

CHARLES OSCAR SWANSON
Interview by Paul A. Dolan

April 11, 2007

This oral history interview is a project of the Historical Committee of the Outrigger Canoe Club. The legal right to this material remains with the Outrigger Canoe Club. Anyone wishing to reproduce it or quote at length from it should contact the Historical Committee of the Outrigger Canoe Club.

* * * * *

“The reader should be aware that an oral history document portrays information as recalled by the interviewee. Because of the spontaneous nature of this kind of document, it may contain statements and impressions that are not factual.”

Quoted by permission of the University of Hawaii Ethnic Studies Program, Oral History Project.

CHARLES OSCAR SWANSON

Interview by Paul A. Dolan

April 11, 2007

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 Charles Oscar Swanson, past president and long time member of the Outrigger Canoe Club. We are at the Club's boardroom on a beautiful Hawaiian day.

PAD: Good morning, Chuck.

COS: Good morning, Paul.

PAD: How were you introduced to the Outrigger Canoe Club?

COS: I was a guest for lunch of a member while I was on active duty at Pearl Harbor Navy Ship Yard. I don't remember who it was or when.

PAD: Wow! Who do you remember bringing you in after that?

COS: Oh, Bobby Evans.

PAD: You were still in the Navy when you joined?

COS: No, I had retired from the Navy.

PAD: Do you remember when you joined?

COS: It was a couple of years after I got out of the Navy. It was not proper for naval officers to take part in such activities when they worked under Adm. Rickover.

OCC-71-2

PAD: Ooooh! That's rough. Do you know who your sponsors were?

COS: No, I don't remember.

PAD: Let me help you in this instance.

You were approved for membership on June 17, 1978 and your sponsors were Everett "Chip" Higgins and Paul Lacy.

COS: Thank you. That makes sense.

PAD: What attracted you to the Club?

COS: It was a good athletic club. A number of people Anne and I knew were members. It was situated in a fine location. The food and service were good and we felt we'd like to be a part of it. It looked like a worth-while endeavor.

PAD: What sports did you enjoy at the Club?

COS: I played tennis occasionally with fellow members and that was about it\

PAD: When did you first participate in committees?

COS: I don't remember exactly, but I served for about six to ten years in committees and the Board of Directors for five years.

PAD: Do you know what committees were on?

COS: I was on Building & Grounds, primarily and also the House Committee.

PAD: Let me help you out. I have it here that you were the chairman of the Building & Grounds Committee in 1983 and 1988. You were chairman of the House Committee in 1987. That's being very active. In addition, you were a member of the respective Committees, when not chairman.

COS: I just couldn't keep a job. (laughter)

PAD: Were there any interesting achievements when you were chairman of any of the committees?

COS: We changed the appearance of the main dining room (Koa Lanai) by installing koa wood throughout.

We installed the access to the beach with new concrete stairs.

One of the concerns was what was going to be the future lease rent.

PAD: We're still worried about it at this time. The reopening for the lease rent was November 16, 2006 and as of this date the matter is still in negotiation. We have forty-eight and a half more years on the lease.

We're not going to be around to worry about where the Club will go after the lease expires.

Somehow you became active with the Board. Knowing that dates of your activity fail you, I will recite them for you.

1990 & 1991 you were a director and coordinating director for the Building & Grounds Committee. That's a big committee with lots of activity.

1992 you were vice-president of operations.

1993 you were president.

1994 you were treasurer and coordinating director of the Finance Committee.

In your presidency, can you remember some of the good fun times and achievements?

COS: The best thing about it was the Board that I worked with. We faced the problems squarely. I don't remember what the issues were, but they were not that demanding. I didn't have any pangs of conscience for not having done the proper things for the Club.

OCC-71-4

It was a wonderful experience working with a group of very fine Club members.

PAD: What do you like especially about the Club, presently? It's been thirteen years since your presidency?

COS: There are a lot of younger people in the Club these days which I think is good for the organization. They are participating in sports and are members of the various committees and of the Board. This is very healthy for the Club.

