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# OCC THANKSGIVING, CASTLE, OPEN-WATER DISTANCE SWIMS

By EDWIN NORTH MCCLELLAN

Ordinarily it takes centuries to create a tradition, but the Outrigger Canoe Club has one in less than forty years—the Castle or Thanksgiving Day Swim Meet which started in 1917. Tradition is the source of *esprit de club* and the Swims have added to the indestructible, spiritual part of the Club. It helps to make the OCC live forever.

## A HOLY HERITAGE FROM ANCIENT POLYNESIANS

The OCC has a holy heritage of outriggering, surfboarding, bodysurfing, swimming and diving, inherited from the ancient Polynesians who lived on the Coral Crescent of Waikiki. On May 1, 1908, the OCC solemnly assumed the mission of perpetuating those and other aquatic sports. The OCC Thanksgiving Day Swims, including the Blue Ribbon Castle, is the Club's promise to the Venerable Past that it is partially keeping its swimming-pledge. It must do more. To keep faith with the ancients it must commission an Olympic Pool and an Olympic Committee to find and develop male and female swimmers and divers to represent Hawaii at the Melbourne Olympics in 1956.

## THE FIRST "CASTLE SWIM" IN 1917

The Thanksgiving Period of 1917 was commemorated by the Outrigger Canoe Club with surfing events, swims and an outrigger fishing party off Diamond Head to secure chow for the Monster Chowder and dance that concluded an Aquatic Carnival on December 1. The first Castle Swim and Women's Race was held.

## A SILENT PERIOD, 1918-1921

There may have been Thanksgiving Day Swims of the OCC staged off Waikiki in the years 1918-1921, inclusive, but my casual research did not disclose them. So there is a silent gap of three years.

## RENEWAL IN 1922

The Outrigger Canoe Club's Annual Long Distance Thanksgiving Day Swims

were revived in 1922 and continued every year thereafter under the auspice of the OCC off Waikiki until 1932 inclusive — the year Franklin Delano Roosevelt was elected.

## UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII ASUH SPONSORS SWIMS, 1933-1936

On Thanksgiving Day, November 2, 1933, the Outrigger Canoe Club at the Associated Students of the U of H sponsored a swim meet off Waikiki. In 1934 this Thanksgiving Day Swim Meet was held off Waikiki under AAU rules sponsored by the ASUH. The ASUH also sponsored the 1935 meet off Waikiki.

## SWIMS OF 1936 IN ALA MOANA CHANNEL

Waikiki was abandoned and the Thanksgiving Day Meet in 1936 was held in the Ala Moana Channel under the jurisdiction of the ASUH. Thus these traditional swims had not only passed from the original sponsorship of the OCC but had been shifted from Waikiki to the Ala Moana Channel. More than that—1936 saw the last of the Thanksgiving Day Meet until 1953. At the OCC had left was the history of the swims.

## EFFORTS TO REVIVE SWIMS IN 1952

"It is great news that the famous Castle Swim is to be revived this year," reported the *Forecast*, November, 1952. "The event formerly held on Thanksgiving Day will be held on Sunday, November 30th . . . It is hoped that the revival of this great event will help stimulate interest and competitive swimming among our members." But the Castle Swim of 1952 did not materialize.

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## RENEWAL OF "CASTLE" CAME IN 1953

"The Club is in real earnest to revive this historic [Castle] Swim and every effort will be made to perpetuate it," published the *Forecast*, April 1953. "Albert E. Toots Minvielle has been appointed chairman of the swim committee and has already drafted helpers to put it over . . . Dad Center has agreed to act as advisor to the committee and with this pair of aces we are assured of success."

The *Forecast* spoke again in November 1953, about the "OCC Open Invitational Turkey Day Castle Swim." It sounded a "last call to prospective entries in the Castle and other swims to be held Thanksgiving morning, Thursday, November 26th. . . . Under direction of Toots Minvielle this traditional swimming day held each year by the Club is again revived."

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## AFFILIATED CLUBS

Aero Club of Oregon, Portland, Oregon.  
Arizona Club, Phoenix, Arizona.  
The Austin Club, Austin, Texas.

Yes, it happened in 1953. "The OCC under the chairmanship of Toots Minvielle, aided by a large number of Club members, held a successful revival on Thanksgiving Day, November 26th," reported the *Forecast*, December, 1953.

## MANY SWIM EVENTS, UNDER VARYING CONDITIONS; TIMES MEAN LITTLE

The Thanksgiving Day Open Water Distance Swims program carries events for male and female, man, woman, boy and girl. These open-water swims off Waikiki involve a study of currents, winds, waves and body-surfing by those who aspire to victory. It is a race requiring mental as well as physical qualifications. Therefore, times in the swims mean little, as conditions for each race and for each contestant vary over the years.

While most of the events are closed to OCC members, there are some open to all.

## MANY HAVE WON—MORE HAVE LOST

Harold "Stubby" Kruger (Healani) won the first Castle Swim (1917); Josephine Hopkins was victoress in the

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100-yard *Ladies Swim*; F. Richardse won the 200-yard *Men's Breast Stroke*.

Many OCC names appear among the winners: Chester Sims (twice), Mari chen Wehslau (five times), Alec R. Tullock, H. Makinney, Bob Askew (five times), Bouldin Burbank, Pauline Laird, Albert E. Minvielle (four times), K. McKinney, Benton Wood (four times), Lelehua Judd, Gay Harris (five times), Janice Lovett (twice), Hans Bahr, Bertrice Newport, Buster Crabbe (four times), Billy Newport (twice), Cliff Gessler (four times), Alice Mitchell, Kenneth Wood (three times), Mildred Slaght (twice), Lillie Bowmer May, Wilbur Craw (thrice), Lorena Hines (twice), Olga Clarke (six times), David Harvey Dot Hammond, Jack May, Jimmie Hurd, Bob McWayne, Gladys Slaght (twice), Harold Sexton, Hollinger, Georgian Cooper, D. Pope, and Betty Stevenson. There were thousands who never won a crown.

## RENEWAL ON THANKSGIVING DAY 1953

A renewal of the OCC Open Water Distance Swims took place off Waikiki on Thanksgiving Day, November 26. The *Men's Swim OCC* was won by Gay Harris. The *Women's Swim OCC* was taken by Jane Wiley. *Boys' Sixteen and Under*, winner Butch Hemmings. *Girls' Sixteen and Under OCC*, won by Cynthia Hemmings. *Boys' Twelve Years and Under OCC*, won by Bill Danford. There also were many events open to everybody.

More power to the fine swimmers and Club members who, from 1917 to 1953, have made this swim meet so interestingly successful. The Outrigger Canoe Club has performed a great service to the Territory and its people. We now face 1954!