

WELCOME BACK to the TRIBE



By George Wessberg, Club Captain



Tribalism is a natural and simplistic social system that has evolved during the past two million years. A tribe is usually a small group that is tightly bound together by their culture and desire for survival. Most forms of government, from communism to democracy, find their roots in tribalism.

Anthropologists currently view tribalism as the natural state of humanity. Tribes are generally an open, egalitarian, classless, and cooperative community. It is the "egalitarian" component of this definition that causes tribes to be different and often causes larger tribes to fragment.

Egalitarian tribalism is based upon the moral doctrine that all members of the tribe are equal. However, equality is a relative term depending upon the perspective from which it is viewed. The Outrigger Canoe Club is based upon democratic egalitarianism where every regular member has an equal voice in the governance of the organization.

Factionalism occurs when a group within a tribe organizes to pursue an agenda that does not support the voice of the majority. When factionalism occurs within an open and honest forum, such

as the OCC2C process, the dissent actually strengthens the tribe. However, when factions develop within a tribe for the purpose of personal gain rather than promoting the welfare of the tribe, the insidious fragmentation saps the strength of the tribe.

Anyone looking at the past several regatta seasons would conclude that we have become a weaker canoe club. Although many excuses have been given, we can only blame ourselves for causing good people to leave our tribe. We need those members to come back home.

I have spent the past three years interviewing some of the "good people" who no longer paddle for our Club. Some gave up competitive paddling because of the time commitment. Others remained at the Club, but quit paddling because they felt there was no place for them in the paddling program.

Some left because of "conflicts" with other paddlers or coaches and they found a receptive home at another club. Other youth and masters members quit paddling with our Club because of limited opportunities to paddle in the ocean or because they cannot, or will not, paddle in the Ala Wai Canal.

However, the most disconcerting reason given for leaving was because paddling for Outrigger just wasn't as fun as it used to be.

Is it ignorance, arrogance or egoism that spawns the prejudice, elitism, or snobbery that taints this wonderful sport? Or, as some experts speculate, is it an innate manifestation of primitive tribalism that affects human beings whenever they attempt to organize a large group?

Historically, dominant factions or cliques inevitably develop within every large tribe and these factions tend to adopt an exclusive or condescending attitude toward "others." Ultimately, things get said, feelings get hurt, and good people leave.

Our unique culture is the rope that binds our rigging together and permits our Club to perpetuate our proud tradition of excellence in canoe racing. For this reason, the mandate of the Athletic Committee is to provide members with equal opportunity to participate rather than equality of outcome.

A sports program that pursues excellence must acknowledge



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that all members are not born with equal aptitude for paddling an outrigger canoe. However, it does provide opportunities for members to improve their individual performance, and personal enjoyment, by improving their attitude and their ability.

The Athletic Committee has been working on several initiatives to address the issues of participation and competitiveness. Last year a task force developed a Roadmap for Excellence to make the Outrigger Canoe Club a "positive place to paddle" for our Junior members. This comprehensive plan has been expanded to include members of all ages.

We introduced the Positive Coaching Workshops three years ago to improve recruitment and retention in our Youth canoe racing and volleyball programs. We have already seen a favorable response in the 15 and under paddling crews and we are optimistic we can retain these kids as they move into the 16s and 18s. The Volleyball program has added Girls 12s, Girls 15s and Women Masters teams.

Retaining 16s and 18s paddlers is a formidable task for all canoe clubs. This season we plan to provide more opportunities for ocean paddling for older youth and we will support a long distance program for these paddlers. A future goal of the Canoe Racing subcommittee is to provide a one-man training program for the older Junior members.

Funding for an expanded Novice/Freshman program has been increased to improve recruitment and retention of young adults to support the successful elite canoe racing program. In addition to funding, we will expand access to equipment, one-man canoe storage and coaching for the long distance program.

Another major initiative this season is to provide an Ocean Paddling Program for adult members. In addition to the existing men and women masters programs, we introduced a new semi-competitive/semi-social mixed masters program on Thursday and Saturday afternoons for adult paddlers last October.

Two men's masters groups practice on Wednesdays and Sundays. All masters crews have assigned coaches, practice canoes, regular practice schedules and approved steersman for ocean paddling when weather permits. Masters head coaches Tom Arnott and Kisi Haine oversee this expanded masters program.

