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OUTRIGGER CANOE RACING

HUI NALU CLUB

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

WILFRED PAUL (WP) *Punahou '31*

ROBERT WAI (RW) *McKinley*

LAMBERT WAI (LW) *Punahou '39*

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Honolulu, Hawaii

John W. Bustard
BY: JOHN W. BUSTARD (JB)

The Hawaii Maritime Center is continuing to collect memorabilia such as photographs, clippings, trophies, medals, equipment, etc. on outrigger canoe racing, and now wants to do oral histories on men and women who competed in the very popular races down through the years.

Outrigger canoe racing is particularly important to us in Hawaii, as in 1986 it was named the official team sport of the state.

Let me say I am not a professional oral history interviewer, nor a former paddler, so please bear with me as we go along when I display ignorance of your sport.

Old time paddlers tell me that prior to 1933, canoe races were scheduled infrequently, often on the annual September Regatta days when barge rowing races were held in island harbors, along with outboard motor, sailing, and whaleboat events.

So let's begin with talking about the 1933 canoe regatta held in Kealahou Bay on the Big Island on July 22. Information from the microfilm in the library revealed that the ancient sport of racing in outrigger canoes was revived that day, sponsored by the Kona Civic Club and the Hilo Chamber of Commerce to celebrate the opening of the Waimea-Kona Belt Road.

Today is May 11, 1993. We'll do an oral history interview with Wilfred Paul, Robert Wai and Lambert Wai at Pier 7 at the museum in Honolulu, Hawaii by John W. Bustard, volunteer Aquatic Sports Coordinator with the Hawaii Maritime Center.

We want to start by concentrating on the Hui Nalu Club, which you three belonged to, paddled for, and were at that 1933 regatta, and its participation in canoe racing.

We have Tita Ruddle Spielman's excellent detailed research report on the history of the club, and other material we got from the archives on the club's beginnings in 1908, including its famous song. This was the same year the Outrigger Canoe Club was started, and I gather Hui Nalu was organized to develop young athletes and provide competition in swimming, surfboard paddling, volleyball and even surfboard water polo

which they say was played in front of the Royal Hawaiian Hotel from time to time. There was no surfing competition, but of course the members surfed. This is all well documented and we will not need to review it.

What we would like to talk about is your personal experiences with the club in the late 20's and in the 30's, the 1933 regatta, and up to World War II - we'll see how far we get.

So finally we'll get you guys in the act. Can each of you give your name and tell me a little about yourself and also your background in the sport - who wants to get us going?

LW: I'll start. I'm Lambert Wai. I guess the best way for me to describe my association with Hui Nalu is that I am and was probably the youngest Hui Nalu member from the old time club. As such I did participate in a lot of the canoe racing events, always in the Junior or Kid class, because I was the youngest and had three brothers older than me, who paddled Senior, Junior and Intermediate. I can recall some of the races held in the Ala Wai Canal - I notice you didn't mention the Ala Wai - there were canoe races in the Ala Wai and surfboard races in the Ala Wai. I think they quit racing in the Ala Wai, because they figured that if you got into certain lanes in the Ala Wai, with the current that came out of the mountains, you had an advantage in certain lanes, so they quit that. (Laughter) I went to Kona for the paddling in 1933 but was too young to participate, but I know Robert did. Maybe he can tell us.

I would also like to say that the Outrigger Canoe Club and Hui Nalu had a very close relationship. Some Outrigger members like Wilfred Paul and Fred Steere paddled for Hui Nalu in that 1933 regatta, they would invite us over to play volleyball on their courts and I believe Duke Kahanamoku belonged to both clubs. But in competition, it was tough. I would call it a friendly rivalry.

JB: What other sports were you involved in, not necessarily with Hui Nalu but in high school and college?

LW: Baseball and football.

JB: And then your employment years - insurance?

LW: Mutual of Omaha for 43-44 years.

JB: And retired now.

LW: Yes.

JB: Robert, how about telling us about your background?

RW: I graduated from McKinley High School, and followed brothers Francis and Conklin to Sacramento J.C. and to U.C.L.A. I was in the Army during World War II, then worked for Mutual of Omaha, in fact still do some work in insurance for them. Football and baseball were my sports during school days, then basketball and handball and I still enjoy golf weekly. Playing music is also a hobby of mine.

