

MAY EVELYN FREETH BORTHWICK
Interview by Paul A. Dolan

March 5, 2007

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I am Paul Arthur Dolan, a member of the Outrigger Canoe Club's Historical Committee. For sometime the Committee has been conducting oral interviews of prominent members of our Club. Today, it is my pleasure to interview May Evelyn Freeth Borthwick, a long time member of the Outrigger Canoe Club. We are at the Club's boardroom on a beautiful Hawaiian day.

PAD: Good afternoon, May.

MEB: Good afternoon, Paul.

PAD: When, where and to whom were you born?

MEB: I was born in Halawa Valley, Molokai, on August 14th, 1928. My mother was Evelyn Clark Freeth and my dad was Douglas William Freeth.

PAD: When did you leave Molokai?

MEB: I was 6-months old. My mother went back to Molokai because her mother wanted her there for me to be born. She stayed there until I was old enough to catch the boat back to Honolulu

PAD: What did she do?

MEB: She was a dental hygienist.

PAD: How about your Dad?

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MEB: He was an architect. He worked for C. W. Dickey for many years and then he went into his own business and partnered with Cy Lemmon and became Architects Hawaii.

PAD: They have since passed away. Do you have any siblings?

MEB: I was the only child as was my Dad.

PAD: Where did to attend school?

MEB: I attended kindergarten at St. Andrew's Priory and then we left for Kauai in 1936. My Dad was the architect for the G. N. Wilcox Memorial Hospital in Lihue, Kauai.

I then went to Lihue Grammar (Elementary) and we spent a year there.

Upon returning to Honolulu, I attended Lincoln School, Robert Louis Stevenson School, Roosevelt High School and then the University of Hawaii.

PAD: What year did you graduate from Roosevelt?

MEB: 1946.

PAD: Who were some of you classmates?

MEB: (Pause....) I don't remember. Not really. (laughter) I was involved with girls in the class of 1945, namely, Yvonne "Blondie" Boyd and the other girls.

PAD: What kind of sports did you participate in high school?

MEB: I did swimming.

In my senior year I was coached by Soichi Sakamoto of the University of Hawaii. He was my personal trainer.

PAD: Oh, touch you! (laughter) After Roosevelt you went where?

MEB: To the University of Hawaii until my junior year and then I got married. I did swim at the U and became captain of the swim team in 1947.

PAD: You did only swimming? Any other sports?

MEB: I rode horses and played volleyball at the Outrigger.

PAD: You got married. When and to whom?

MEB: I got married on December 29th 1948 to William Mendel Borthwick

PAD: So you are now married....Children?

MEB Yes there are three children. William Blair Borthwick born October 20, 1949, Karen May Borthwick born March 23, 1950 and Douglas Freeth Borthwick born April 20 1953.

PAD: With the three children you went to work?

MEB: Well yes. I taught hula as a side line. I was teaching since I was sixteen. I taught for my grand-aunt Dorothy Campbell at Betty Lei Hula Shop in Waikiki.

PAD: Where was it located?

MEB: I can see the place, but I can't remember the street. (laughter)

PAD: When did you first perform hula?

MEB: I first performed at the Royal Hawaiian Hotel in 1930 when I was two years old. I performed at the Royal for about three years. Until I was five and then I quit. (laughter)

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PAD: You got involved with horses. Tell me about it.

MEB: I was nine years old and rode at the Town and Country Stables, formerly across the street from the Outrigger Canoe Club.

PAD: When was your first Pa'u ride?

MEB: My first was in 1946 at the Kamehameha Day Parade.

PAD: You kept riding horses until when?

MEB: Until I was around fifty-seven then the doctor told me to stop. We had a ranch in Waimanlo, the *Double 5 Ranch*, where we raised Arabians.

PAD: Tell me a little about Mendel

MEB: Mendel worked at Borthwick's Mortuary as a director. His grandfather started the business and his father took over and Mendel took over from his father. The Mortuary was sold in 1980 by a group headed by John Felix. It has been sold twice since and the name is remains the same.

Mendel then became president of Honolulu Federal Savings and Loan which was also started by his grandfather.

PAD: Wow! Talk about nepotism. How long was he there?

MEB: He was there until it was sold to Bank of America.

PAD: How were you introduced to the Club?

MEB: I was so young and it was at the Club completed in 1941 with C. W. Dickey and my Dad was one of the architects. My Dad's firm also did Oahu Country Club.

