

Setting the Course.

THE OUTFRIGGER

By Barbara Del Piano

Editor's Note: Each month throughout the year 2000, writer Barbara Del Piano will highlight a decade in the Club's history. In this installment, she writes about the period of 1911-1920.

At the time of the Outrigger Canoe Club's founding, Waikiki was primarily a sleepy residential area with a combination of palatial beachfront mansions and small cottages. There was not a store of any kind to be seen.

Although the visitor industry was still in its infancy, the majestic Moana Hotel, on the Diamond Head side of the Club, had been in operation for seven years. In 1906, two years before, the popular Seaside Hotel, with its charming, airy cottages and tents nestled among the coconut palms, opened on the Ewa side, on what were once the royal lands of Helumoa. Here such personages as Alice Roosevelt Longworth and Jack and Charmain London enjoyed the tropical ambiance of Waikiki.

A few smaller inns were nestled between the homes around the area. However, the downtown Alexander Young Hotel with its 300 rooms, and the old Royal Hawaiian Hotel on Richards and Hotel Streets held more visitors than all the Waikiki hotels combined.

Five years before the Outrigger Canoe Club came into being, Honolulu Rapid Transit Co. had begun service to Waikiki, previously accessible mainly by horse and carriage. The electric cars reduced travel time to Waikiki from 45 to 28 minutes.

The future of Waikiki looked bright although no one could imagine the extent of its growth in the coming years. The fledgling Club, located right at its center, grew and flourished with the area.

Within months of its organization, the Outrigger was able to organize a regatta to entertain Teddy Roosevelt's Great White Fleet which arrived in Honolulu in July of 1908. By then the Club boasted of more than 40 canoes, many belonging to members but put at the disposal of the fleet.

A serviceable canoe could be acquired for about \$20 so several paddlers often got together to make a joint purchase. A renaissance in surfing and canoeing occurred. An on-site craftsman fashioned surfboards for the Club or for purchase by individual members for \$2.

Not only were "men and boys" riding the waves, but women as well. Although Ruth Soper and Margaret Restarick, daughter of the Episcopal Bishop, are hardly household names today, these ladies are credited with being the first female members of the Outrigger Canoe Club to master the art of surfing while standing upright on the board.

Interest in the traditional Hawaiian sports of canoeing and surfing increased dramatically with the establishment of the Outrigger Canoe Club but it would be many years before Waikiki would supercede Honolulu Harbor as the Mecca of competitive water sports on Oahu.

Along the Harbor's edge were located the famous rowing organizations: the Myrtle Boat Club and the Healani Yacht and Boat Club, as well as the Women's Rowing Club. Each September a Regatta was held in the harbor and since the days of the monarchy was

Honolulu's major sporting and social event of the year. The boat clubs were festooned with colorful bunting as the Healani "Blues" and the Myrtle "Reds" were joined by crews composed of service men stationed in Hawaii who added to the competition.

The heavy, six-oared barges were a far cry from the sleek racing shells used in the East, but the rivalry between the clubs was fierce and Regatta Day drew hundreds of spectators from around the island to enjoy the excitement and festive atmosphere.

In addition to the barge races, there were several events for outrigger canoes. Although many Outrigger members were also members of these rowing clubs and devoted most of their time and energy to them, the Club managed, in its first year, to enter two canoes, the *Hanakeoki* and the *Hoop La*, and came in second in both races.

