

Harry Huffaker Named to Marathon Swimming Hall of Fame



Honored for his solo swims between the Hawaiian islands and for helping others en route, Harry Huffaker was cited as an example of all that is admirable and unique in the sport at his induction ceremony.

Outrigger's Harry Huffaker was inducted into the International Marathon Swimming Hall of Fame in New York on June 19. Huffaker was a pioneer in swimming the dangerous channels in Hawaii. Throughout his illustrious career in the pre-GPS era, Huffaker faced

sharks, jellyfish, massive ocean swells and strong currents during unprecedented swims in the tropical waters of Hawaii.

During his 1967 Molokai Channel swim, Huffaker saw a large shark underneath him and immediately headed for his escort boat, but the shark then swam between him and his boat, which was too far away for an easy escape. He continued on and ultimately reached his goal after 16 hours.

Huffaker was the first person to cross the 30-mile Alenuihaha Channel in 20 hours between the Big Island of Hawaii and Maui in 1970 after his initial failure of 17 hours. He crossed from Molokai to Oahu in 1967 and was the first person to cross between Oahu to Molokai in 1972 after a failed 20-hour attempt when he ran into strong currents, a tiger shark and a brood of Portuguese Man-o-War.

At the age of 50 in 1989, he swam from Lanai to Maui, then Maui to Molokai, then attempted to complete his final Molokai-to-Maui leg before being pulled after 18 hours. He has swum the Maui Channel three times, is the first person to cross the 9.3-mile Kalohi Channel (1989) from Molokai to Lanai, and crossed the 8.5-mile Palilolo Channel from Maui to Molokai (1989).

A lifetime of success that followed some dramatic failures has proven Huffaker to be a true pioneer of the Hawaiian Islands channel swimming community.