My Mother and Dad joined the Club and I was thirteen when I joined the Club on September 20, 1943.

PAD: What sport did you do first in the Club?

MEB: I paddled canoe in my first race in 1945 when I was about fifteen.

PAD: You finally hung up paddling in the senior-6 women's crew?

MEB: I can't remember. I also played "beach or sand" volleyball. We played around town against different teams at different places on hard court.

PAD: Were you a spiker or setter?

MEB: I was a setter and I played until I was thirty-five.

PAD: You played golf?

MEB: I didn't start until after my horses at about sixty. We sold the ranch at that time.

PAD: How about bridge? How did you get involved with bridge?

MEB: My Mother and Father made me play when I was around eleven years old. I haven't stopped since.

PAD: Super! Did you children pick up bridge?

MEB: No! Not one of them.

PAD: How about club committees? Were you on any of them?

MEB: I was on the Entertainment Committee for sometime and chaired it in 1960-61. We had the best group of people on the committee and looked forward to working together and having a 'few' after

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the meetings. I can't remember who was on the committee because it was such a long time ago.

PAD: How about other organizations?

MEB: I was a member of the Prince Kuhio Hawaiian Civic Club for a period of years.

I was an officer or director of the YWCA for a number of years.

I was a judge for the Hawaiian AAU. They needed judges for swimming meets.

I went to see my youngest son swim in college in 1974 and was a judge.

I remained a judge for about ten years.

PAD: At this present date, what are your activities?

MEB: I play golf and bridge. I play golf at the Oahu Country Club and bridge at the OCC or at the Elks.

PAD: The children all grown and they have children of their own?

MEB: Oh, yes and the children have children. I have seven grand children and I have five great grand children.

PAD: Are they all still in the Islands?

MEB: Blair is in Honolulu and his two children and three grand children are in Texas. Karen has two children with two grand children lives in Pennsylvania. Douglas has three children with no grand children yet is in California.

PAD: Did the children belong to the Club?

MEB: Yes, they were members when they were young. When they left for college they decided to quit.

Blair belongs to the Oahu Country Club and is a good golfer.

Douglas has no interest in joining any club. He's a Hawaiian archeologist.

PAD: Comparing the old Club to this present Club that we now enjoy, what do you miss from the old Club?

MEB: I enjoyed the Hau Terrace and the volleyball courts. Also the lunches, parties and dances on the Sun Deck and even the bar. (laughter) I couldn't drink until I was twenty-one. (laughter)

PAD: What do you think about this Club?

MEB: I guess I don't feel the same way about this Club as I did the old one. I grew up in the old Club with lots of memories. (Note: I can't recollect them)

PAD: Don't you feel it was the best move to this location. At the time of the move members were quitting the Club and joining the Elks because the dues were less. Other members just quit.

MEB: What was the Club to do, just lease from the Outrigger Hotel?

PAD: There was talk of leasing a floor of the hotel. We would not have had enough space and been run over with tourists.

There would not have been enough room at that location to store our canoes, kayaks and 1-man canoes. Parking would have been a real problem.

What do you think about our present Club facilities?

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MEB: I think there fine and I enjoy the Club even if it just to play bridge and enjoy a meal.

PAD: What do you think about the OCC-2C improvements to the Club?

MEB: I just said “no.” Have we settled the lease rent?

PAD: Everything has been put on “hold” until the new lease rent is known scheduled for May 16 and then it will raise it ugly head again.

Can you name some of the people that you “horsed” around with at the Club?

MEB: Ivanelle Mountcastle....How’s that? I can’t remember any others.

PAD: What recollections of events can you recall?

MEB: I do remember one. I was playing volleyball and I hear someone shouting at me. “G--dam it May, you get off that volleyball court!” It was Dr. Rodney West, my OB/GYN, telling me to get off the court because I was pregnant with my second child. I was three months on.

Let me tell you this. I was playing in a tournament and I was six months on.

After my third child it was so easy having him that two weeks after he arrived I was playing volleyball again.

It was good to stay in shape and keep active. They didn’t believe in that regime in those days.

PAD: What do you think of the number of members in the Club?

MEB: I don’t know how many there are.

PAD: Almost forty-nine hundred in all categories of membership. Do you feel the Club is overcrowded sometimes?

MEB: No, because I'm strictly a social member and just come to play bridge and have dinner once in a while.

PAD: What do you think of the Club as an instrument of promoting Hawaiian water sports?