Another component of the expanded masters program will be occasional clinics to improve physical conditioning and paddling technique for mature athletes. The first of these technique clinics was held in October and featured Shelley Oates-Wilding, a former member of the Australian Olympic Kayak Team, a member of the 2005 Na Wahine O Ke Kai winning Team Bradley, and current co-head coach at Lanier Canoe & Kayak Club in Gainesville, GA.

A second technique clinic was held in November and featured Traci Philips, a three-time former Olympian, a member of 16 OCC Na Wahine O Ke Kai crews, four of them winning the championship. Traci will be working with the mixed masters group on a regular basis.

The new ocean paddling program is for all adult members who wish to enjoy the canoe paddling experience. Some crews will focus on serious training for the regatta and long distance seasons while other crews will paddle merely for fellowship and exercise.

Regardless of individual skill or experience, it is essential that members of our paddling program adopt an attitude of "inclusion"

toward all paddlers, so every member of our tribe who wishes to do so, can experience the joy of paddling at Outrigger Canoe Club.

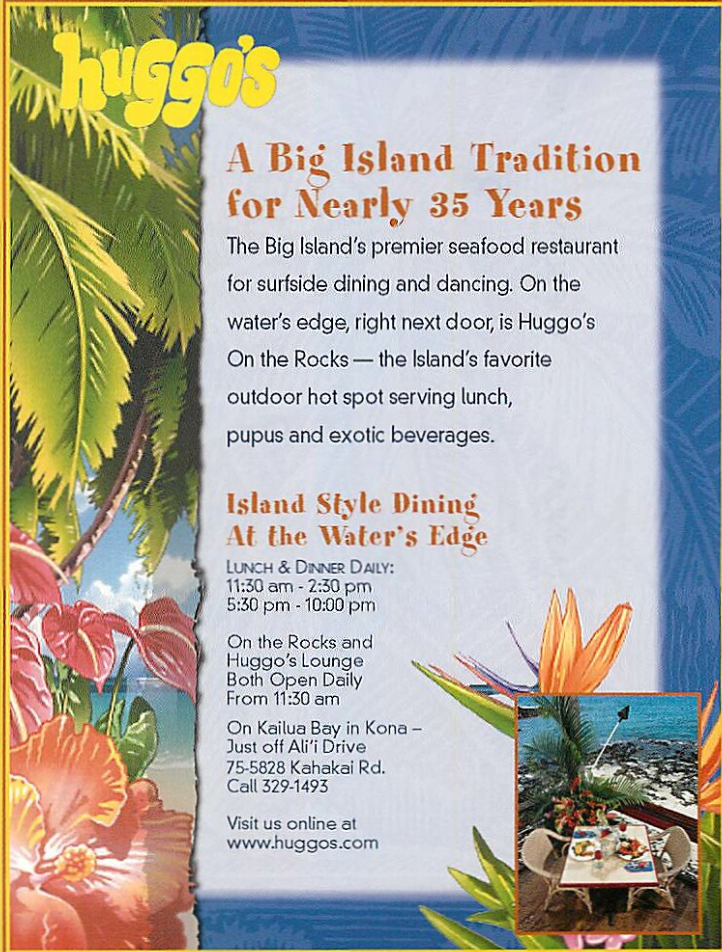
The tradition of excellence at Outrigger Canoe Club was created by the contributions of many members. To perpetuate this legacy, our paddling program must have the support of all members: gifted athletes, enthusiastic participants, dedicated volunteers, and generous supporters.

I invite paddlers that have moved to another club, for whatever reason, to give us a second, or third, chance. Please come back home for the 2006 season. We have outstanding head coaches, excellent equipment, generous Board support, a positive attitude on the Canoe Racing Subcommittee and expanded opportunities for ocean canoe paddling.

I also invite all members to attend Club Day this May. This new event will be a homecoming party for active paddlers, a reunion for former paddlers, and a kick-off for the canoe racing season.

It is likely this event will include a draw-race from Hawaii Kai to OCC in the afternoon, followed by a social event with entertainment in the evening and possibly a fundraising auction to support our sports programs.

So, during the next few months, when you see a "prodigal paddler" among us, rejoice, extend your aloha, and welcome them back to our tribe.



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