

Macfarlane Regatta Set for July 4 at Waikiki

By Barbara Del Piano

On the 4th of July, the Walter J. Macfarlane Regatta will take place in the waters fronting the Moana and Outrigger Waikiki hotels, just as it has for the past 52 years.

The oldest and most prestigious of Hawaii's canoe races, it is also the only wave event on the Oahu Hawaiian Canoe Racing Association calendar. The colorful races attract thousands of spectators who line the shore cheering for their favorite among the 14 clubs that now participate in the day's 31 races. More than 200 paddlers represent each of the clubs.

This is a far cry from the two teams and 13 events of that first war-time regatta in 1943.

This popular, day-long contest is named after Walter James Macfarlane, who was president of the Outrigger in 1943 at the time of his untimely death from typhoid fever contracted during a trip to Mexico.

Walter Mac, as he was called, is credited with steering the Club through troubled

financial waters during the late 30s. Not only did he attain fiscal stability for the Club, he helped to increase a sadly declining membership and spearheaded the building of an entirely new and modern facility, located on the Club's former site where the Outrigger Waikiki Hotel now stands.

After his death, the annual July 4th canoe races were renamed in his honor.

Scion of a prominent kamaaina family, Walter Mac was not the first of the Macfarlanes to leave a lasting mark on the Waikiki-Diamond Head scene. The first Macfarlanes, who arrived from New Zealand in 1846, settled in Waikiki when much of the area was still a marshland, dotted with taro patches, rice fields and fish ponds fed by the waters of Palolo and Manoa streams.

Their eldest son, George W., great uncle of Walter Mac, was a close friend of King Kalakaua and after serving as an officer in the King's court with the rank of Colonel, assumed the duties of Chamberlain to the King and was the youngest person appointed to the House of Nobles in the Hawaiian Kingdom.

Colonel Macfarlane is credited with being one of the first to envision Waikiki as a resort area and was part of the very first attempt to provide hotel accommodations for visitors in the area.

Our present Club site is located on the grounds of what was once Colonel Macfarlane's home, located where the Elks Club now stands. In 1888, it was transformed into Waikiki's first hostelry, the Park Side Hotel.

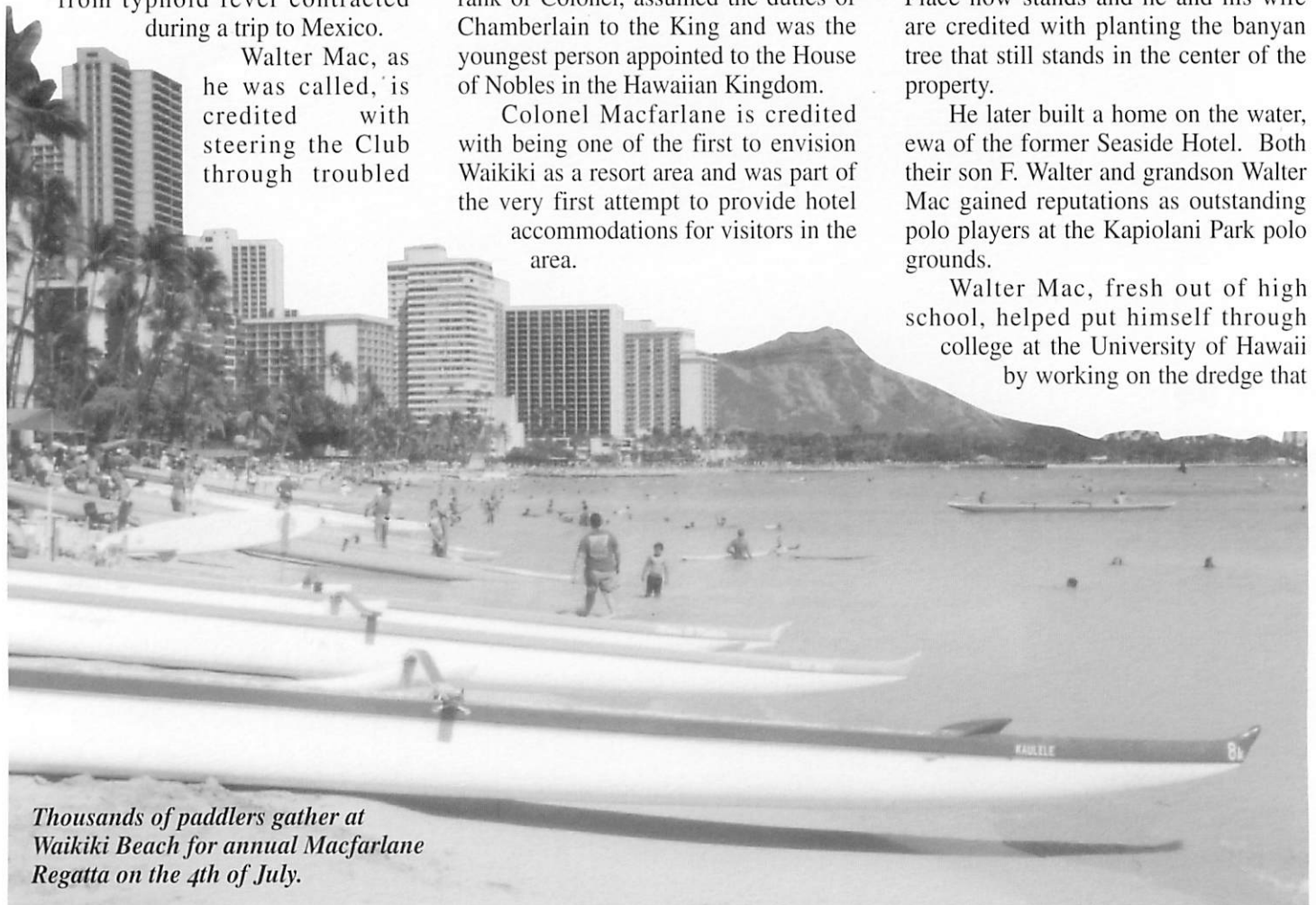
This property was later sold to James B. Castle who razed the building and erected an elaborate three story colonial style home on the site. The Colonel subsequently acquired the downtown Royal Hawaiian Hotel and later, the Seaside Hotel, near the site of the Royal Hawaiian.

