

Ian Emberson swims the Molokai Channel

by Rick Davis

May 29, 1979, 1:30 P.M. Rick Davis backs his 37 foot motor sailer **Kanaloa** out of slip 68 at the Ala Wai Yacht Harbor to begin his voyage to Molokai. Objective: to escort Ian Emberson in his attempt to swim the treacherous, unpredictable Molokai channel from Molokai to Oahu. . . Accompanying Emberson is professional hiker Mike Miller. They have flown over to the Sheraton Molokai and are awaiting their escort vessels for a 2 A.M. departure.

We arrive 8:45 P.M. to find Gordon Wilkinson, with his **Wailau** already anchored, enjoying dinner. He is also carrying support crew and food for the swimmers. Conditions appear ideal with no wind and flat seas. However, we have found in the previous attempts these conditions can change in a moment.

12:30 A.M., we upped anchor and **Wailau** picked up Emberson and Miller, who swam out from the beach. We then headed south to Laau Point where the swimmers indicated they wanted to start. Seas were still flat, no wind, no moon.

At approximately 1:55 A.M., the swimmers headed for the beach, and at 2:00 A.M. exactly, they signaled they were on the beach and starting the swim. They were accompanied by two paddlers on surfboards. **Kanaloa** set the course, **Wailau** brought up the rear. Our first sighting at 6:00 A.M. put us approximately 6 miles west of Laau Point. Personally, I was happy with the progress, but for the swimmers, it was a bit different. From their vantage point, they didn't feel as if they were moving. Molokai still looked very big to them.

For the next 8 hours it was routine; swim 55 minutes, rest and feed for 5 minutes. The only scare we had was between 10:00 and 11:00 A.M. when a navigation fix showed no progress for the hour. We still are not sure if it was a navigation error or if indeed a current did have us in its grip. In any event, we resumed normal progress, about 1¼ mile per hour, at the next fix and were able to relax again.

Around noon, we were entertained

by a Japanese Zero which put on a 15 minute air show for us. The inter-island air taxis made us a point of interest and were always circling us.

At 4:30, all aboard **Kanaloa** knew we had it made. Psychologically, the swimmers had had it. They just couldn't see the progress we were making and were becoming very discouraged. And then—Walter Guild, Jimmy Dean and Emberson's girl friend Coco to the rescue, along with Jim Caldwell, who came racing up yelling and screaming in 25 foot outboards. How can you be a mile from shore and not finish with Walter Guild urging you on? If he got mad because you didn't finish, that would probably be a lot worse than the pain of that last mile.

And so, at 6:49 P.M., 18 hours and 49 minutes after they entered the water, Club members Ian Emberson and Mike Miller became the 4th and 5th persons to swim from the Island of Molokai to Sandy Beach, Oahu. It was fantastic.

Additional recognition is due Club members Peter Wilson, who paddled alongside the swimmers for the better part of 11 hours and Paul Manaut, who was probably paddling, his board for 16 hours. Manaut was so determined to land at the surfing beach at Sandy that he did. It mattered little that the swimmers landed closer to Makapuu Point, and he found himself all alone. Jody Pollock swam alongside Miller and Emberson for almost 5 hours and came out of the water not even winded.



In the early 1960's, about 1963, Outrigger Beach at W