

A CHRISTMAS SURPRISE

By Barbara Del Piano

It was a cloudless, sunny day on December 25, 1963, when a stream of cars turned off of Kalakaua Avenue to enter the brand new premises of the Outrigger Canoe Club for the first time. The party was scheduled to begin at 3 p.m., but many of the members arrived early.

Standing at the entrance to greet them were Club President J. Ward Russell and members of the New Site Building Committee: Donald Schmuck, Tom Wells, Hal Whitaker, Walter Collins, Keith Wallace, Dickey Thacker, and Chairman Cline Mann. They had all worked tirelessly to meet their self-imposed deadline of Christmas Day so that the annual Open House could take place in the Outrigger's new home. General Manager, Don Ross, was busy checking last minute details.

Throughout the many months of ground work, ocean preparation, construction, and landscaping, both Ward and Cline did everything possible to keep the project running smoothly, always mindful of that deadline, which in their minds, was etched in stone.

In actuality, they missed it by a few days, because, when the holiday arrived, the kitchen and bar were not quite completed. However, the staff made do with what they had and provided a grand array of delicious pupu and beverages for the crowd.

The McGuire rattan furniture had been ordered from the Orient; upholstered seats were being shipped from San Francisco. The

two ships carrying the items were on their way, but the big question was, "Would they get here in time?"

Just days before Christmas, the ships arrived. The original plan was to take the chairs to a warehouse to be assembled, but instead, they were brought directly to the Club and put together on the spot. A Christmas tree and a few other Yuletide decorations were added early that morning.

As the members arrived, some were eager to see the new clubhouse... others were skeptical...some were dubious...and many were just plain curious. They had no idea what to expect. But to the surprise of all, they were totally impressed with the architectural masterpiece that Vladimir Ossipoff had produced.

Floor plans of the new clubhouse had been on display at the old Club for several months, but looking at blueprints and seeing the actual structure were something entirely different. As they munched on cheese and crackers, sashimi and poki, they commented again and again on how wonderful the new Club had turned out.

Even the most doubtful were swayed by the beautiful surroundings. As Cline and his committee had hoped, it looked like the new building had been set in an ancient coconut grove, due to the full-sized palm trees that had been planted.

As Anzai mixed his Banzai Punch, and Helen and other staff members, working out of their make-shift kitchen, scurried about, refilling platters of teriyaki chicken legs, devilled eggs, and frosted cakes, members relaxed to enjoy the special holiday event, which, courtesy of the Board of Directors, also included a free, open bar. Nearly 1,000 guests attended the celebration, a record number for any event in Club history.

When not munching on delicious goodies or sipping a glass of eggnog, members wandered about the premises, thrilled with the amenities offered by the innovative design. Parking was a special feature, as it had never before been so conveniently located: all the basic features of the "old Club" and more were there, including a large, comfortable Board Room which had been lacking at the previous site.

Lobby, Volleyball Courts, Snack Shop, the traditional Hau Terrace, Dining Lanai, Locker Rooms, Surfboard Lockers, Bar, and Logo Shop were all included, although separated by covered walkways that flowed from one to the other, leading out to the ocean.

Although the party was scheduled to end at 5 p.m., members lingered on, still in awe of the beautiful ambience and reluctant to leave. Fortunately, the Board had anticipated the "over-time" and had ordered the Bar to remain open for an extra hour and for food service to continue as well.

It was truly a day to remember in the annals of the Outrigger Canoe Club which, over the years, had faced many challenges, but managed to survive them all. The move from Waikiki had been by far the biggest challenge of all, with the Club actually coming close to disbanding, but again, it came through with flying colors.

So as the sun set that Christmas evening, gradually sinking into the ocean, the crowd departed in high spirits, fully imbued with the holiday spirit and looking forward to a Happy New Year at the new Club.

Although it was not officially open, the preview of their future home had renewed the optimism of the members in the future of the Club, knowing that it was safe and secure for the next 99 years.

The old Club officially closed at midnight on New Year's Eve. The new Club at Diamond Head opened for "business as usual" on January 4, 1964. The formal opening dedication with a canoe parade between the old and new Clubs was held on January 11, 1964.

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