

the Outrigger

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MACFARLANE REGATTA



WAIKIKI BEACH, HAWAII 'JULY 4TH, 2001

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There's Something About the

By Barbara Del Piano

It's like no other canoeing regatta in Hawaii or anywhere else, for that matter. It's not the longest, or most demanding. It's not grueling or fraught with danger. It does not take place in a remote area. What it is, is colorful, exciting, totally unpredictable, and, as paddlers from all over the islands will agree, the Walter J. Macfarlane Regatta, the Outrigger Canoe Club's own special paddling event, is good fun.

July 4th, 2001, will mark the 59th year that the Club has sponsored this popular event, the longest continuous canoe paddling event in Hawaii and the only wave race in town.

It happens right in the middle of Waikiki Beach where the Outrigger Canoe Club once stood and what is now the heart and hub of the tourist Mecca. It's the one day of the year when the "locals" take over Waikiki and for many it brings back a wave of nostalgia.

The Macfarlane Regatta is the only Club tradition that didn't move down the coast to the new location, and so once each year, Outrigger paddlers and members return en masse to the former site to host and participate in this nautical extravaganza.

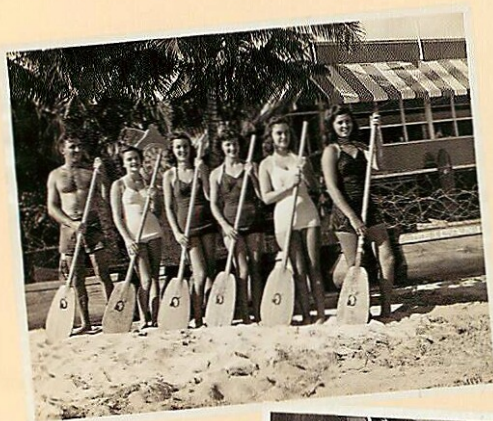
Spectators can really enjoy the races because the canoes go straight out from the beach and back so one can watch the whole event. For paddlers, the element of chance and the thrill of catching a wave are some of the reasons it's so much fun.

We talked with paddlers, past and present, in an attempt to capture some of their most vivid memories and to share their precious experiences with you.

July 4, 1943

Thad Ekstrand paddled in the first Macfarlane Regatta in 1943 when there were only four teams competing; Outrigger, Hui Nalu, Waikiki Surf Club and a team of beach boys. Thad was one of "Duke's Boys", an outstanding championship crew that paddled for several years in the Senior Six class.

The legendary Duke Kahanamoku coached them and served as steersman for two years before turning that position over to Turkey Love.



The 1943 Senior Women were steersman and coach Bob Fischer, Greta Ross, Nita Hayes, Clarice Cross, Anna Morris and Roselle Robinson.

The crew, besides Thad, consisted of Tommy Arnott, Jim Fernie, John Beaumont and Tommy O'Brien. At times, Jimmy Pflueger, Warren Ackerman, Bob Bush and Carlos Rivas took over a paddle, filling in for someone off on a tour of war duty.

Thad recalls that the Senior Six race in those days was four miles long, twice the distance it is today. One of his favorite races was the year that the Outrigger entered two Senior Six crews. It was an exciting race with both canoes dead even throughout most of the race. Then a huge wave came along and both canoes swamped. Thad says his crew members were faster bailers and despite the setback, managed to win the race, but not by much.

Mickey Beggs wasn't one of the "chosen few", being slight of build and lacking the power of some of the bigger paddlers. But he trained hard, coveting a place on the Enlisted Men's Six, a wartime crew that Duke also coached. But unlike the Senior Six, crew members were not selected until the day of the race.

Mickey will never forget the morning of that first Regatta. The paddlers assembled early on the beach, waiting. Finally, Duke appeared and tapped first one and then another on the shoulder, indicating that they would be the ones to paddle that day. Mickey recalls that he couldn't have been more thrilled if the Queen of England had granted him knighthood. He got the tap for the next few years until the war ended.

Mae Freeth (Borthwick) paddled on the winning Junior Four wahine crew during the war years along with "Blondie" Boyd (Erickson), Barbara Borthwick and Alva Janssen (McDiarmid), and Johnny Hollinger steering.

