

The Golden Age of Sports Ou

By Barbara Del Piano

Editor's Note: Each month during the year 2000, writer Barbara Del Piano will highlight a decade of the Club's history. In this installment, she writes about the period 1981-1990.

It's four o'clock on a chilly Saturday morning in October. A yellow moon, low in the sky, casts an eerie glow over Molokai's Hale O Lono Harbor as the crews of 40 canoes arrive, wide awake and ready to get going. They mill around in the semi-darkness, sizing up the competition, cracking jokes, making small talk. Inside the harbor the water is fairly calm. It will be rougher out in the open ocean.

Outrigger's support team of Jeff Kissel, Bill Cook, Cline Mann, Wayne Faulkner, John Beaumont, Stew Brissette and Kimo and Gay Austin, was waiting at the airport on Friday morning to welcome the paddlers when Royal Hawaiian Air Service's flight from Oahu touched down at Hoolehua Airport. After checking in at Hotel Molokai, the crew got right to work rigging the canoes. The Kaiulani, a fiber glass boat, which will compete in the open class, and Kakina, a koa canoe, were shipped by barge along with cars and trailers earlier in the week. The canoes were then hauled by trailer to Hale O Lono where the rigging was checked and checked again. The sun was low in the sky by the time they were finished.

Bill and Kimo assembled an early ono high-carbohydrate dinner of spaghetti with meat sauce, steak, salad and French bread slathered with garlic butter. The paddlers ate heartily so that they could start off in the morning with a light breakfast. Now a large cooler filled with juice, sweet rolls and muffins arrived and the contents were quickly devoured.

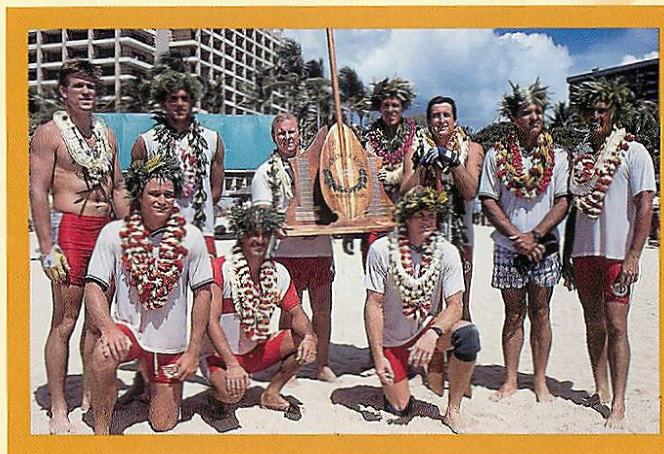
The escort boats and smaller "change boats" left Kaunakakai shortly after five o'clock to arrive at Hale O Lono in ample time. The "change boats" carry replacement paddlers out ahead of the canoe. The replacement paddlers will jump into the water as the canoe approaches, then into the canoe. The paddlers from the canoe will jump out and be picked up by the boat. Precious time can be lost while changes are made but the Outrigger has the technique mastered. There's also a catamaran with about 50 Outrigger members sailing along to cheer the Club team on.

The pink-tinged clouds of early morning have dissipated by the time the paddlers take to their canoes and the sharp gun blast at 7 a.m. signals the start of the 28th annual Molokai-to-Oahu race, the longest and most arduous outrigger canoe race in the world.

Many of the crews and canoes, like

Outrigger, have come from Oahu but there are others from Maui, Molokai, and Hawaii. Some have come from great distances, as far away as Tahiti and New Zealand. But it's the crew from California, the Off Shore Canoe Club from Newport Beach, that has everyone worried. They have combed the west coast for the strongest and best paddlers and put together a formidable crew. Local teams can recruit from all of the Islands. Outrigger, on the other hand, has only its own membership to draw on.

The crews have undergone months of physical conditioning and rigorous training to reach this time and place. The final selection of paddlers was painful for both the coaches who had to choose and those who were not chosen. But all that is behind them now as the race begins.



