

Life Member: Josephine Hopkins Garner

By Mary Machado

Among the women who have distinguished themselves in surfing and swimming competition for the OCC, one name looms prominently—that of Josephine Hopkins Garner.

Josephine was a pioneer in an age when competitive women's sports were virtually nonexistent. Prior to 1917, there was scant competition in the area of women's surfing at the OCC with one exception.

In 1910, Josephine C. Pratt was named winner of a Queen's Surf Surfing event and received a perpetual trophy—the Frank Clark Cup—which was kept at the Club. This competition was repeated for the last time in 1917 and the trophy was awarded to Josephine Hopkins.

Several OCC members, among them Club Captain Dad Center and Judge William T. Rawlins, who was an AAU Director, were working diligently to develop a women's swimming program at the OCC. It was with the encouragement and sponsorship of Judge Rawlins that young Josephine joined the Club.

"I was a frail youngster, tall and skinny.

It was recommended that I take up swimming to build endurance. Each day after classes at Sacred Hearts Academy, I went to the Waikiki home of family friends—the Akana family—who lived near the corner of Ohua and Kalakaua Avenues. There I changed into my swimsuit and swam at Kuhio Beach across the street.

Judge Rawlins, who was scouting for outstanding swimmers, observed her skill and sponsored her for OCC membership in 1917.

Within the year, Josephine had captured several medals, a trophy and the distinction of second place in an AAU meet as an OCC

contender. This was her first major competition. Her main competitor was the then-Pacific Coast Champion Dorothy Burns who won first place.

"I was lucky enough to come in second in the 50, 100 and 200," she says and "became the first woman to swim for the OCC in competition outside of the Club. This became the start of a women's swim team.

"I also competed in the 1 1/2 mile swim from the Elks Club to the former OCC (Castle Swim) with 25 or 30 men and finished ahead of many of them. For this, I received a special medal from the Club.



The OCC Women's Relay Team wearing the royal blue swimsuits designed by Coach Dad Center. From left, Bea Dowsett (Ross), Gerd Hiorth (Blodgett), Ruth Scudder (Gillmar) and Josephine Hopkins (Garner).

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"In 1920, the first women's relay team was formed which included Bea Dowsett, Gerd Hiorth and Ruth Scudder, along with myself."

While Dad Center was at the Olympics in Antwerp with Duke Kahanamoku in 1920, Josephine coached the fledgling women's swim team. Several of these aspirants went on to become champions.

She recalls many more happy events, meets held in Honolulu Harbor, in Hilo Harbor, at the YMCA and the opening of the University of Hawaii swimming pool which was marked by a visit of the Yale Swim Team.

She comments, "They had a swim meet. I won the ladies plunge record and came in second in the 50 and the 100."

According to Gerd Hiorth Blodgett, Josephine was "an excellent open water competitor."

Josephine also excelled in surfing, as evidenced by her winning first place in the Queen's Surf competition in 1917.

"I was under Clair Talt's tutelage who was head coach for the Club. Dad Center would accompany us out to Second Surf. At the former Club, the canoes were kept under the seats which ringed the pavilion. I borrowed a board from Dad Center. Whenever I could, I would surf from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. with time out only for lunch."

Married to the late Gerald Sheldon Garner, who was recruited from the Mainland to become the circulation manager for the Honolulu Advertiser, she is the mother of two sons, Alan and Charles.

The Hopkins' roots run deep in these islands—back to Josephine's great great

granduncle who was a member of "the House of Nobles and Director of the Government Press at Honolulu."

He was a brother of Manley Hopkins, the British Consul of the Sandwich Islands, the author of one of the first histories of Hawaii and the father of the famed English poet, Gerard Manley Hopkins.

She speaks with affection of her grandmother, Angela Kahala Aiwohi Hopkins, and of her grandfather, Charles Louis Hopkins, and of his scholarly pursuits.

The latter was Marshall during King Kalakaua's reign and Territorial Interpreter for the courts for a number of years.

Josephine was hanaied by her maternal grandparents early in life and reared with gentleness as their punahele (favored one).

This distinctively statuesque keiki o ka aina literally glows with a love of her island home, her friends and her associations with the OCC.

Always the engaging conversationalist, she serves on the OCC Historical Committee and is an invaluable resource person because of her familiarity with Hawaii and the OCC.

With an infectious grin, ready wit and sharp precise perception, Josephine is the quintessential OCC Living Treasure. This fact was recognized in 1984 when she was

designated a Life Member because of her contributions to the OCC through the years. Star quality is still evident in her wit, grace, charm and above all, dignity. From the time of her first association with the Club, her dedication and loyalty have been evident. She leaves no doubt about her sentiments regarding the Club:

"My happiest days have been spent at the OCC. I cut my eye teeth at this Club."



Josephine Hopkins Garner

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