

Healani's centennial is a family celebration

By Jack Wyatt
Star-Bulletin

Don't tell Healani Canoe Club paddlers they lack the clout necessary to win this season's Hawaii Canoe Racing Association championship on Kauai Aug. 4.

The Ala Wai Canal-based Healani, celebrating its 100th anniversary this year, has confused talent and muscle with heart and determination for years.

Outrigger Canoe Club, six-time HCRA defending champ, is everyone's choice as the team to beat this season. Healani, with 125 members, is expected to battle bigger Kailua and Hui Nalu for the remaining top spots.

"We may not have the paddler power to win the big club division," said Clement Paiaina Sr., Healani's president for the past 40 years, "but we're long on enthusiasm and I expect we'll be right in there."

Sunday marks the start of Oahu's canoe racing season. The Healani Regatta opens OHCRA racing at Keehi Lagoon, while Windward Kai Canoe Club hosts the Hui Wa'a opener at Waimanalo Beach. Both regattas begin about 8:30 a.m. and run through the afternoon.

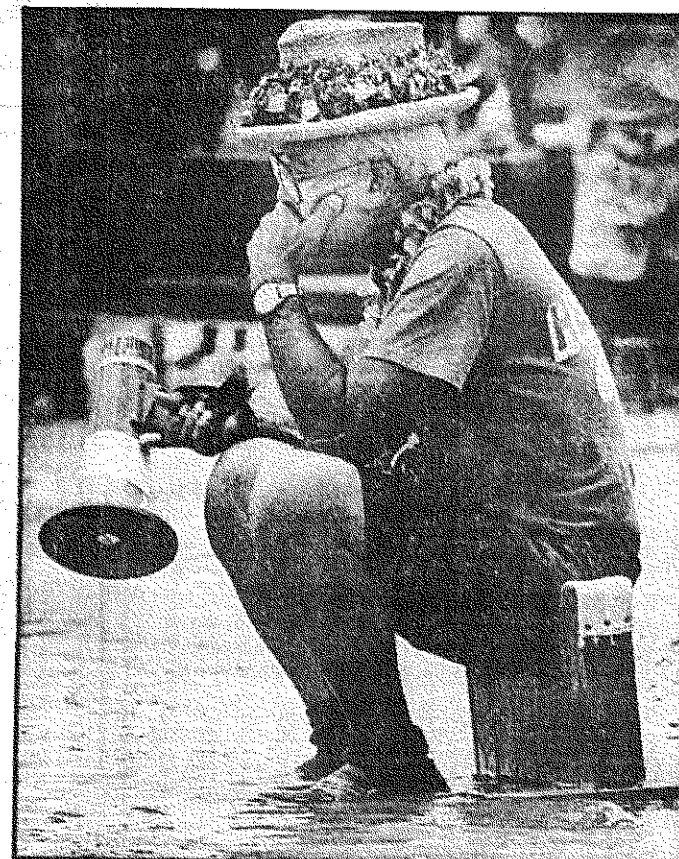
"Our centennial makes this season special. I've never seen more excitement and camaraderie among our paddlers," the 75-year-old Paiaina said.

Since its founding in 1890, Healani has seen many changes — boats, regatta sites and members. But one thing surges on — the famous Healani tradition of blending competition with family recreation.

"We're competitive. Make no mistake about it. But we also have fun," Healani's coach, Gary "Sword" Murakami, said.



Photo courtesy Clement Paiaina



By Mike Tsukamoto, Star-Bulletin

Clement Paiaina and his wife, Healani members since the 1930s, pose together in 1948 in photo at left. At 75, Clement, above, is still the canoe club's president.

Healani's current strength is in its women's crews. "We're still looking for a few good men," the coach said.

Healani's glory years came in 1964 when it won the state championship. The historic old club also won several Molokai-to-Oahu races.

"Too many clubs now," Paiaina said. "The pool of available paddlers runs pretty thin."

Rowing oared barges in small weekend meets during the 1930s was easy when compared to today's complex and highly competitive outrigger canoe regattas.

"We had fewer clubs; fewer heats and far fewer rules," Paiaina's wife, Elizabeth, recalled. A typical Oahu regatta today consists of 1,500 paddlers, representing 10 to 15 clubs, competing in 30 heats. The Sunday meets take six

to eight hours.

"We rowed six-oared barges until the war (World War II) pretty much halted most water sports," Paiaina said. In 1948, the Paiainas attempted to rekindle rowing but failed.

"Outrigger, Waikiki Surf and Hui Nalu began attracting people to canoes," he said. "No one was interested in rowing barges." Healani turned to outriggers in 1950.

