

## Moloka'i Ho'e: a Race Spiced with Tradition

By Cindy Luis  
Star-Bulletin Writer

If a California team should win Sunday's 34th Moloka'i Ho'e canoe race, it will be totally *Malia's* fault.

How could a 52-year-old 400-pound koa racing canoe be blamed for helping teams from the Golden State win three of the past six crossings of the Kaiwi Channel?

"The first year of the Catalina Island-to-Newport Beach in 1959, the *Malia* was borrowed and the Newport club made a mold of her," explained Hawaii paddler Archie Kaaua, a seven-time winning crew member of the Moloka'i-to-Oahu race. "I've never forgiven California for that. We left the canoe all wrapped up and ready to ship it back here and they unwrapped it and made a fiberglass mold."

"We almost didn't get the *Malia* back in time for the Moloka'i race."

BUT THE CANOE did make it back in time for Waikiki Surf Club to win its second of seven straight channel victories. In 33 years, the *Malia* has finished first a record 13 times, the last in 1973.

That was just one of the worth-remembering stories going around at last night's kickoff reception for the Bank of Hawaii-sponsored race. The Waikiki Aquarium was swimming with old tales of past races but there was still time to talk about Sunday's 40.8-mile event.

Three California clubs—yes, using the *Malia* mold—are entered in the 47-canoe field, the largest ever. They are Hanohano of San Diego and Newport Beach's Imua and Offshore clubs.

It's Offshore that has two-time defending champion Outrigger Canoe Club of Oahu worried.

"WE'RE JUST GOING to go out hard, use the same boat and paddles as we did last year," said OCC's Marc Haine. "We've trained and thought out our paddling program, always peaking towards the Moloka'i race. If the ocean stays as it is (30-knot winds, 18-foot swells), it will be to our advantage."

Offshore Coach Billy Whitford, a steersman for three winning crews (78 with Blazing Paddles, '81 and '82 with Offshore), agrees with Haine . . . to a point.

"There's a magic to Moloka'i. If you want flat water, you should stay in California," the veteran of nine channel races said. "Here when you paddle, you're taking on Mother Nature. In flat water racing, you're just racing yourself. I think we'll be fine in the waves."

Flat-water racing is the forte of Imua, the only crew to beat Outrigger in a race this season. Imua won the Catalina-Newport race in July with Outrigger second and Offshore fourth.

"Imua is a flat-water club," said Offshore's Jon Van Cleave. "They will do well for two-three hours. But with Billy's knowledge of surfing waves, we've got as good a chance to win as anybody. I say we always have a chance but this year the quality of our paddlers is the best we've ever had. It's the best of the best-ever paddlers we've had through the years."

VAN CLEAVE, AN Olympic-caliber kayaker, has six Moloka'i races to his credit. At 40, he's the oldest; his youngest teammate is 19. The only novice is Buck Barton, a pig farmer from Michigan.

"I always like to bring one novice and give them the experience," said Whitford, whose left arm has been in a cast most of the summer with various strains



**HONOR ROLL**—As someone said last night while this picture was being posed, "This is the history of the whole Moloka'i race." Pictured are: (front row, left to right) Chris Bodi, Stew Kalama, Rabbit Kekai and Nappy Napoleon; (second row, left to right) Toots Minnvielle, Blue Makua Sr., Herbert Apo, Joe Pang, Archie Kaaua and Richard Kauo (back row, left to right) Gary Murakami, Wally Froiseth, Blue Makua Jr., Mike Tongg, Joe Gilman, John Apo, Alex Apo, Bill Cook and Bob Fisher.—Star-Bulletin Photo by Dennis Oda.

and tendon tears. "There's a small family of paddlers around the country that we can call up and ask them to come race."

"All-star team? Outrigger is an all-star team, too, since they can pick from hundreds of their members."

Whitford's steering knowledge he credits to "Grandpa" Noah Kalama, who kept his Newport club canoes in Whitford's back yard and taught him the nuances of the waves. But if Whit-

ford can claim a Hawaiian advantage for Offshore, so can Imua. With the help of Stew Kalama, coach of Oahu's Kai Oni Canoe Club, Imua has a sleek racing koa canoe, the *Naija*.

"I took the log to Orange Coast and within two weeks, we helped make a canoe," said Kalama. "It's the one they used to win the Catalina race."

KALAMA SPOKE of the *Naija* with the same love in his voice

as he does of the *Uwila*. That canoe, belonging to the Kailua Hawaiian Civic Club, was lost during the '66 race in 18-foot seas.

"The *Uwila* was special," he said. "If we could have saved her, she would still be racing today, just like Outrigger's *Leilani*. It hurt to lose that canoe."

But Kalama had plenty of other happier stories to tell, as did a number of the oldtimers. Legendary Waikiki watermen

with names of Apo, Froiseth, Napoleon, Makua, Kekai and Minvielle.

When a group photo was taken of 19 of them as taken, one bystander remarked: "There is the history of the whole Moloka'i race."

The old friends jostled one another while posing, joking, singing the Hui Nalu club song, shouting out a word like "Moloka'i" which would bring smiles to all faces. It would also start a chorus of "Remember the time

It even brought talk of creating a new class for paddlers—what might be called a *makule* class for 50-years-and-older. "We could make a real comeback," said Kaaua. "But, I don't know. It's still the same long way across the channel as it was the last time I did it ('62). And the paddlers seem to get younger and we just get older."

Two of those oldtimers, Tilton Morris and Joseph "Nappy" Napoleon, were honored for their contributions to the Moloka'i Ho'e.