Winners of the 1988 Molokai Hoe were Bruce Black, Keone Downing, Scott Rolles, front; Marc Haine, Mark Rigg, Coach Steve Scott, Walter Guild, Chris Kincaid, Tom Conner, Kainoa Downing.

Outrigger takes an early lead at the start but perennial rival Hui Nalu is just a few strokes away and the two California clubs, Off Shore and Imua, also from Newport Beach, are close behind as forty canoes and their crews plow through the swells of Kaiwi Channel. Each crew has nine members; six in the canoe and three in the change boat, but for the first half hour, the starting crew maintains a steady pace and no changes are made.

As the leading canoes pass Laau Point, Off Shore has a stroke of bad luck when the ama comes untied and they lose precious time re-rigging it. Gradually Imua falls away but Hui Nalu and Outrigger are nearly side by side. Paddlers from both teams begin to tire and changes are made smoothly. The hours of practicing the maneuver are paying off.

Finally, after four grueling hours, Outrigger pulls away from Hui Nalu, but Off Shore, its ama retied, has made an incredible comeback and suddenly appears not far behind. Eleven miles from Oahu's shore, Outrigger pulls away again and maintains the lead until the Kaiulani arrives

in front of a cheering crowd at Fort DeRussy Beach, 40.8 miles and five hours, 52 minutes and 26 seconds after leaving Molokai.

The exhausted but exhilarated paddlers, Bill Bright, Tom Conner, Keone Downing, John Finney, Walter Guild, Dale Hope, Ed Pickering, Tim Kelly and Bill Mowat are smothered with lei, hugs and congratulations from hundreds of friends, family and spectators who crowd around the winning crew. It's 1980 and the Outrigger has completed the first paddling season of a new decade with flying colors and will dominate the world of water sports in Hawaii for most of the coming years.

By the time the 1980s rolled around, the 75 year old Outrigger Canoe Club was a well-established, financially-sound, world-class, prestigious beach club. Nestled among a string of up-scale

condominiums along Diamond Head's "Gold Coast", the Club was one of Honolulu's most popular social and sports venues. Toddlers, teens, business men and women, celebrities and seniors all congregated to enjoy the casual lifestyle of the beach, volleyball courts, Hau Terrace, and Snack Bar as well as the more formal ambience of the elegant seaside dining room.

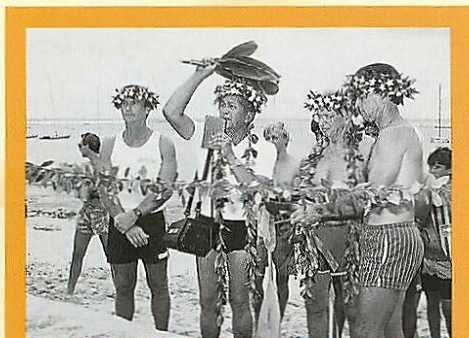
Inevitably, many changes took place in the Club over the years. The high inflation rates of the '80s affected the Club as it did the economy in general. The initiation fee for regular members, raised to \$3,000 in 1980, escalated over 300% to \$10,000 in just nine years. Monthly dues reached an all-time high of \$65. Nevertheless, spurred by an exuberant economy, the

waiting list for admission was always long and the waiting period sometimes stretched into years.

Many changes were made to meet the needs and wishes of the growing membership and staff. An executive suite was created on the Ewa side of the Lobby and the Lobby and business office were remodeled. The kitchen area on the lower level was renovated to provide additional space for purchasing, receiving and storage. The entrance courtyard and Board Room were renovated. Two additional levels of parking were added in 1987 to accommodate the enlarged membership, by then approaching the 4,000 mark. A section of the garage was enclosed to create an exercise room and state of the art equipment was installed.

A variety of exciting new social events provided fun and entertainment for members and guests. Regular activities such as bridge parties, clam bakes and fashion shows rounded out a busy calendar while the traditional annual events such as the Club Luau, Christmas Open House, Keiki Christmas Party, and Club Day continued without interruption year after year.