Mae remembers the enthusiasm and excitement that the Macfarlane elicited, and the sweet thrill of victory at crossing the finish line first. The party on the Hau Terrace at the old Club that followed was always a great event, even back then.

Bill Barnhart's first Macfarlane experience had a humorous twist. Bill, at age 15, had been training diligently for six weeks along with Cally Campbell, Bruce "Niele" Bush, Deke Carr and Clyde French when they found out that another crew had been training as well and there would have to be a run-off to see which crew would paddle in the Regatta.

Much to their dismay, Bill's crew came in second. According to Bill, Cally told the discouraged paddlers not to worry. He'd find another canoe and a another sponsor. True to his word, Cally managed to secure the use of a rather beat up canoe and on Regatta day, shortly before the race began, Cally gave a signal and the crew quietly walked into the locker room.

A few minutes later, they emerged wearing bright red tee shirts with the Outrigger emblem on the front. In large letters across the back, was written "Y. Higa Trucking Service". Despite their efforts, they failed to win.

While Duke was coaching the senior crews, Bill Cook coached the juniors, a position he held for about ten years. Bob Rotz, Don Denhart, Gil Carr, Tommy Thomas, Bill Casey, brother George Cook and Jimmy Pflueger were at times members of Bill's two-man, four-man and six-man junior crews that rarely lost a race, with Bill steering most of the time as well.

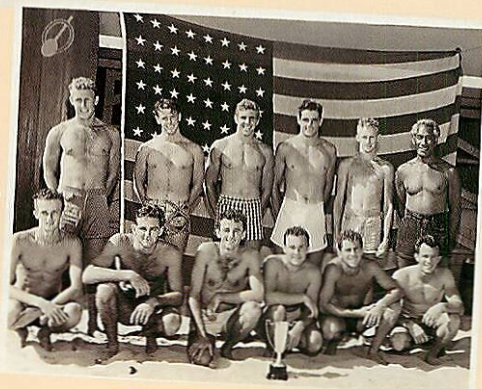
After his own days of paddling were over, Bill, Jeff Kiesel and several friends got a couple of canoes, lashed them together, made a platform across the top and spent Regatta day ensconced in "My Safari", moored right along the edge of the course.

One year they even had a hibachi between the seats and as the canoes paddled by, they sat back and enjoyed teriyaki meat sticks and other goodies. This was the beginning of what eventually became a flotilla of party boats that, until recent times, added to the color and gaiety of the scene.

July 4, 1949

Joan Ka'aua had watched the Regatta through the barbed wire that lined the beach during the war years, envying the paddlers and hoping someday to paddle in the beautiful koa *Kakina*. In 1946, when she joined the Club, Joan joined the Outrigger paddling crew.

She remembers especially the Regatta of 1949. When she made the Senior Women's crew, it was a dream come true. With Johnny Hollinger as steersman that day, they paddled right into the surf, and promptly swamped.



The first place relay crew in the 1944 Macfarlane Regatta was Bob Rotz, Don Denhart, Gil Carr, Tommy Thomas, Bill Casey and Bill Cook, front; Tom O'Brien, Bob Bush, Jimmy Pflueger, Tom Arnott, Jim Fernie, Duke Kahanamoku, back.

Macfarlane...

With inimitable spirit, however, they bailed and managed to finish the race, coming in a respectable second. Joan fondly recalls her teammates, Anita Berg (Whiting), stroke: Doris Berg, Helen Haxton (Bode), and Rusty Thomas.

A special memory is the "training table" upstairs at the old club where the paddlers gathered after practice. The food consisted of a steaming bowl of rice and gravy, which cost five cents a bowl.

Duke and Dad Center, along with Johnny Hollinger, were the major coaches of the seniors in the Regatta in those days. Says Joan, "Now those are some pretty special people. I miss them but know they're still with us each July 4. While watching the regatta at Waikiki over the past years, I still hear their voices, still see their smiling faces."

July 4, 1950

In 1950, Joan recalls, the Outrigger won every single event. That was because the Club entered more than one crew in each event. Although agreeing that only one crew's score would count, the other teams objected and withdrew from the Regatta, so the Outrigger crews raced against each other. No matter who came in first, the Outrigger won.

Later, Joan's two sons, Drea and Alika and daughter Laurie, paddled in the Macfarlane and Joan herself made a comeback in 1975 at the age of 42 as part of the Masters crew.

