



R. Alex Anderson

A Musical Legend in His Own Time

By Frank E. Walton

*"When the waves are up for surfing
And the sea is running high
Our canoes and boards are out there
Where the waves are rolling by."*

Do you recognize these words? You should, they're the opening words to "Outrigger," the Club song written especially for us by longtime member R. Alex Anderson.

The song is one of the most recent in a songwriting career that began some 75 years ago when he wrote a fight song for Punahou (it was called Oahu College then) and later wrote "Go Punahou," which is still sung at his alma mater.

Now, he says, they are asking him to write a song to commemorate the 150th anniversary of that distinguished institution. That will occur in 1991.

Alex's musical career was temporarily sidetracked while he served in the U.S. Army Air Corps during World War I. (It was called "The Aviation Section of the Signal Corps" in those days.)

He and a wingman shot down a German bomber and then, on August 28, 1918, he tangled with five German planes, was wounded, forced to land, captured and made a POW.

His hair-raising account of his escape and his trek through hostile country, getting through an electrified fence and making it safely back to England is a story in itself.

After the war, Alex returned to Hawaii and became a successful businessman but continued writing

songs. Over the years he has written more than 100 songs; perhaps best known are "The Cockeyed Mayor of Kaunakakai" and the exquisite "Lovely Hula Hands."

Alex first joined the Outrigger Canoe Club as a student member in 1909. He recalls Club founder Alex Hume Ford initiating him into surfing by giving him a push on one of the heavy plank boards in use at the time.

He dropped his membership when he went to the mainland to college, graduating from Cornell with a degree in mechanical engineering.

He resumed his membership when he returned to Hawaii after the war and married Dad Center's sister, Peggy Center. Last November the couple celebrated their 67th anniversary.

On February 23, upon recommendation of the Historical Committee, the Club membership approved the award of a Life Membership to R. Alexander Anderson in recognition of his many years of membership and his major contribution to the Club in the form of the words and music to the Club song: "Outrigger." Cassette tapes of the Club song are available at the Beach Shop.

A well-deserved award to a musical legend of both Hawaii and the Outrigger.

Naturally, we expect Alex to be here in person in 1991 to play the song he's written for Punahou's 150th anniversary, and of course, we expect his lovely wife Peggy to sing it. ☎