In the quest to become competitive, Healani asked master canoe builder Charles Mokuohai to select a koa log and carve them a boat.

"On the upper slopes of a Big Island mountain, Charles found a beautiful log," Paiaina recalled. "He carefully built our canoe and we named it Papa-loa."

The 42-foot outrigger cost \$1,200. "Big

money for a small club back then," he noted.

Koa outriggers today run up to \$50,000. In 1955, the koa Hoolale was purchased. Healani also owns 15 fiberglass outriggers for training and select racing.

With his keen interest in water sports, King David Kalakaua (1836-1891) gave Oahu rowing a boost.

"His Regatta Day was celebrated annually as a territorial holiday for more than 40 years," said Patrick Silva, 77, a long-time Healani member.

It's not too late for people interested in paddling to try out. Attend Sunday's regatta, or any weekday practice, and tell the coach that you're interested. With most clubs still short paddlers, chances are you'll have your race this season.

MAY 31 1990

Hawaii's Princess now fit for a king

Renowned outrigger canoe lovingly restored at age 120

By Bob Krauss
Advertiser Columnist

The Princess, now an old lady, took her last dip in the waters off Kauai yesterday before she retires to a comfortable place where famous outrigger canoes spend their declining years.

June and Stanford Achi, to whom the Princess is like an adopted tutu, made sure her last dip at Niimalu near Nawiliwili didn't give the old lady a chill. They left her in the water just long enough for a Hawaiian blessing.

The reason the Princess is getting all this attention is because she is one of the legendary koa canoes of the Hawaiian Islands.

"She is elegant in her proportions," said Tommy Holmes, executive director of the Hawaii Maritime Center. "She is large and stately and she surfs well."

The wood shines warm, dark and strong. The canoe's hull carries a classic sweep that today's flat racers don't match. The Princess, set up with six paddling seats, is 21 inches wide and nearly two feet deep at the fifth paddling position.

George Downing, veteran waterman, estimated that the Princess was built from the trunk of a koa tree that stood 40 to 60 feet before the first branch of the crown.

Everybody agrees she must have come from Kona, but nobody knows when. Stanford

Achi said he believes the Princess is at least 120 years old.

Old-time beach boy Charlie Amalu insisted she belonged to Prince Kuhio. Nobody disputed him.

"I swear I recognized the Princess with Prince Kuhio on board in a photo of the arrival of the overseas cable at Waikiki in 1902," said Wally Froiseth, canoe expert and harbor boat pilot.

The Princess spent many of her years on Waikiki Beach. Because she was so big and heavy, 750 pounds, beach boys like Steamboat Mokuahi used smaller canoes more often to take out tourists.

"The Princess held the honors of giving rides to world dignitaries (like the Prince of Wales in 1920)," wrote Downing. "She had a seating capacity of 10, including steersman."

In the 1930s, Duke Kahana-moku and a bunch of other daredevils took her out to the Castle surfing spot off Waikiki when it was running better than 15 feet. Then youngsters Froiseth and John Kelly, on surfboards, watched the kings of Waikiki Beach catch a wave and get clobbered.

"The wave broke and the Princess swamped," said Froiseth. "Then heads popped up all over the place. Paddles were floating around. It was a real mess. But the Princess wasn't damaged."

In the 1950s, members of the Kauai Canoe Club saw the old Princess in disrepair and saw



Advertiser photo by Jan TenBruggencate

The Princess gets ready for her last ride on the water yesterday on Kauai.

horses at the Outrigger Canoe Club. They got her and she was restored by Tetsuo Sato. By training with the heavy canoe, Kauai Canoe Club members built muscles and a stroke that won numerous championships.

"We paddled her all the way from Hanalei to Nawiliwili, and from Nawiliwili to Waimea," said Stanford Achi, longtime head of the club. "She was

very fast once you got her going and she could turn faster than racing canoes."

"With this canoe, boy, you could surf the ocean swells," he said.

But the Princess was too heavy for modern racing. She stood on saw horses and deteriorated. Then along came Hurricane Iwa in 1982 and smashed her.

That's when the Achis start-

ed a campaign to save her. Billy Fernandes stored her at his Kamokila (Hawaiian) Village on the Wailua River while his daughter, Sen. Lehua Fernandes Salling, helped get funding in the Legislature for a restoration done at Kamehameha Schools by Wright Bowman.

As good as new, the Princess will be dedicated at 2 p.m. June 9 at Kukui Grove Center on Kauai, and now the Achis

are looking for her final resting place.

"Our dream is to see that the canoe has a place where she is cared for and loved," said June Achi. "We'd like it to be where children can see it without charge."

Advertiser Kauai Correspondent Jan TenBruggencate contributed to this report.