaimuki which were in constant need of repair. The men often held fund raisers to contribute to their maintenance. They would go fishing, and with their catch, prepare chowder on the premises, which they sold.

Before long, the Auxiliary took over and the women took the fish home and prepared a more ono soup in their own kitchens and brought it down to the Club where it was reheated and sold to as many as 1,000 people in just one afternoon; it was certainly one of the Club's most popular fundraisers. The tasty soup was also featured at evening events which included surfing and canoeing contests and moonlight dancing.

The women not only gave financial support to the men, but more and more began to participate in sports such as swimming, surfing and outrigger canoeing.

When 1914 arrived, thanks in large part to the efforts of the Auxiliary, the Club was completely out of debt and had the largest membership of any private club in Hawaii at the time, which numbered 250. Because of limited space, however,

the Auxiliary, had only 150 members, and a long waiting list.

Not willing to accept the status quo, Mrs. Swanzy negotiated with a trustee of Bishop Estate and the Auxiliary acquired a half-acre of leasehold property located between the Outrigger and the Seaside Hotel for \$3,000. The ladies then leased a part of it to the Outrigger for \$1,000. In return, the ladies asked for a lease on the Hau Terrace which was already under their jurisdiction. The Outrigger countered with an offer to merge the two clubs, but the ladies declined.

On August 1 of 1914, an event occurred that completely disrupted the plans of both the Outrigger and the Auxiliary. A fire of unknown origin broke out in one of the cottages at the neighboring Seaside Hotel and quickly spread across the way, setting the ladies' dressing room and the thatched roof of the dance pavilion into flames. A meeting with the Outrigger Board of Directors, House Committee, and ladies of the Auxiliary, was held the following day. The only option on which they all agreed was to rebuild.

When the construction was completed, the Auxiliary arranged a "moonlight chowder and dance" which took place on the new premises and was attended by a huge crowd. It was a great help in paying off the cost of the construction. (Incidentally, these social events were open to the public)

When the United States entered World War I, the ladies of the Auxiliary entertained service men and also worked for months on a flag listing names of Outrigger members serving in the military. When the flag was completed, there were 130 names embroidered on it. For the duration of the war, it was prominently displayed in the clubhouse.

Because of the war, membership declined in both the Outrigger and the Auxiliary; instead of lolling on the beach, the women devoted their time to rolling bandages for the Red Cross.

Although there had been several minor ones, in 1917 the first major rift between the Outrigger and the Auxiliary occurred when the ladies made an offer to take back from the Outrigger the land leased to them and to reimburse them the \$1000 they paid. Since the men's club had spent considerably more for buildings on the site they refused.

In 1925, plans for building the Royal Hawaiian Hotel on the grounds of the Seaside Hotel were presented and the hotel company negotiated a lease for the property with the Bishop Estate. It then came to light that part of both the Outrigger and the Auxiliary facilities were on land to be leased and notice was given to the organizations that all buildings must be removed in just two months.

It was a chaotic time for the Auxiliary and the Club but both managed to raise funds and proceed with removing the old and building the new. Probably because of time issues, a major goof was made when the new bathhouses were being built. The ladies discovered that their new bathhouse was totally inadequate but because of costly plumbing already installed, little could be changed.

Rather than coping with the problem, the indomitable Mrs. Swanzy negotiated a lease of a parcel of land on the Diamond Head side of the Outrigger and planned a new club which they named after the land, Uluniu.

The Women's Auxiliary of the Outrigger Canoe Club formally severed ties with the Outrigger on February 16, 1926



The Uluniu Women's Swimming Club was located between the Royal Hawaiian Hotel and OCC.

and a new organization called the Uluniu Women's Swimming Club, was established.

After a seventeen year reign over the Auxiliary, Julie Swanzy resigned but was honored with the title of Lifetime Honorary President. Alexander Hume Ford stated in a letter, "I want to lay my tribute at your feet as one of the most loyal and splendid women I have ever met."

And so the ties were broken. Soon after, wahine were allowed to join the Outrigger as non-voting members. The Uluniu, now open to men, still exists in a lovely beachfront home in Laie.



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Email: cbhill@caronb.com

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