MEB: It's good. I think the Club does very well in the water sports and volleyball.

PAD: You know we have some of the most valuable koa canoes in existence. The LEILANI, KAKINA and the KAOLOA have an estimated value of seventy to eighty thousand dollars.

MEB: KAKINA is the canoe that we women paddled in and won many races.

PAD: The KAOLOA was renovated recently to comply with the HCRA (Hawaiian Canoe Racing Association) rule that koa canoes must not have any foreign material in its construction. It's all koa with not a piece of metal in it.

MEB: Did the KAKINA have anything foreign?

PAD: Oh yeah! The KAKINA and LEILANI will also be renovated in the future to comply with the rule. All koa canoes will have to be regulation Hawaiian.

MEB: I didn't know there was any metal in the canoes.

PAD: Oh yes, there were metal rods that held the gunnels together at the i`akos (cross-members hold the ama or float) including metal screws holding the seats in the canoe.

MEB: My God! I didn't know that.

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PAD: Well May, I've picked your brains as much as I can. Remember, you may input more information as you see fit.

Thank goodness you are computer literate. It should be very easy for you to add to this oral history.

Many thanks for making this interview very interesting. Aloha.

MAY'S SCRAPBOOK



Paradise Eng.

Photo by F. W. Warren

*Hawaii's Youngest Hula Dancer—May Freeth, Age Two
Pupil of the Betty Lei Shop*



Outrigger Canoe Club Public Baths Swim
Trophy – 1945 – May Freeth – 1st place

OCC Forecast Dec-1945

Castle Swim

This event was a decided success. Held Thanksgiving Day it brought forth a host of material from which it is hoped the Club may begin to build a swim team truly representative. The Castle Swim was won by Stanley Hargrave in 25 minutes, 45 5/10 seconds. Betty Sumner won the girls under 16 race from Canoe Surf, L. Kinnear, the boys' swim from the same point. Cunha Swim for boys won by Blaine Boyden, Cunha Girls' Novice won by Patricia Honl, Public Baths Swim for Women won by May Freeth.

Public Baths Swim for men over 40 won by Sam Kahanamoku and Gay Harris second.

An unscheduled race was held by Duke Kahanamoku and Charles Amalu; they had entered in the Public Baths Swim but decided it was too short, so they took off from Castle Surf and both finished in great style. These men, both over 50, show what daily exercise can accomplish for one.



Diving – 3-meter platform – McKinley High School pool -1945



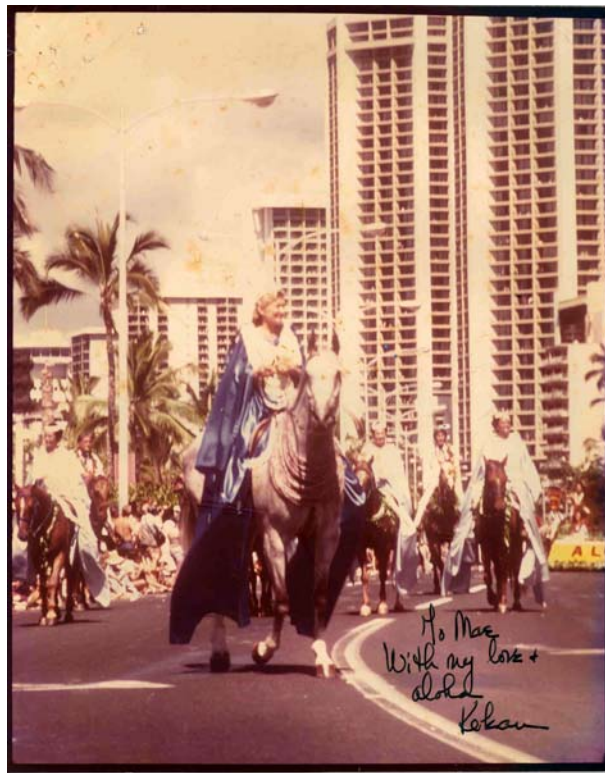
COMPETE IN SWIMS: Pictured above are members of the Roosevelt High school wahine swim team entered in the University of Hawaii invitational swimfest to be held at the college pool Friday. From left, they are: Front row, Elizabeth Hironaka, Janette Sapiro, Eda Levintohle, Alva Janssen, Yvonne Boyd, Ruth Winsley, Eula Hodges, Rosemary Silva and Lynn Shields. Second row, Marilyn Muirhead, Martha Steinberg, Francis Siu, Susan Johnson, Francis Johnson, May Freeth, Audrey Hitchcock and Wilma Brown. Back row, Jean Turner, Barbara Borthwick and Josephine Jensen.



