

# The Good Old Carefree Days at the OCC

By Barbara Dorsam Del Piano

On the first day of my junior year at Roosevelt High School, our English composition teacher gave out the first assignment: write an essay on what you did during summer vacation. "Duck soup," I thought. The past three months, filled with sun and fun, had flown by and I could hardly believe it was September and school was already beginning. That evening I sat down at the old family Underwood and proceeded to write my composition. "The very first day of my vacation," I wrote with confidence, "I went to the Outrigger Canoe Club and during the day went swimming, surfing, and paddling. Later, I played volleyball and then just lay on the beach, working on a tan. The next day, I..." And then I realized that just about every day of the entire summer had been spent pretty much the same way. It took a lot of descriptive phrasing and minute details to fill up the required two pages.

## Carefree Summers

Although World War II was raging, summers and weekends at the Club were carefree and filled with physical activity despite the barbed wire fences that stretched across the shore line and the gas masks we were supposed to have nearby at all times. The initial war scare was over and life went on, shortages and all.

It's hard to imagine life without the Outrigger, the gathering place where monumental decisions were often made... like what to wear to the party on Saturday night... or what color bathing suit to buy next.

Of course, this all took place at the "old Club", in the heart of Waikiki, where the Outrigger Hotel now stands. It was the third structure on the site since the Outrigger's founding in 1908. Actually, I remember the second Clubhouse, a long, dreary dark green building, because, at a fairly young age, I was often invited to the Club on weekends by my neighborhood friend, whose father was a member.

I remember Webley Edwards and the Hawai'i Calls radio program being broadcast in front of the Club. Web had a microphone with a very long cord and he would stroll

along the beach and interview people. The waves rolling up on the shore made wonderful background music and he always put a thermometer in the water and announced the results to all those shivering

people on the mainland. Eventually, the show moved to the Moana Hotel.

A favorite pastime back in the thirties was collecting autographs of the famous movie stars who frequented the Royal Hawaiian Hotel. Spencer Tracy, Rochelle Hudson, Bing Crosby, Claudette Colbert, Shirley Temple, Loretta Young are some that come to mind.

## Joining the OCC

I didn't become a member of the Club until much later. When I had outgrown my welcome as a guest and the grim visage of the Club Manager Henry De Gorog began to appear in my dreams, I asked my parents if I could join.

They were not at all in favor of it because my father was an Elk and my mother a member of the Uluniu Women's Swimming Club. So really, they reasoned, what more did I need? Oh, how to explain that I wanted to be where the action was... not in a stodgy old ladies club, or heaven forbid, way out there at the far, far end of nowhere.

Eventually, after giving up a summer to work, I saved my money and paid my own initiation fee, which was \$25, I think. I really scrimped on my allowance to keep up with the dues, a few dollars a month.

## Remembering the Clubhouse

By then, the new Clubhouse had been built, and it was a vast improvement over the previous building.

One entered from Kalakaua Avenue, through an arcade of

shops, into the lobby. Auntie Eva Pomroy was the receptionist and everyone loved her dearly. She was sort of our surrogate mother. Behind her desk

was the ladies and



junior girls' locker rooms. Straight

ahead were wide doors which opened onto a lanai lined with chairs, overlooking a large grassy area on one side and volleyball courts on the other. A walkway down the middle separated the two.

There were, I think, two large courts and one small one. On the Ewa side, behind the small court, was the entrance to the men's locker room. The Snack Bar was on the Diamond Head side. For many years, an outrageously funny fellow named Richard worked there. He was a nightclub performer in the evenings and scandalized us with stories of his risqué act.

Beyond the lawn and volleyball courts was a long building with canoe storage below and a Dining Room above. Two sides of the Dining Room were covered but the center part was open. On the other side of the building was the Hau Terrace, with stairs leading up to a very nice cocktail lounge. I remember spending my 18th birthday there, just waiting for the feared liquor inspector, Willie Whittle, to make an appearance.

Sometimes, when we tired of the Snack Bar menu, we had lunch in the Dining Room. Our favorite meal was a turkey sandwich or simply two scoops rice with gravy.

## Bathing Suits

On the beach side of the Club was a small structure from which Sally Hale provided beach services and sold Club bathing suits. In those days, no one would be caught dead wearing anything other than an Outrigger bathing suit.

They were two-piece suits



made of heavy cotton, fully lined.

They came in white, red, light and royal blue. The first ones I remember had trunks that buttoned up both sides, "sailamoku" style. The tops tied around the neck and back. Later, a snazzier design became available. The trunks had a side zipper and the tops had horizontal pleats and narrow straps, and buttoned in the back. I still have one.

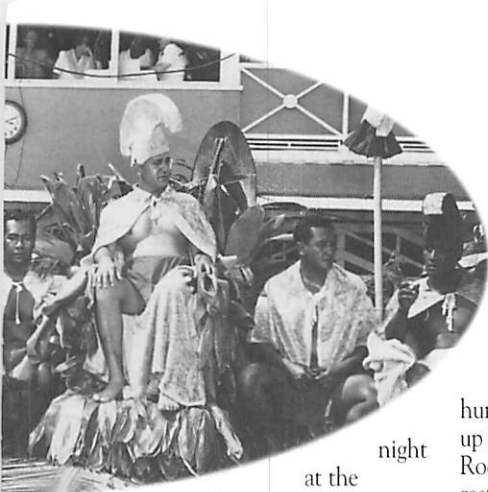
## 'Sunshine' & Parking

The parking lot was next door where the Ewa wing of the Moana-Surfrider Hotel is now. For awhile, we also had another lot across the street for additional parking.

