



Haili Men's Club Volleyball Invitational

By Dean Nowack

This year the Haili Volleyball Tournament was a time to step back in history and unite with the beginnings of not only Hawaiian volleyball history, but the history of national and world volleyball.

I'd like to give some insight into the scope of a sport which has impacted the Hilo culture and the sport of volleyball nationwide. We pay homage to a wonderful family and extended family that started a volleyball tournament as a Christian fellowship in 1958 with 14 participating teams.

The late Albert Nahale'a, a songwriter, member and director of the famous Haili Choir, organized the Haili Boys Club to develop its youth through faith, music and athletics. The boys soon were called to service in WWII and when they returned, Mr. Nahale'a organized the Haili Men's Club.

The Haili Men's Club Invitational Volleyball Tournament began as the brainchild of Thomas Lindsey, Kihei Brown, Albert Nahale'a and Arnold Nathaniel. This year marked the 50th year of the tournament. It was also this year that marked the passing of the last surviving member of the Haili Men, Arnold Nathaniel.

To honor these men, the surviving daughters of Thomas Lindsey (and tournament directors for the past 20 years), Lyndell Lindsey and Sweetie Osorio pledged to continue the tournament, but changed the name to the "Haili Invitational".

At the championship banquet after the tournament, Lyndell Lindsey made it a specific point to thank the Outrigger Canoe Club for expanding the tournament. She remembered watching the 1961 OCC team walk into the gym. They were so proud that Oahu wanted to join their little tournament.

She praised Ron Sorell for bringing such a great team—some of them future Olympians. The tournament has grown from its original 14 teams to 180 adult and 70 junior teams. These 3,000 participants hail from all the islands and include Guam, Canada, Japan, California, Washington and Oregon.

Over the years, the OCC VB teams could not have reached such national prominence without the high level of competition Haili has provided. For that, and their dedication, the OCC presented a gift of thanks to the Lindsey family and the Haili Church.

We presented them with a pictorial history of OCC volleyball; beginning with Duke Kahanamoku's beach team (circa 1920's) wearing their bathing "costumes", the 1958 AAU National Championship combined Hawaii team, and pictures each decade to date. A heartfelt sigh came from Lyndell when she saw the picture of the four OCC members on the 1968 Olympic Team.

LEFT: Outrigger's masters women finished fourth at the Haili. From left: Linda Nelson, Pam Jenkins, Carrie Christman, Janice Harrer, Kristal Lopez, Wendy Crabb, Marcie Nowack, Coach Dean Nowack, Terri Needels, Diana McKibbin.

RIGHT: Dean Nowack and Marc Haine present a collage showing Outrigger participation in the Haili Tournament to Sweetie Osorio and Lyndell Lindsey, daughters of Haili Tournament founder Thomas Lindsey.

Jon Stanley, John Alstrom, Pete Velasco and Thomas Haine cut quite a photo, and they all played in the Haili Gym. Lyndell said that the founders envisioned a tournament which would pass through generations.

Daddy Haine was there in spirit, his son Marc presented the gift and Marc's son Reese played on the Open team. The same was true for the Velasco family and many families from Hilo—four generations of players at this event.

Of note, the executive director of the United States Volleyball Association was on hand to present Haili with a plaque recognizing them as one of, if not the longest running tournaments in the world. We were also treated to a luau for 3,000, with the sounds of the *Makaha Sons*.

As far as this tournament is concerned, we were carried again by the powerhouse OCC Masters—champions in the 35 and older division. (See below for a list of players and accolades for all teams).

Alika Williams took on the difficult task as player-coach for the Open Team. They placed third but were only a point away from playing for the championship match. Four high school players played for OCC Open, which is quite remarkable.

Spencer McLachlin, Tri Bourne, Riley McKibbin and Reese Haine connected to make this one of the youngest Open teams in event history.

After a 17 year hiatus, OCC fielded a woman's 30 and older Masters team. They placed a respectable fourth. Wendy Crabb more than held her own playing against women many years her junior. Our women may have won their division if it had not been for poor coaching.

Our men's Golden Masters were given a special trophy as the sole entrant in the Golden Masters Division 55+. They had to play in the Masters division and were competitive with players decades their junior.

Special Note: not only did Sweetie and Lyndell organize 250 teams using six venues and produce a luau for 3,000, but played in two divisions on both the Haili Women's Masters and Golden Masters teams. Lyndell was also the Most Outstanding in her division, and Sweetie was the Most Valuable in hers. Her father and founding fathers were smiling on Hilo this day. We thank them all.