PAD: We sure have wonderful resources when it comes to competition in the various sports.

My day there was politics within the various sports. I felt very fortunate that I didn't have a problem, although it did exist.

I find that the present Club is very family oriented and the leadership should be mindful to keep it that way.

OK.... Let's talk about your military service.

COS: I went to the Naval Academy in July of 1945, was graduated in 1949, receiving a BS degree in engineering. I was at the Academy before the end of World War-II, long enough to receive the American Theater Campaign Medal and the WW-II Victory Medal.

PAD: Are you listed in the World War-II Memorial database? After the Academy you went where?

COS: No I'm not listed and don't feel it necessary.

About eleven months after I left the Academy I went to MIT for three years, to study naval architecture and marine engineering. I was graduated from there in 1953.

From there I went to submarine school and completed training in 1954.

After sub school, I was assigned to the USS CROKER (SS-246). I stayed onboard until I qualified as a submariner. She was an old diesel-electric boat that had been modified as a sonar platform.

I was then sent for Portsmouth Naval Ship Yard where I was re-designated from a line officer to an engineering duty officer.

PAD: Wow, you really were restricted in your duties. Did you have any more service time in boats?

COS: No, I was strictly a specialist and not permanently attached to any boat or crew.

PAD: You remained that way until you retired? What were some of your duty stations?

COS: I served as submarine program officer at the David W. Taylor Model Basin where I conducted research projects on prototype submarines and basic research for future designs.

Then to Bureau of Ships in Washington DC where I served as contract manager on the submarine type desk having seven submarines under my purview. I had the desk for the *TRITON*, *JACK*, *GROWLER*, *GREYBACK*, *TULLIBEE*, *HALIBUT* and *ALBACORE*. These were all special mission boats, both nuclear and diesel-electric.

PAD: Good for you. Old diesel boats too. I understand that sonar is critical being unable to detect the old diesel-electric boats. I hope they correct that matter.

So you went right up the ladder and you retired when?

COS: In 1975, almost 30 years to the day I entered. I finished up as a captain at CINCPACFLT for nine months after completing a tour as Commander, Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard from 1972 to 1974.

PAD: What was your most valued decoration?

OCC-71-6

COS: The Navy Commendation Medal for work completed at the Electric Boat Company, which was in the late 1960's.

PAD: After you retired what was your first civilian job?

COS: I worked for Governor George Ariyoshi as the Deputy Director for the State Department of Transportation from 1975 to 1979. The first two years I was Deputy Director of the Planning Division and the last two years I was Deputy Director for the Harbors Division. I worked under director E. Alvey Wright, a former Navy rear-admiral, and later, Dr. Ricky Higashona.

PAD: Those top jobs roll around like pin balls. It's so political. Onward, what was the next job you had?

COS: I am grateful to Herb Cornuelle for arranging an interview with the Dillingham Corporation which ultimately resulted in my assuming the job as CEO and President of Dillingham Tug and Barge Corporation (later Hawaiian Tug and Barge) and Young Brother Ltd. When Hawaiian Electric Industries bought the two companies, I remained in the same position until my retirement in 1992.

After that Mayor Harris needed someone to fill in for a short term as Director, Department of Transportation Services, City and County of Honolulu from 1995 to 1997. After that job of two years I retired for good. Let's just say that I took a job that didn't make any money.

PAD: Have you had any additional advanced education?

COS: I attended the Harvard Program for Management Development in 1968, receiving a certificate.

I also attended the University of Hawaii Advanced Management program.

PAD: Presently, what do you do athletically?

COS: I play tennis three days a week for a little exercise.

PAD: No golf?

COS: No golf. In 1962 I went to work for SUBPAC as a LTCDR and they had Wednesday afternoon off. My wife bought a nice set of clubs for me. We worked seven days a week so I took up tennis.

PAD: Wow! Seven days a week. What was going on?

COS: The Cuban Missile Crisis and setting up the Polaris operation in the Pacific.

PAD: Your wife has had quite a career of her own. Tell me a little about her.