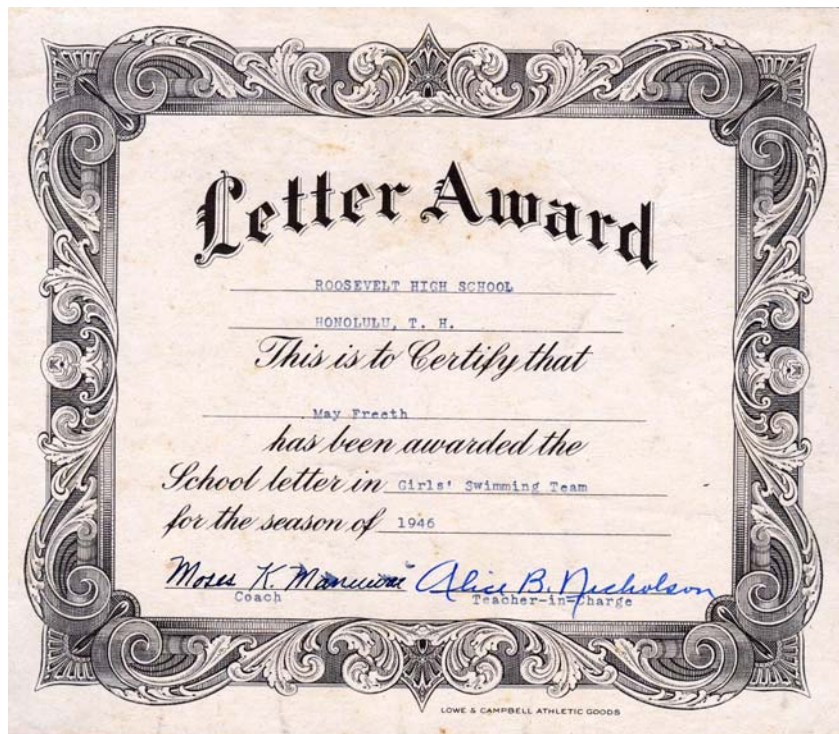
JOHNNY HOLLINGER, YVONNE "BLONDIE" BOYD, MAY FREETH
BARBARA BORTHWICK & ALVA JENSEN
Outrigger Canoe Club – Senior-6 Women's – 1st Place
Walter Macfarlane Memorial Races – July 4, 1945



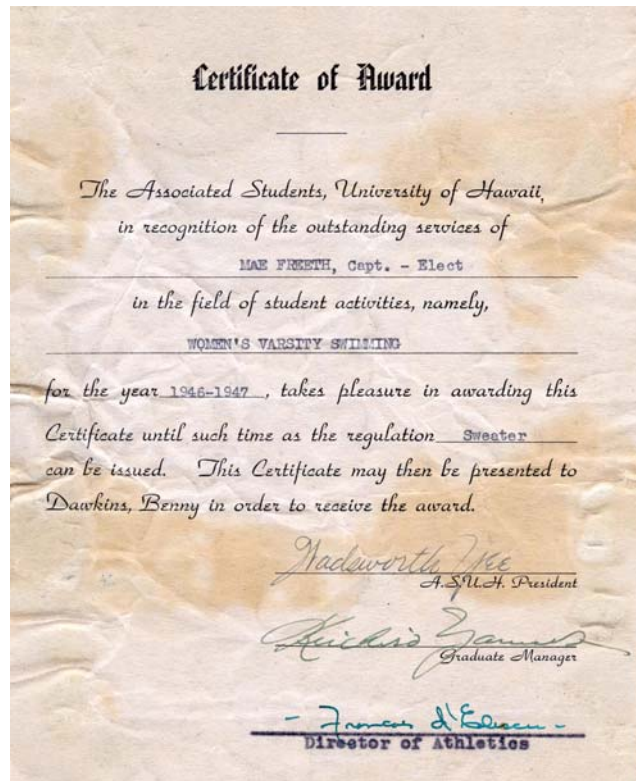
Pa'u rider – Kamehameha Day Parade – June 11th, 1945



Princess Abigail Kawanānakoā with May Freeth directly behind
Kamehameha Day Parade – June 11, 1946



Roosevelt High School letter in Swimming - 1946



ASUH letter in swimming – Swim team captain in 1947



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