A wonderful Hawaiian man named "Sunshine" was the parking attendant. He always wore a small lauhala hat and was a wizard on the ukulele, which was like an extra appendage because he was never without it. We often spent hours in the parking lot while Sunshine entertained us. I once heard that Sunshine appeared one day at the home of one of Auntie Eva's relatives in Kapahulu. They hired him to mow the lawn. When they found that he had no place to live, they offered him a room in the back of the garage. He stayed there for many years, became part of the family, and Auntie Eva got him the job as parking attendant.

## Volleyball, Surfing

It was in the small court that we played volleyball most of the time. To make the games more interesting, we often enticed the younger boys, who were good players, to play doubles with us. They condescended to do so while waiting to use the large courts. Tommy Haine, Peter Balding, the Auerback brothers, Mark and Hank, Johnny "Mongoose" Crites are a few that I remember. I never was a very good player, but I was on an Outrigger team for awhile. We practiced at



night  
at the  
Waikiki Fire Station  
and "small" Jack Ackerman was  
our coach.

When we weren't playing volleyball or surfing, we often sat on the lawn and played cards. Kamau was our favorite game and it kept us occupied for hours.

In the late afternoon it was fun to watch the businessmen arrive in suits and ties, then reappear shortly in bathing trunks and take over the large courts. There were some very large men among them, like Bill Mullahey, Ernest Stenberg, Sam Fuller, R. Q. Smith, Wilford Godbold, and Duke Kahanamoku, to name a few.

Surfing was a very important part of life at the Club. There was usually a long, hollow board available to borrow, and I remember being very proud when I mastered the feat of sliding it out of the locker, balancing it on my shoulder, and carrying it down to the beach.

I wasn't a very good surfer, but I loved to go out to "Canoes" and spend hours in the water, waiting for just the right wave. I loved sitting out there, straddling the board, and looking at the magnificent, unobstructed view of the Ko'olau mountains behind Manoa Valley.

One day when I was out in the surf daydreaming, I noticed everyone around me paddling madly for shore and heard someone yelling. I looked around and there, right beside me, was an enormous stingray. Needless to say, I paddled in as fast as I could.

### Kau Kau Favorites

Often we would go to the Saturday matinee at the Waikiki Theater, practically across the street. They were very strict in that everyone was required to wear shoes. Many times we would scrounge up a pair and someone would buy a ticket, enter the theater, walk down the side aisle and

toss the shoes out the door to the next person. Some times four or five of us would get into the movie with the same pair of shoes. For some reason, we always sat in the front row.

Occasionally we would get hungry for Hawaiian food and walk up Kalakaua to Unique Lunch Room, a marvelous hole-in-the-wall restaurant opposite where Kuhio Beach is now. I remember sitting at the counter and devouring bowls of poi and pipikaula, the best I've ever had.

### OCC Entertainment

The Outrigger became even more important after going away to college. Coming back after a homesick year on the cold, cold, mainland, getting down to the Club and back together with old friends was truly exciting. Of course, we were all pale and embarrassed to be seen in bathing suits, but within a few days we had re-acquired our tans and it was like we'd never been away.

One summer when I returned from school, everyone was talking about a Hawaiian music group that performed on the Hau Terrace every Friday night. Andy Cummings' great hit, "Kaimana Hila" was sweeping the Islands.

Andy, Gabby Pahinui, Joe Diamond and Ralph Alapa'i made such wonderful music that we couldn't get enough of them. Often we'd pool our money and go to Felix's Florentine Garden on Ala Moana where the group performed on Saturday night, or out to Kaneohe to a wonderful place called Kilohana Gardens where they were the major attraction on Sunday afternoon.

Of course, most of the world famous Royal Hawaiian Hotel beach boys belonged to the Outrigger. We loved to watch them holding court on the beach entertaining the wealthy tourists who absolutely idolized them and were totally entranced with their inimitable brand of ho'omalimali. The ones I remember best are Chick Daniels, Turkey Love, Blue Makua, Panama, Kalakaua and Harry Robello.

Kamehameha Day and the Fourth of July were big days at the

Club for canoe racing. I think it was on Kamehameha Day that a platform would be built and someone would be ensconced on a throne wearing a pseudo-feather cape and helmet. The platform was surrounded by the prizes for the day's events . . . stalks of banana, baskets of papaya and coconut, and even a live pig.

When Walter Macfarlane died, the Club renamed the Fourth of July races after him, and Matson Navigation Company donated the beautiful silver bowl that to this day is filled with champagne for the winning crew to indulge in.

### Happy to be Members

In those days, women were not allowed to serve on committees or be a member of the Board of Directors. We took it for granted and were just happy to be members. It happened that I was at the Club on two occasions when extraordinary events occurred. We were hanging out one day on the lawn when into the Club walked a young woman wearing a bikini. It was the first time any of us had ever seen one and I must admit we were all a bit startled.

Fascinated, we giggled as she strolled down the walkway before our very eyes. I don't remember whether she was a member or a guest, but she was very quietly asked to leave. For weeks after, the incident was the talk of the Club.

After the war was over and we moved into the '50s, our "old gang" drifted apart. Many of us married and began to raise families, leaving little leisure time; some moved away. Others embarked on careers that brought new interests and different pastimes.

After years as a Nonresident member, I finally made the heart-rending decision to resign. Fortunately, the Club adopted a reinstatement policy so that eventually I was able to regain my membership.

By then, there had been monumental changes at the Outrigger. The race and gender barriers had been hurdled and the move to the Elks Club site completed. How my father would have laughed had he lived to see that! ☺



Members lazed on the OCC lawn opposite the volleyball courts on long summer days.