WP: Well, I'm Wilfred Paul. ^{'21 Punahou} My first experience with Hui Nalu was in 1933. Prior to that, I was a member of the Outrigger Canoe Club since 1921. When I came back from college in 1933, Dudie Miller got hold of me and said, "How about paddling for Hui Nalu?" Like Lambert said, we also paddled in the Ala Wai Canal a couple of years and my association with Hui Nalu was very, very pleasant. I have many stories of the club. We did pretty well in our canoe paddling - John D. Kaupiko was our captain and coach, and Dudie Miller was still active, but passed away in 1935. It was quite an experience, paddling for Hui Nalu. Some of the guys were so big, some of the other crews were scared of them - John D. Kaupiko, Malcolm Paoa, Squeeze Kamana - they all paddled, tough Bill Keaweama. The competition then was pretty strong between Hui Nalu and the Outrigger, then when we got to Kona, Queen's Surf was there. I guess that's about it.

JB: And then you rowed and swam.

WP: I swam for the Outrigger - even played on their track team in 1926. I wasn't very good but played volleyball for them and of course surfed, and water polo. I rowed for Myrtle.

JB: You were with Dole?

WP: I started with Hawaiian Pine, joined Standard Oil and transferred to Molokai and left them and joined California Packing Corporation, later changed to Del Monte and stayed with them 'til I retired in 1979.

LW: I don't know whether Wilfred recalled, but most of the canoe practicing was

done in the Black Maria and old man John D. kept you in that until about 2 days before races, then put you in "White Horse". The Black Maria was the heaviest canoe you could find.

WP: One time a couple of wrestlers were out there and they could hardly lift it, they were all muscle-bound. (Laughter)

RW: In the early years, beginning our athletic accomplishments, we can credit Hui Nalu in helping us, because all the young members, the Juniors, would assemble at the beach after practices, run down the beach and train together. We developed top coordination and physical development. I remember the canoe that was most famous in those days was the White Horse. By the way, what happened to the White Horse?

WP: Enay Makinney was related to Dudie Miller, wasn't he? He got a lot of the surfboards and some canoes for Hui Nalu, didn't he? He may know what happened to the White Horse.

RW: I remember in the surfboard races in the Ala Wai Canal - the first hollow board was developed by Tom Blake, it was so light and he became famous for winning so many races, I think they outlawed it. It was too much for the others to compete against. But we participated in a lot of surfing, they taught us how to earn some money. I know for the Junior team, we took some tourists canoeing and surfing, teaching them surfing and swimming and all that helped us grow. Canoe races that were held in Kailua, Kona were a tremendous accomplishment and help in developing our athletic skills, and I think the friendliness and cooperation among the members, especially old timers, helped the youngest to grow - like Willie Whittle taught us how to box, and Lei Whittle who was also boxing, and Eddie Whittle was also boxing, and they used to take the youngest members, the Junior crew, in that open field next door and they had no mercy on us. We either learned how to block ourselves, or we'd get a black eye. (Laughter) This cooperative spirit was a tremendous help to us - lot of the kids - regardless of what high school, we had a good competitive spirit, but still the love and appreciation for each one as a member of Hui Nalu greatly helped us to our accomplishments.

LW: Robert mentioned it, and know you're interested in aquatic sports. Many other things took place on that beach, like learning how to play good volleyball,

football skills, right on that beach. All the different participants from different high schools played football on the beach. Boy, you had to learn or get beat up.

JB: Let's talk a little bit about those things - that's part of what we're trying to do.

RW: In those days, too, in the early evening when our folks used to come down and pick us up, there was time to play, and we used to play touch football on the sand, and that got to be a tourist attraction - they used to come down and watch the kids play and throw the football and we accomplished a lot running in the sand. It helped in developing our legs.

LW: Oh yeah, running at the water's edge builds up your legs.

RW: We used to run races right at the water's edge, the sand was hard there. We used to run from the Royal Hawaiian to the Moana Hotel in sprints, just for the fun of it, for conditioning purposes.

JB: And one of the good things there was you had young fellows from all schools and got to know each other and understood one another.

LW: Sometimes I wonder how we would have made out in the volleyball tournaments now, where they get paid big bucks. We had some darn good volleyball players on the beach.

WP: Today they call it spiking, not slamming, the way they hit that ball.

JB: And even the wahines, the way they hit the ball, I don't want to play against them. (Laughter)

WP: I don't think we could have made one point against the University Wahines, the way they play.

JB: You talked about playing surfboard water polo.

WP: To attract tourists - it was right in front of the Royal Hawaiian Hotel. It was just the Outrigger and the Hui Nalu. I was playing for the Outrigger at the time, and you could get a little banged up - they tried to ram you in the ribs with their surfboard. I poked Willie Whittle and he got mad as hell and we almost had a fight, but I'm glad it didn't turn out that way, he was a good boxer. It was interesting and the tourists seemed to enjoy it, but it only lasted a couple of years.