COS: She's the best thing that ever happened to me. Anne Beverley Wright Swanson was a model when I met her at age eighteen. We have four outstanding children, Beck, Brad, Anne and John, and six wonderful grand children.

We will have our fifty-seventh anniversary on the 9th of September, 2007.

PAD: Did you marry her after you graduated from the Academy?

COS: No. We married a little over a year later.

PAD: What were her accomplishments? I remember seeing her name in the newspaper.

COS: She is a past president of the Garden Club of Honolulu. She's still very active in that organization. She is also on the Board of Hawaii Theatre.

She's been very active with the Lyon Arboretum board and as a docent for the Academy of Arts for more than 30 years. She is a very capable woman who stays very busy.

OCC-71-8

PAD: Did she have an executive type job in town?

COS: No, she's been a top model in the State. She retired at sixty while it was still her idea. (laughter) She sets a very fine example for our offspring.

PAD: That's a kick! Your children, can you name them all? Start from the top.

COS: I'm pretty sure I can. The oldest is Charles Beckman Swanson born on 7 August 1950. Number two is William Bradshaw Swanson born a couple of years later on 11 February 1952. Then a daughter, Anne Beverley Swanson, same name as her mother, born on 27 October 1957. The last one was John Westwood Swanson born on 4 April 1967.

PAD: Where did they all go to school?

COS: All of them at one point in time all went to Punahou. The two boys attended in the 7th & 8th grade and 5th and 6th grade, respectively. Our daughter attended in her 10th through 12th grades and John attended all twelve years.

PAD: At Punahou?

COS: At Punahou. John attended after I was out of the Navy.

PAD: Where are all the children scattered now?

COS: Mostly, on the east coast. Number one son is in the New Haven, Connecticut area, married with three children, Charles Jr., Peter and Margaret. Number two son and his wife live in Harpswell, Maine. Daughter and her husband with children, Elizabeth, Benjamin and Lilly live in Newton, Mass., and number three son resides in Portland, Oregon.

PAD: Nobody here? Nobody in Hawaii, they all went to college on the east coast and have chosen not to come back.

PAD: Like my three kids also. Let's get back to you. You were born when, where and to whom?

COS: I was born on August 25, 1927 in Canyon City, Colorado to Oscar Bernard Swanson and Beatrice Gail Swanson.

PAD: What did your Dad do?

COS: My father was a retail dry goods store owner in private business.

We moved from Canyon City when I was a year old to Delta, Colorado, where I was raised.

I left from Delta to go to the Academy at the ripe old age seventeen.

I went back east and I haven't returned to Delta except for a visit since.

PAD: Super! Did you mother work?

COS: No. She was a homemaker.

PAD: Any siblings?

COS: None.

PAD: You were the only child? Spoiled?

COS: I was the only child. (laughter)

PAD: Holy cats, I'm tail-end of seven. What are you doing presently to keep yourself out of mischief?

COS: I recently moved into Kahala Nui (Retirement Community). Upon moving in, I resigned the chairmanship of the board of directors.

OCC-71-10

During the development of the project I was blessed with a devoted and capable board. I am very proud of the way the project has turned out.

PAD: So you were on the ground floor in the development. I remember Joyce Timpson working on promoting the project. She was really hawking the place. (laughter)

COS: Love her dearly. She is largely responsible for the success of the project.

PAD: I'm surprised at the number of Club members who reside there. Between Kahala Nui and Arcadia, half of the oldsters of the Club are living out their golden years.

PAD: Are you doing any traveling?

COS: We go to the mainland once or twice a year. We've visited Russia, China and Europe. We go to Squam Lake Camp in New Hampshire to a camp called Rockywold Deep Haven Camps. We've had the whole family there for a week or two. This will be the 25th year.

PAD: It's amazing that the children all gravitated to the mainland. It's because of jobs, basically. Just like my kids. They still have their roots in Hawaii.

COS: They all went to college back there and married. That's their home.

PAD: Here you are, comfortable in Hawaii.