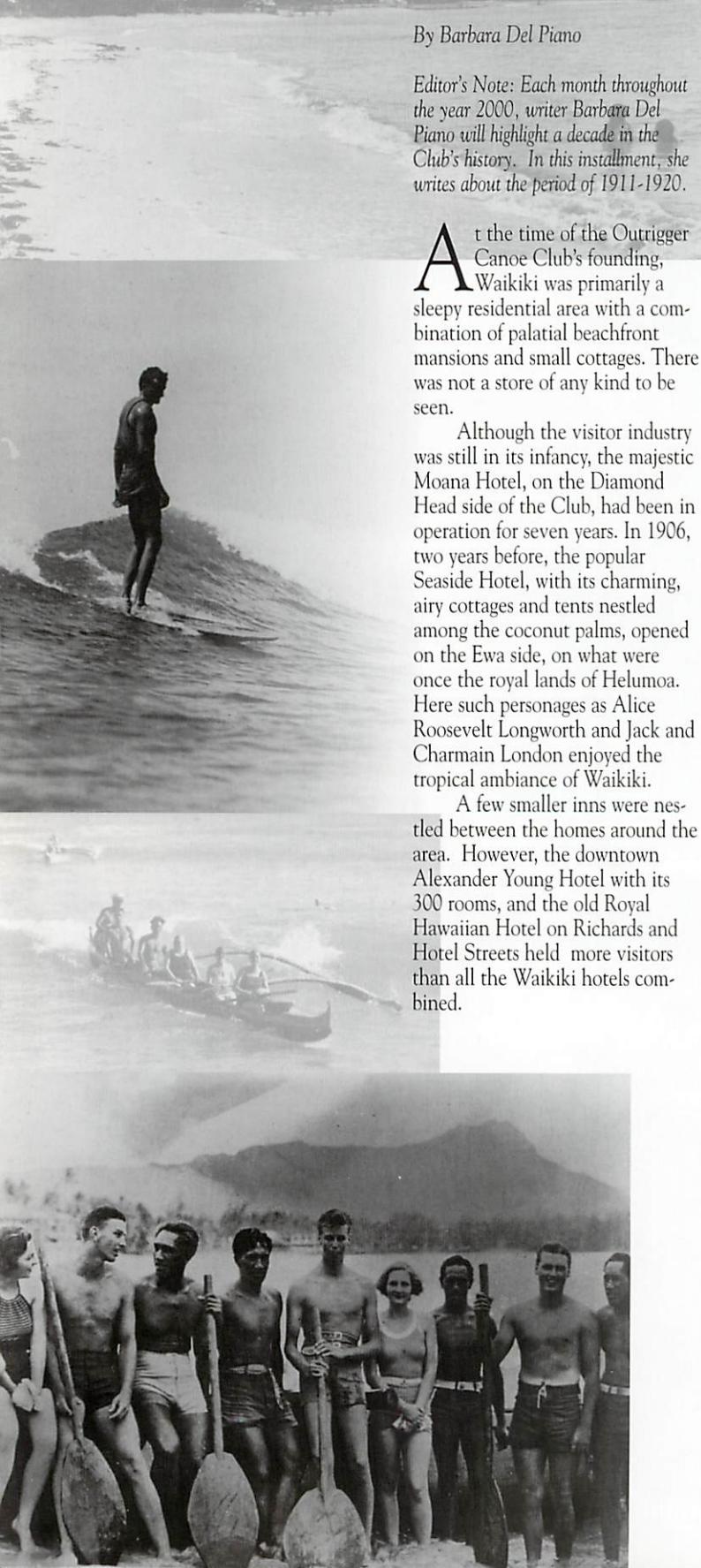
In one of the big events of the day, the six-paddle canoe race, the *Hanakeoki* was beaten by the A, Prince Kuhio's sleek koa canoe, purported to be the fastest outrigger in existence at the time. Regatta Day was also a brilliant social occasion as the races were followed in the evening by parties and balls.

Swimming pools were practically non-existent in Hawaii at the time, so swimming meets were held in Honolulu Harbor where the calm water provided ideal conditions for both diving and short and long distance swimming competition.

It was here, at Pier 7, in 1912, that Duke Kahanamoku introduced his amazing Hawaiian crawl that would revolutionize competitive swimming around the world.

Despite its remoteness, the Outrigger Canoe Club, from its inception, grew quickly in membership and reputation as the community applauded its commitment to the revitalization of native water sports. The Club planned and executed many innovative events which brought crowds of people to Waikiki.

