

Do YOU Know Jenifer Kay Bossert?

By Erika Eberhart

Born February 2, 1964, in Lock Haven, Pennsylvania, Jenifer Kay Bossert (Jen), hails from an East Coast family of five, including one brother and one sister. She graduated from Penn State University, where she was involved with her sorority, gymnastics, and the Young Republicans, graduating in 1986 with a B.S. in Animal Bioscience. She received her doctorate from the Pennsylvania College of Optometry; engaging in internships in Anchorage, AK; Honolulu, HI; and Atlanta, GA; graduating in 1990.

Missing the active outdoor lifestyle prevalent in Hawaii, Jen returned in July, 1993. She was hired as an Optometrist by the Hawaiian Eye Center, where she was employed for 12 years. Last year, she moved to the Honolulu Eye Clinic at Queen's POB II to reduce her commute time, preferring to spend that time on the water or reading a book.

Her love of water sports started at a very young age, as her family traveled around the East Coast to watch her father compete in river canoe races. Jen started white water kayaking while in graduate school and got her first taste of outrigger canoe paddling in 1994 when she paddled for Anuenue.

Since 1994, she has paddled at WSC, WBB, and of course, OCC, which she joined in 1998, thanks to boyfriend, Byron Ho. Jen's first distance season was as a Novice B in 1994, and since then, she's only missed one Na Wahine O Ke Kai after having shoulder surgery in 1999.

She has also competed in Kanaka Ikaika on a surf ski for four seasons. When asked what her favorite paddling race is, the answer was quick and certain: Dad Center Women's Race. And her favorite seat? Clear answer once again: 2 seat.

What most paddlers do know about Jen is that in 2005 she volunteered to take on a daunting task as Chair of the Canoe Racing Subcommittee. Prior to 2005, she had served on the Kayak Subcommittee for three years.

By default, when one holds the Chair of the Canoe Racing Subcommittee position, which is part of the Athletic Committee at the Outrigger, they also become a member of the Oahu Hawaiian Canoe Racing Association (OHCRA).

These two volunteer positions require endless hours of meetings both within the Club and the entire OHCRA community. Coupled with her own training time for regatta and distance paddling, her selfless volunteer efforts amount to approximately 30 hours per week - and this is outside of her normal 40-hour work week at Queens and her cross training which consists of lifting weights three times a week; spinning; and attending core training class.

Jen spends 10 months of the year working issues for Outrigger's paddling program (December and January are slower than the rest of the year) and her biggest challenge this year has been coordinating and keeping track of 330 paddlers, 18 canoes, 22 coaches and practice time for 37 crews. Her mother told me she "was always a 'boss' and her last name always seemed to fit." Other quotes garnered from her peers at the Club are as follows:

George Wessberg, Club Captain: "Two years ago, Jen volunteered to serve as Canoe Racing Chair when the entire paddling program underwent a major reorganization. She has been a patient, considerate, and competent leader throughout the transition. Jen's enthusiasm, composure and optimism have guided the paddling program through one crisis after another, including the untimely closing of the Ala Wai

practice site this season. I truly enjoy working with Jen because she thoroughly investigates problems, reaches appropriate conclusions and makes thoughtful recommendations that improve the outcome for everyone concerned. Jen demonstrates all the habits of an effective leader and mentor. We are fortunate that Jen shares her valuable time and skills to make our Club a better place to paddle."

Kisi Haine, Assistant Club Captain: "I'll never forget what she said when she took over the Chair position: she said once she takes on a job, she always sees it through. That type of stick-to-it-ness and perseverance create an extremely successful committee structure."

Bill Comstock, General Manager: "Jen is the 'go to person.' I sometimes feel guilty for calling, texting and emailing her so often. She always appreciates and thanks the Club's staff for their efforts."

Ian Forester, Women's Head Coach: "Jen is well-organized and cares about the Club's position from its reputation to its equipment. She is an integral part of the entire women's program and its success in garnering more paddlers this year."

Liz Perry, Women's Novice A and B Coach: "Jen has the ability to keep things calm. Often, people in her position have had an agenda they are trying to push through, but in Jen's case, she tries to be fair and avoid the drama. She handles things quietly and it has really created a tone the coaches can follow. It's all about the "O", baby!"

Walter Guild: "Generically, anyone who undertakes this job works far too hard and is thanked far too little for everything they do. In Jen's case, the fact that no one hears of any issues reflects on how smoothly she runs the program. People don't realize that being the chairman of canoe racing or coaching is the equivalent of full time jobs and for someone like Jen who has a high level career as well, it just further demonstrates her dedication to the Club and its paddlers."

Lisa Livingston: "Jen deserves more time on the water! She sacrifices her own personal time in order for her fellow paddlers to enjoy a smooth ride through the entire season, both regatta and distance. She often times gives up precious practice time in order to attend lengthy OHCRA meetings or to take care of paddler-related issues. Jen is a rock star!"

Maile Ostrem: "Jen is superwoman! Totally committed, positive, a great motivator and organizer, and a super delegator!"

Kelly McMahon: "Extremely organized and never snaps!"

Alice Lunt: "Unbelievably competent and stays calm and doesn't get rattled. She manages to keep a sense of humor through things, too."

My intent in writing this article was to introduce Jen to Club members who don't know her yet. I also wanted the paddling community at the Club to realize what she does to make it possible for us to enjoy our season. She simply makes it happen!

She is a selfless superwoman who has earned utmost respect from her fellow committee members, paddlers, peers, and the Oahu paddling community as a whole. The next time you see Jen, please give her your warmest Mahalo!