Outrigger Canoe Club 1981-1990



The Rev. Abraham Akaka participated in the re-blessing of the Club in May, 1989. To his left is Mark Buck. To his right are Ward Russell and Peter Balding.

In addition to paddling and surfing, the Outrigger expanded its non-water sports program beyond volleyball into the realms of golf, track, motorcycling, tennis, kayaking, softball and mountain ball. Club teams excelled to the point that the eighties might well be called "The Golden Age of Sports" as the full gamut of athletics in which the Club was involved produced outstanding teams and individual stars.

After a stunning victory in 1980, the Outrigger men went on to win the Molokai Hoe five more years, and the Club won nine out of ten Macfarlane Regattas during the 80s. Year after year they won not only the Hawaiian Canoe Racing Association championship, but the State Championship as well. The Outrigger women also had a spectacular record, winning the Dad Center long distance race from Hawaii Kai to the Club eight times. A Molokai to Oahu race for women was established in 1979 and the Outrigger crew was the first to claim the championship. They would take first place three more times during the 80s in that most challenging of paddling events, despite overwhelming competition from Off Shore, the powerful California club.

The Outrigger was fortunate to have many outstanding coaches who deserve no small measure of credit for the continuing success of its teams. Tom Conner, Mark Buck, Walter Guild, Mike Holmes, Brant Ackerman and Steve Scott all made important contributions to the sport. For the first time in Club history, a woman was appointed Club Captain in 1986 when Paula Carbone Crabb took on the demanding job. The following year, Michele St. John became the Outrigger's first woman canoe racing coach.

In 1989, Outrigger crews traveled to Australia to compete in the Hamilton Cup, a new international long distance paddling event off the coast of Australia in the Great Barrier Reef. The difficult 25-mile course presented some challenging conditions as it looped around three islands, but the Outrigger crew won the coveted trophy.

In 1985, another new Club-sponsored race

was established: the Cline Mann Paddleboard Race, dedicated to the former Club President and ardent supporter of water sports at the Outrigger for decades. Cline devoted much time and effort over the years to the perpetuation of the sport of paddleboard racing. The event, which features 10 to 12 foot paddleboards, was an instant success.

An insatiable appetite for water sports brought about the First Annual Outrigger Invitational Water Polo Tournament in 1987 as well as an annual kayak race which drew more than 100 participants to the starting point at Maunaloa Bay. The Castle Swim, for Club members only, was a popular event throughout the decade.

Outrigger had long held the distinction of producing an awesome number of outstanding volleyball players, and the '80s perpetuated that tradition. The Club teams never failed to render stellar performances at the annual Haili Easter Volleyball Tournament in Hilo. In fact, Club teams were so good that one year, two Outrigger teams ended up playing against each other in the finals of the men's division. Needless to say, Outrigger won.

The same year the Club went on to win two titles in the U.S. National Volleyball Championships, competing against 130 teams. The Outrigger teams, from teenagers to Senior Masters, placed consistently in the top spots of tournaments held not only in Hawaii but across the country as well. In 1989 members Randy Shaw, Charlie Jenkins, Jon Stanley and Chris Crabb were selected to the national All-American team.

Not only did the Outrigger produce championship teams, but it committed itself to the support of other athletic endeavors as well. In 1982, President Ron Sorrell instigated the creation of the Outrigger Foundation whose mission was "to sponsor, promote, encourage participation in and provide education and instruction in national and international athletic competition". Funding for the foundation came from Club members and an annual auction.

In 1986, the Outrigger Foundation merged with the Duke Kahanamoku Foundation, an organization with similar objectives. By consolidating the resources and assets of the two, the new Outrigger Duke Kahanamoku Foundation would be better positioned to provide assistance to local athletes. The merger proved a wise one and over the years, the ODKF has continued to fulfill the combined missions of both non-profit organizations.