A Club-sponsored Regatta in



CANOE CLUB 1911-1920

October of 1908 was a huge success, with several particularly exciting events that added a true sense of excitement to the scene. The Outrigger teams won every event that they entered and came away with \$85 in prize money. A month later, the Club made headlines in the local papers with its "Moonlight Carnival" which featured not only a regatta, but moving pictures, fireworks, a luau, and dances at the neighboring Moana and Seaside Hotels.

The most spectacular event of all was the night surfing exhibition by Kenneth Atkinson, the first Club Captain, who rode a wave in to shore carrying an electric, battery-operated torch. The surfrider was illuminated against the dark sky and caused quite a sensation among the spectators.

Physically the Club grew quickly as more facilities were added. In addition to the original grass houses, a large lanai was built next to the lagoon and a retaining wall was erected to prevent the lagoon from flooding when Apuakehau Stream overflowed. A charming bridge of coconut logs spanned the lagoon, and canoe sheds constructed of coconut fronds, added to the tropical ambiance.

Refreshments and food could be ordered from the Seaside Hotel and enjoyed on the Club's grounds. A storage room for surfboards was built and made available free of charge to members, but those preferring a locked compartment could hire the Club carpenter to construct one for a dollar. Dressing rooms and showers were also added, and if a member wanted a private locker, the Club carpenter was happy to build one for two dollars.

Within a few years, under the guidance of President Sanford B. Dole, the prestigious architectural firm of Ripley and Davis was commissioned to design a new, more permanent club house. Although the grass houses were charming and provided an attractive tropical decor, they did not prove sturdy

enough in stormy weather. So two wooden structures were built; a large two story pavilion-like building which provided canoe storage below and a large, informal, comfortable area for social activities above. It was open to the cooling breezes but protected from the hot sun by broad, overhanging eaves.

The smaller building housed dressing rooms and served a variety of purposes. The "hau lanais", popular gathering areas for members, were left undisturbed.

When World War I commenced in 1914, it had little impact on Hawaii and its residents. Even after America's entrance in 1917, the war never felt very close to home. However, in the spirit of patriotism, a National Guard Coast Artillery was formed and local businessmen, including many Outrigger members, joined. The Women's Auxiliary did its share by participating in Red Cross and War Camp Community Service projects. Some of the younger members were eventually drafted into service.

By the time the war ended, the Club was in satisfactory financial condition; it boasted of attractive physical facilities and with an influx of new, enthusiastic members, including Dad Center, and Duke Kahanamoku, the Outrigger was poised to embark on a new era of growth.

Of course, the surrounding area was growing as well. By 1919, there were five major hotels in Waikiki. In addition to the Moana and Seaside, Waikiki Inn, Halekulani and Pierpoint had been added as the visitor count rose steadily from approximately 3,000 in 1900 to over 8,000 in 1917.

More and more of the visitors were eschewing downtown Honolulu in favor of the quiet, peaceful atmosphere of Waikiki, where one could fall asleep at night, lulled by the sound of gentle surf and spend the day frolicking or relaxing in its soothing waters.

The Outrigger, located as it

was in the heart of the growing resort area, became more and more popular as a place for residents to entertain guests and more services were added to accommodate their needs. Tea was served in the afternoon and before long non-alcoholic beverages became available along with basket lunches and items such as hot soup and rice were prepared on the premises.

Under the guidance of George "Dad" Center, the Club expanded its athletic program. When a local chapter of the AAU was formed, the Outrigger was one of the first to join. Beach volleyball originated at the Club and soon became a popular sport. In the afternoons, businessmen would arrive from "down town" in their suits and ties, don swimming trunks and take to the courts for relaxation and exercise.

The Club initiated the "Castle Swim", which started at the Castle home (now the Elks Club) and finished at the Outrigger. It soon became a popular annual event.

Thus the Club took on an air of permanency, planting its roots and establishing itself as a vital part of the community; creating traditions of its own, and setting out in directions to satisfy its membership and fulfil a need for both athletic and social activities amid pleasant and congenial surroundings. But, first and foremost, the Club remained dedicated to promoting the sports of surfing and outrigger canoeing.

Next Month: 1921-1930.