Joan later retired from paddling and became an official with OHORA (Oahu Hawaiian Canoe Racing Association.) As a member of the merchandise fundraising committee, Joan was in charge of selling tee shirts in the tent on the beach every July 4, with proceeds benefitting ODKF and Outrigger.

There are many other Outrigger members for whom the Macfarlane has become a family affair. Tommy Haine started paddling as a teenager in the 50's. His first race was as a member of the Junior 4 crew and the thrill of winning that first competition was something that stayed with him for the rest of his life.

Tommy continued to paddle and at one time or another, participated in every class, ending his long career at the Macfarlane in the Makule race with other old-timers Jack Mattice, John Beaumont, Peter Balding and Jim Peterson.

July 4, 1984

Tommy's wife Marilyn was on the record-breaking team of Senior Women whose victory was the result of one of those unpredictable things that often happen at the Macfarlane. In 1984, with Fred Hemmings Jr. steering, the canoe was about 50 yards offshore when a tremendous backwash swelled up under them.

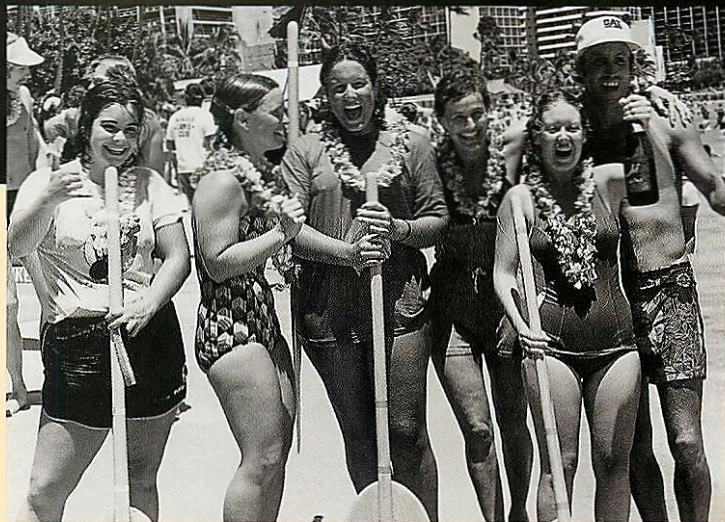
Fred hollered at the crew to stop paddling as the canoe rose on the top of the swell which was like a wave in reverse. It carried them out for about 150 yards, leaving the competition far behind in their wake. On the way in they caught a real wave and crossed the finish line when most of the other canoes were just making the turn.

Marc and Kisi Haine have been paddling since they were young kids and today are both outstanding paddlers and steersmen who have experienced innumerable victories in the Macfarlane Regatta.

July 4, 2000

But they both say one of their most cherished memories is paddling on the same crew in 2000. With Marc steering and his sister in seat five, Kisi says they toyed with the idea of employing an innovative strategy where Marc would paddle from the steersman's position in the rear and Kisi would steer from seat five. They decided the strategy needed additional practice but who knows, someday it just might happen.

Fred Hemmings Jr. started paddling at age 12 and within two years, was steering. He remained one of the Outrigger's most successful steersmen for nearly 30 years. Fred has so many victories to his credit that he can't begin to remember how many times his canoes crossed the finish line first.



The winning Senior Women in 1976 were Stephany Sofos, Maile Ostrem, Christie Wilson, Robin Smith, Tracy Haworth, and steersman Mike Holmes.

In one Macfarlane regatta, Fred steered in 14 events, coming in first in eight of them. Like other exceptional steersman, Fred realizes that understanding the waves is a major factor in winning, and that skill, strategy, and being able to anticipate the variables is the difference between winning and losing. In one Macfarlane Regatta, Fred was steering the Boys 18 crew.

As the gun went off, a huge wave walled up all across Waikiki. As canoes began to swamp right and left, Fred yelled at his crew to jump out, allowing the lightened canoe to ride up over the wave. As soon as it passed, the boys jumped back in and while the other crews were bailing, Fred's crew paddled on to a spectacular victory.