Napoleon was given a large koa bowl for competing in the most channel races—he has paddled every one since 1958 and will go for his 28th time as coach and steersman of Anue-nue.

Napoleon didn't even miss the 1964 race, which occurred three weeks after his early October wedding. "No, we took a week for the honeymoon, and then he trained the next two weeks for the race," said his wife Anona, herself one of the top female paddlers since the mid-1950's.

### Outrigger favored in Molokai race

Forty-seven canoes, including crews from Tahiti, Australia, California and Canada, will participate in the 34th Moloka'i-to-Oahu outrigger canoe race Sunday.

The race, called Moloka'i Ho'e, will start at Hale O Lono Harbor on Moloka'i's south shore and finish 40.8 miles later at Fort DeRussy Beach, adjacent to Waikiki.

Last year, Outrigger Canoe Club of Honolulu set a record of 5 hours, 18 minutes, 19 seconds.

The race will begin at 7:30 a.m. Spectators on Oahu probably will be able to see the first canoes round Koko Head about 11:30 a.m. and off Diamond Head about 12:15.

The favorite is Outrigger, which has won the last two races and six of the last 10.

## Outrigger Tops 47-Team Field for Molokai Race

By Jack Wyatt  
Special to the Star-Bulletin

Two-time defending champ Outrigger Canoe Club is heavily favored to win the 34th annual Bank of Hawaii Moloka'i Ho'e canoe race on Sunday. The big question is which OCC crew will finish first.

A record 47, nine-paddler crews are entered, including three strong OCC teams—two in the open division and one in the masters' class. Race officials agree that any one of OCC's crews could win. "Definitely a race within a race," OCC's paddler/coach Walter Guild said.

The 40.8-mile race, from Moloka'i's Hale O Lono Harbor to Waikiki's Ft. DeRussy Beach, is expected to finish around 1 p.m.

LAST YEAR, OUTRIGGER'S first crew set the course record, finishing in five hours, 18 minutes



and 19 seconds. Koa and fiberglass canoes are used.

Hawaiian Canoe Racing Association's Michael Tongg also rates Outrigger the club to beat. Which crew? Tongg shrugs. "Outrigger is at the top of its cycle," the HCRA president said.

Tongg explained that in just fielding three crews while most clubs struggle to enter one, OCC obviously enjoys great paddler depth. "Outrigger's canoes are also among the fastest," he said.

Outrigger's open crews are steered by Aka Hemmings and Tommy Conner. The steersmen hope to finish 1,2, in no particular order. "If I turn the last buoy with a competitor," Hemmings said, "I'm not giving an inch. And that includes crews from our (OCC) other two boats." Mike Holmes will helm OCC's masters' boat.

ED PICKERING, A PADDLER on OCC's first team, explained that instead of Outrigger fielding one all-star open crew they've ended up with two very good open teams. "Our crew (in the Hemmings-steered boat) is probably a shade stronger," Pickering said.

Hemmings explained that while Outrigger's three crews may be pals around the clubhouse, on the water they're all business. "We try to avoid all contact while practicing," he said.

Hemmings says his crew is the strongest of OCC's three. "Six of my nine paddlers are from last year's record-breaking team," he said.

Being OCC's best also allows Hemmings first choice of the club's canoes. "That should tell you something," he said.

But the unflappable Conner doesn't mind if his crew is ranked the underdog. "We even call ourselves Brand X," he said. "When this race is over I think we'll be surprised at lot of people with our pickups and leftovers (paddlers and canoes)."

OUTRIGGER'S INTRA-CLUB skirmish is good news to Off Shore Canoe Club of California, plus other race favorites. "Let them battle," Off Shore's steersman/coach Billy Whitford said, "and just maybe we'll sneak past them for a win."

Offshore won the Moloka'i Ho'e twice (1981-'82) and Whitford said his crew is even stronger this year.

In addition to Off Shore, visiting teams to watch include those from Australia, Canada, Tahiti and Imua of California. "Kailua looks strong among local crews," Tongg said.

Tongg said that harsh channel weather could become an equalizer. "The swells have been big and the wind strong most of the week," he said, adding that "anything can happen under those conditions."

With 12 Moloka'i Race wins, Waikiki Surf Club leads OCC's 10 victories. "Surf Club's six-race win streak took place over a couple decades ago," paddler Rich Fernandez said, "and paddling techniques have changed drastically since then."

Beginning in the mid-1970s, the Tahitians and California crews demonstrated to island paddlers a



**NAPOLEON CONQUEST**—Nappy Napoleon, who has paddled in every Moloka'i-to-Oahu race since 1958, received a koa bowl Wednesday night in recognition of his achievement. Pictured with Napoleon is his wife, Anona.—Star-Bulletin Photo by Dennis Oda.

more efficient stroke and a far better crew-conditioning program. "Obviously Outrigger learns fast and takes its canoe racing seriously," Fernandez said of Outrigger's six wins in 10 years.

With crews from three foreign countries, from

Illinois and California plus all the Neighbor Islands, Sunday's race is truly international. "Could this be the world outrigger canoe racing championship?" Fernandez asked.

Tongg nodded yes.

### Moloka'i Ho'e this week

**HONOLULU (UPI)**—Crews from Tahiti, Australia, California, and Canada will challenge Hawaii's outrigger canoe clubs in the 34th Moloka'i-to-Oahu race this weekend. The grueling race will start at Moloka'i's Hale O Lono harbor and finish 40.8 miles away at Fort DeRussy Beach Sunday. Outrigger Canoe Club is the favored team, having set a record of 5 hours, 18 minutes, 19 seconds last year. Outrigger has won the last two races six of the last 10 races.