Another of Walter Mac's great uncles, Clarence Macfarlane, founded the world famous Transpacific Yacht Race. A true water man, Clarence is credited with being the first haole to master the sport of surfing and outrigger canoeing.

Walter Mac's grandfather, Frederick W. Macfarlane, lived in the area where the International Market Place now stands and he and his wife are credited with planting the banyan tree that still stands in the center of the property.

He later built a home on the water, ewa of the former Seaside Hotel. Both their son F. Walter and grandson Walter Mac gained reputations as outstanding polo players at the Kapiolani Park polo grounds.

Walter Mac, fresh out of high school, helped put himself through college at the University of Hawaii by working on the dredge that



Thousands of paddlers gather at Waikiki Beach for annual Macfarlane Regatta on the 4th of July.

cleared the way for the Ala Wai Canal which drained swampy, mosquito-infested Waikiki and turned it into a modern residential and resort area.

Walter Mac was a true water man and spent most of his leisure time in the ocean. He was also a man who couldn't resist a challenge.

His sister, Muriel Macfarlane Flanders, tells of an incident at Sandy Beach during the 30s when Walter Mac and friends were body surfing. An enormous wave came along and everyone but Walter Mac ducked below it. He caught it and rode it completely across what is now Kalaniana'ole Highway.

Although Walter Mac had no children of his own, the family involvement with the Outrigger Canoe Club continues with his sister, Muriel Flanders and her children and grandchildren.

Two family members currently serve on the Club's Board of Directors--Muriel's daughter, Mary Philpotts-McGrath, and her grandson, Walter Guild, who is Club President. Another grandson, Billy Philpotts, is the Club's head coach, and a granddaughter, Di Guild, is a coach.

In 1943, Matson Navigation Company donated a magnificent trophy topped by a large silver bowl to be awarded to the winner of the Senior Men's race at the Macfarlane Regatta.

That year, the trophy was presented to the winners by Walter Mac's mother, Alice Kamokila Campbell, who filled the bowl with champagne. After sipping from the bowl, the crew invited the runners-up to join them, and thus a tradition was born.

Mrs. Campbell continued the practice of supplying the champagne for several years until the Club offered to take over. OCC General Manager Ray Ludwig says that in packing supplies to go to the race site each year, a case of champagne is always at the top of the list.

After Mrs. Campbell's death, her daughter, Muriel Flanders, carried on the 4th of July tradition. When she has been unable to do so, her daughters,

Alice Guild and Mary Philpotts-McGrath have stepped in.

Over the years, Mrs. Flanders has donated seven additional trophies awarded for various events at the Regatta.

And so, when the last race of the 1994 Regatta is over, and the scores have been tallied, once again that silver bowl will be filled with champagne and one of Walter Mac's family will make the presentation. The winners will pass the bowl from paddler to paddler, and after each of them has enjoyed a quaff, the second place team will partake as well.

And thus, the tradition continues.

You can be part of the tradition by joining us at the Macfarlane Regatta on the 4th of July. *D*



Walter J. Macfarlane



Muriel Flanders presents champagne to winning Macfarlane crew.