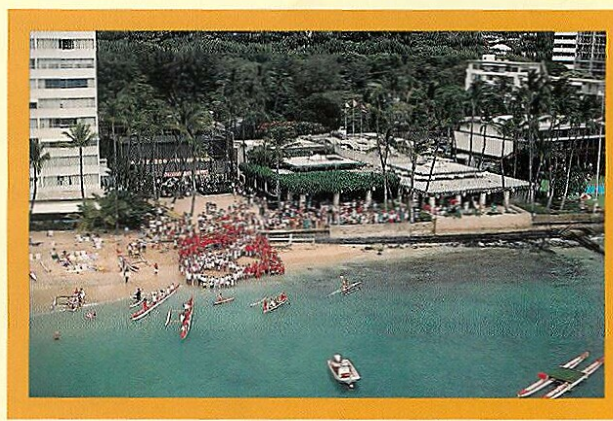
Roy Kesner, former Outrigger President, and first president of ODKF poignantly expressed the sentiments of all: "By merging the two foundations we can strengthen our commitment to the youth of Hawaii and perpetuate the ideals that

Duke Kahanamoku believed in". In the years since, the ODKF has awarded numerous grants and scholarships that have helped hundreds of local athletes and provided them with opportunities they might otherwise not have had.

A large colored photo hangs on the wall behind Manager John Rader's desk. It's an aerial shot taken from a helicopter as it hovered over the water in front of the Club on May 6, 1989. The picture shows a large number of people—men, women and children—some dressed in white and others in red. They are assembled on the beach in front of the Club in the formation of the Outrigger symbol. Red and white Outrigger canoes and surf boards are lined up in the water just beyond the shore.

On the Hau Terrace, along the wall and in the dining room, hundreds of spectators watch the activity. It's Club Day and also the 25th anniversary of The Outrigger Canoe Club at its "new" location. A featured attraction of the day-long festivities, was a re-enactment of the canoe parade and ceremony that marked the original dedication a quarter of a century earlier.

Some of the original participants who took part in the re-creation were Ward Russell, Rev.



Club Day Photo May 1989.

Abraham Akaka and Cline Mann. A moment of silence was observed to honor those who had passed on: Duke and David Kahanamoku, Charlie Amalu, Jack MacKenzie, Johnny Hollinger and Gay Harris. Immediate past President Mark Buck and current President Peter Balding participated as well.

The celebration was an all-day affair which began with the annual Club Day Biathlon followed by a keiki soccer game and family softball game in Kapiolani Park. A mixed volleyball competition, surfing contest and keiki sand building contest ensued.

A high point of the day was the burying of a time capsule which contained such mementoes of the past 25 years as copies of the 1964 and 1989

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membership lists, a copy of the original charter, issues of the *Outrigger* magazine for May and June, the Outrigger burgee, 25th anniversary T-shirts, a copy of the aerial photo and a list of the 25th Anniversary Committee members.

As an afterthought, Cline requested that a copy of the paid-off mortgage be included. The capsule was filled and then Guido Salmaggi sang a stirring rendition of the *Star Spangled Banner*. Hawaiian musicians on hand followed with *Hawaii Ponoi*, *Hawaii Aloha* and the *Outrigger Song*, written by Alex Anderson.

A sumptuous complimentary buffet and bar drinks rolled back to 1964 prices was enjoyed by more than 700 members and their families who had come to enjoy this special day. In the evening, a steak fry on the Hau Terrace and dancing on the Lanai brought an end to a perfect day.

The day was also a tribute to those dedicated people, such as Russell, Mann, and so many others, whose foresight, determination and courage made the Outrigger dream live on.

Next month: 1991-2000.



Winning the USVBA Championships in the Golden Masters Division in 1985 were front, Peter Balding, Ron Sorrell, Bill Baird. Back, Tom Haine, Fred Hapo, Bob Kashare, Dave Hendrickson and Colin Chock.