COS: No complaints. I don't miss those New England winters. (laughter)

PAD: My Dad was the same, being from Fitchburg, Massachusetts. You say you're going back in May. Besides seeing the children what are you going to be doing?

OCC-71-11

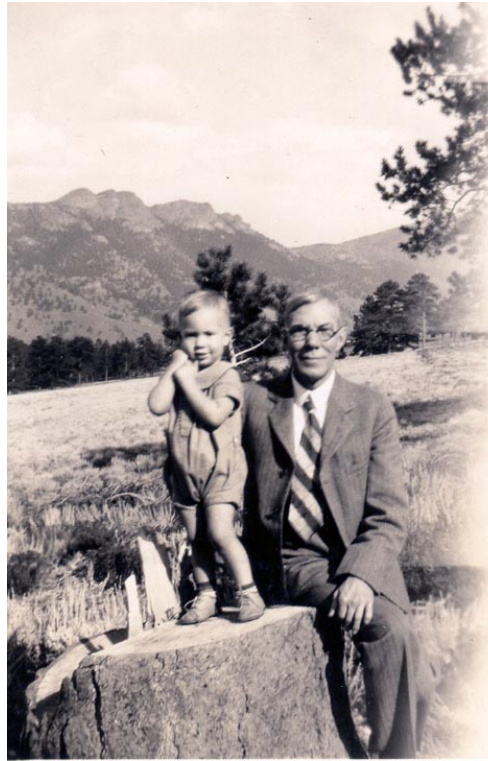
COS: I've been invited to join the official party for the commissioning of the submarine, *USS HAWAII*. I'm very grateful for the opportunity.

PAD: That's great! What an honor!

Well Chuck, we'll wrap it up and I'll look to you to review and complete this oral history. Aloha and thank you much.

COS: You're welcome, Paul

CHARLES O. SWANSON'S SCRAPBOOK



1929 – ME AND GRAND-DAD BECKMAN



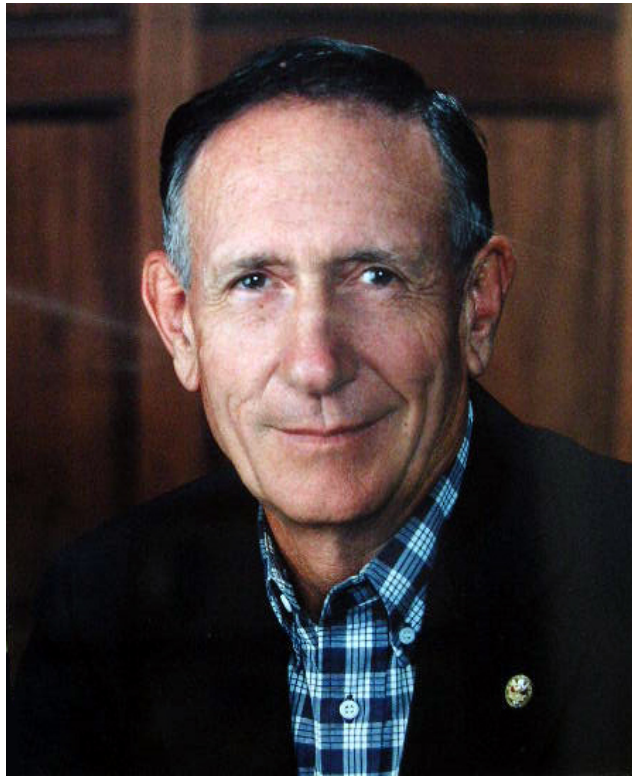
ME AND DON RAY – 1ST GRADE



**1945 – MIDSHIPMAN C. O. SWANSON – U. S. NAVAL ACADEMY
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND**



**1972-74 –COMMANDING OFFICER – PEARL HARBOR NAVY SHIP
YARD**



Swanson
CHARLES O. SWANSON
1993 ~ 1994

1993-94 – PRESIDENT, OUTRIGGER CANOE CLUB



**CHARLES OSCAR SWANSON
APRIL 11, 2007**