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LOMI-LOMI—OLD WAIKIKI CUSTOM

By EDWIN NORTH MCCLELLAN

White haole discoverers of Waikiki in 1786 enjoyed healthful and soothing "lomi-lomi" which they called "O Rume! O Rume!" Down the years witnesses have published unsolicited testimonials that "lomi-lomi" banned insomnia, promoted circulation, improved digestion, eliminated fatigue, cured headaches and rheumatism and almost anything that ailed you; and that it was a luxury as well as a necessity. Female operators were the most popular. "Lomi-lomi" is part of present-day Waikiki. Try it some day at the Outrigger Beach Services.

"The women would sometimes lay us down and chafe and rub us, making moan and saying: 'O Rume! O Rume!'" wrote John Nicol of the *King George* in 1786 near Waikiki. On board the *King George* (Nathaniel Portlock) and *Queen Charlotte* (George Dixon) anchored in Waialae Bay, were the discoverers of Waikiki in 1786. Nicol explained that "they wrestled, but the stoutest man in our ship could not stand a single throw with the least chance of success."

"VERY LULLING AND PLEASING"

Archibald Menzies, in Hawaii 1792, 1793, 1794 with Vancouver, wrote that "a number of the natives place themselves around us to *lomi* and pinch our limbs, an operation which we found . . . very lulling and pleasing when gently performed."

Thomas G. Thrum defined *lomi-lomi* as "to rub or chafe the body." Archibald Campbell (1809-1810) told us that *Rorome* was the "pressing with the hand when tired."

"MAKING PEOPLE SLEEPY"

Captain Louis de Freycinet, in August of 1819, wrote: "Two females about forty years old knelt down on each side of me, and squeezed and rubbed my limbs with all their might . . . this is called *macer*. All the parts of the body are pressed between the hands, which go from the arms to the legs, from the thighs to the shoulders. Here it is em-

ployed as a means of making people sleepy."

AIDS DIGESTION OF QUEEN

Queen Nomahanna after feasting heartily, "turned on her back," wrote Otto von Kotzebue (1824-1825), whereupon a tall fellow "sprang upon her body and kneaded her as unmercifully with his knees and fists as if she had been a trough of bread." This so aided digestion that the Queen resumed her feasting.

Townsend of the *May Dacre*, at Honolulu in 1835, called it "*Rumi-Rumi*."

BLESSED BE INVENTOR OF LOMI-LOMI

"If the traveller, who consigns" himself to the hands of "two aged women" at Anahola, Kauai, "is not fain to cry out, 'Blessed be he that invented the *lomi-lomi*,' his body must be formed of sterner stuff than mere bones and muscles," wrote James Jackson Jarves



On July 24, 1912, this is how Waikiki Beach looked. The old Seaside Hotel wall, next the OCC pavilion and canoe shed, next the Moana Hotel and pier and the Steiner home quite different from today.

(1830's). "Fatigue soon leaves him; each muscle is kneaded, each joint is cracked, and the whole corporation thumped, pounded and squeezed, until every old ache and chafe is fairly driven out of it. A series of less violent kneadings . . . and sleep, most delicious sleep . . . In an hour's time he is ready to cry out, 'to horse again!'"

Lieut. Fred Walpole of HMS *Collingwood* in the 1840's, wrote of "fair girls *rumi-ruming*" and "fanning off flies."

SPECIFIC FOR HEADACHE, RHEUMATISM

Alexander Simpson in 1843, lauded the habit of being "shampooed" (*lomi-lomied*) after every meal, for it "promotes circulation and digestion . . . an infallible specific also for headache and rheumatism." He explained that "its medicinal influence . . . (was) heightened by the fact that the shampooers are almost invariably of the weaker sex," and when the malady seems deep-seated, she furrows "her customer's carcass pretty forcibly with her elbows."

TEASING THE MISSIONARIES

"If nothing more, it is clearly an easy substitute for exercise," continued Simpson. The "native name of shampooing . . . is *tumee-tumee*; but the foreign residents . . . to tease the missionaries who disapprove of some of the modes of operation, generally express it . . . as *rumee-rumee*." (short u).

"INEBRIATING POTATIONS"

William Maxwell Wood, about 1844, explained that "*lomi-lomi-ing*" was "shampooing" in "the Turkish and not the barber's sense of the word."

In 1846, Rev. Walter Colton of USS *Congress*, defined *lomi-lomi* as a "kind of shampooing much resorted to here to relieve fatigue"—a "kneading process." The *lomi-lomier* "used me as a baker would a lump of dough," explained the Reverend. "He worked me into this shape, then into that, then into no shape at all . . . He put me back into the shape in which I came from Nature's mould, and I sank to sleep softly as an infant in its cradle. Ye who take to anodynes and inebriating potations to relieve a sense of pain, restlessness or fatigue, try *lomi-lomi*."

"ONE OF THE PLEASURES OF LIFE"

Lord George Campbell of the *Challenger* (1873) recommended *lomi-lomi* for those who are tired, stiff or dyspeptic and said that when "applied to your head is so delicious."

"To be *lomi-lomied*," Lord George explained, "you lie down upon a mat . . . the less clothing you have on [the better] . . . comes a stout native, with soft fleshy hands but a strong grip . . . *lomi-lomi* is used . . . among . . . all the foreign residents; and not merely to procure relief . . . but . . . by the luxurious as one of the pleasures of life."

"DANCE UPON HIS SPINE"

Isabella L. Bird in the seventies, wrote that the "first act of courtesy to a stranger in a native house" is *lomi-lomi*. "Now and then a patient lies face downwards and children execute a sort of dance upon his spine."

LOMI LOMI IN CHURCH

On May 8, 1881, at Kawaiahao Church, Honolulu, wrote L. Vernon Briggs, "in the middle of the service the Princess Ruth," who weighed over 300 pounds, arose "and, walking to the rear . . . lay down on her back in the middle of the aisle. She told a young boy to *lomi-lomi* her abdomen. The "boy stepped upon her abdomen and trotted around on it with his feet." Princess Ruth was relieved and "directed him to dismount." She then "arose and returned to her pew . . . the service [meantime] . . . had not been interrupted."

Captain H. Whalley Nicholson in the eighties and Helen Mather in the nineties praised *lomi-lomi* highly.

LOMI-LOMI, FLY-BRUSH, SPITTOON

W. D. Alexander wrote that a High Chief was surrounded by a throng of *kaukau* attendants. One always attended his master with a *kahili* or fly-brush, another with a spittoon, and a third sat ready to *lomi-lomi* the royal person.

LOMI-LOMI ON A SURFBOARD

An American girl, M. L. C., riding a surfboard at Waikiki about 1913, collided with an outrigger canoe and sunk "to the reefs below." Believe it or not it was a terrible moment. "I rose," wrote M. L. C., "The Duke reached the spot,

clutched me by the back and, spreading me out upon a surfboard, gave me the famous Hawaiian *lomi-lomi*."

LOM-LOMI—MODERN

"If you've wrestled with a surfboard too long, and have acquired some stiff muscles—try a *lomi-lomi* and see if it doesn't really help you," advised an old OCC Beach Patrol pamphlet.

Forecast, December, 1955, pledges: "Lomi-lomi is administered only by licensed operators through the Outrigger Beach Services."