Walter Guild, another of Outrigger's super steersmen, paddled in his first Macfarlane Regatta in 1970 at age 13. Not all Regatta memories have happy endings and a very vivid memory of Walter's was a July 4 when the waves were enormous. Steering the cherished koa canoe, *Leilani*, with a young crew, Walter remembers a gigantic wave coming up under the craft, tossing it in the air and causing it to crash down, nose first. The beautiful canoe suffered significant damage.

July 4, 1981

In what had to have been one of the most exhausting races ever, Walter recalls the 1981 Senior Men's race, which was still four miles long. The waves were so big and unpredictable that the canoe swamped each time it went out and again on the way in.

With eight 'swampings' and the constant bailing, it was a pretty tired and relieved crew that finally passed the finish line.

July 4, 1996

Walter and Marc Haine both chuckle over an incident that occurred during the 1996 senior men's race. With Brandt Ackerman steering, Walter, in seat four, lost his paddle when it slipped out of his hands during a changeover. An extra paddle is always kept on board behind the steersman's seat and if such a mishap occurs, the crewmen pass their paddles forward.

The extra paddle that day was a huge steering paddle and a very reluctant Marc, who was in seat five, passed his on to Walter and was forced to finish the race using "the monster steering blade".

Both Walter and Marc will again be among this year's Outrigger steersmen. Paula Crabb, Chairperson of the Canoeing Racing Committee, and Tiare Finney both started paddling in the Macfarlane Regatta during the late 70's and have been paddling ever since.

Tiare remembers the special thrill of her first race when her crew was well ahead in first place. At the 1/4 mile marker, a huge wave swelled up, causing the canoe to swamp. By the time they had bailed enough to get going again they were dead last and discouraged. Then another wave came along and they paddled their hearts out to catch it, then rode it in to a sweet victory.

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Another year, Tiare recalls, her crew was in last place as it struggled out in the big surf. When the canoe swamped near the sand bar, the crew jumped out, lifted it up, turned it over, righted it, jumped in and paddled on to miraculously win the race.

Lisa Livingston began paddling at age 12 and continued through her high school years. Returning from college and a sojourn on the mainland, Lisa took up the sport again in 1991 and has been paddling ever since. Lisa says that Tiare is the only one she knows who has been on a winning crew in the Macfarlane who hardly had a chance to paddle. Their canoe took on a great deal of water going out and rather than stop, everyone kept paddling except for Tiare who bailed the entire way. Not only did they win the race, but made the front page of the newspaper as well.

Many youngsters start paddling at an early age, but an exception is Winged "O" member Diane Stowell who paddled her first Macfarlane at age 50 and has paddled in 17 Regattas since.

Previously a bicyclist and runner, Diane fell in love with canoeing not long after moving to Hawaii. Along with Gerri Pedesky, Peggy Danford, Ann Cundall, Ulu Friese, Ruby Iferson, Patty Mowat and Barbara Bryan, and coaches Di Guild and Kisi Haine, they have chalked up a number of wins in the Masters division over the years.

July 4, 1982

Pam Davis and Kehau Kali were part of the crew in a girl's 1/4 mile race that set a record in 1982 that still stands. "If nobody breaks it this year, it'll be 19 years old," says a proud Pam whose teammates, along with Kehau, were Leslie Ayau, Adrienna Richard, and Anne Corboy, with Fred Hemmings Jr. steering.

To Tommy Thomas, one of the great things about the Macfarlane is seeing the youngsters today competing with the same enthusiasm and excitement that fired up the teams of by-gone days. When one generation of paddlers retires, there is always a new one to take over. Austin Kino, at 13, has already paddled in two Macfarlane Regattas and is looking forward to many more. He loves the spirited competition and the fun of the races and the party and fireworks afterward.

July 4, 2001

Jeremiah Hancock is looking forward to his very first Macfarlane this year. After watching his sister paddle for the last few years, he's eagerly anticipating the thrills and excitement that are always an integral part of the Macfarlane Regatta.

Each year the number of paddlers grows by leaps and bounds. The crowds get larger, the thrills and excitement soar. It's an event that paddlers throughout the Island look forward to. Win or lose, it's a great day for everyone.

This year's event will be no exception, with nearly 700 cherished Outrigger medals awarded in addition to the all trophies, champagne, leis and cheering fans that all make the Macfarlane Regatta such an exciting and unique event.