JB: Someone was telling me about that a while back, and said the big problem was when you lost possession of the ball, then you had to turn your surfboard

around, but Sargent Kahanamoku was the smart guy, he made his board pointed on both ends, so all he had to do was swing around on his belly.
(Laughter)

LW: We even played water polo - just swimming, no boards.

JB: Great way to grow up.

WP: But volleyball and swimming were the most popular with the two clubs.

LW: Whenever movie stars came down, they got involved with the beach boys, and there was always some kind of banquet held on the second floor of the Moana Hotel - that big dining room. I recall going up for a cowboy - Hoot Gibson.

RW: By the way, what were the colors of Outrigger?

WP: Red and White.

RW: And Hui Nalu was black and gold.

WP: Myrtle was red and white, and Healani was blue and white.

JB: OK - why don't we get into talking about that 1933 regatta. All three of you were up there. Can you tell me a little about it?

LW: These guys were the ones who participated.

JB: Yes, but you were there, Lambert, you can chime in, talk about the color, how it was there.

RW: There was always a lot of excitement in that harbor and the course went kind of a triangle, but we were only the Junior crew, and were 14 years old, and won our race. I think Walter Love was our stroke.

WP: We started at Captain Cook's monument and went down and back. A lot of the clubs were kicking and Hui Nalu kicked because they claimed the flags weren't set right - some lanes were shorter than others. (Laughter)

RW: By the way - you folks recall how the song, the Hui Nalu song, got started?

JB: I have a copy of it here.

RW: Do you know who wrote it?

JB: This is a report by Tita Ruddie, and I gave a copy of it to Lambert, and I'll give you guys copies on Hui Nalu. Isn't that interesting and well done? But as Lambert said, there is a period of time in the 30's and 40's that wasn't covered. The report was written by Tita Ruddie Spielman, wife of Joe Spielman, from the Big Island.

WP: It's a beautiful song.

- JB: Wilfred, you were talking about how the flags were set. How did your race turn out?
- WP: Well, we won both races, but other crews claimed that their lanes were off. (Laughter) Toots Minneville and his father were the engineers who surveyed it. They were very competent and knew what they were doing. Maybe the current moved the flags. I think the flags were all right.
- JB: And your race, Wilfred, you finished in the wrong lane?
- WP: We came down and were a little bit ahead in the 2 man open, and Enay Makinney saw the flag. I didn't see the flag, and the colors were the same in both lanes.
- RW: You were the stroke, weren't you?
- WP: Yes, and we finished in the wrong lane, about five feet off. They disqualified us, since we finished in the wrong lane. (Laughter)
- LW: Did Enay blame you?
- WP: He blamed me, and I blamed him (Laughter).
- JB: Robert, what race were you in that day? And how did it come out?
- RW: We won our race, we were in the 14 years old.
- LW: You were in the Kids crew then. Conklin was in the Juniors, and I think Francis was in the Seniors.
- JB: According to the newspaper write-up, there were Senior 6, Senior 4, Junior 6, Junior 4, 2 Paddle Open, and Women.
- RW: We were in the 6, must have been Junior 6.
- WP: I was in the 2 man and 4 man. "Suckwind" Vierra, Malcolm Paoa and John D. Kaupiko and myself in the 4.
- JB: Suckwind Vierra - what a name! The write-up said about 7500 people were at the regatta.
- WP: There were a lot of people.
- RW: And the only thing you had to worry about was what are you going to eat afterwards at luau time - Kona Nightengale? (Laughter)
- LW: You didn't know if it was donkey meat.
- WP: We went to Norman Kauaihilo's in-laws' place and had a luau there - good kaukau.
- JB: The paper said there were 3 vessels in the harbor - the Itasca, Ramsay and the

Wai'e'ele, and a lot of small craft and sampans, so it was really a wonderful thing.

RW: We went over on the Itasca, it was a small Coast Guard ship, and when people asked us how we went over, we said we went over mostly by rail. (Laughter). The Itasca seemed like it was under water all the time and we were always hanging on the rail. Everybody seemed to get seasick. But everything came out all right.

JB: How'd you guys get to go over on the Itasca?

RW: I guess the club made the arrangements.

WP: I guess that was part of the Coast Guard's tour or exercise.

LW: The cheapest possible way, which I think was free. (Laughter)

WP: They took the canoes and everything. I remember Melvin Paoa going around and making believe he was going to throw out and getting more and more people sick. (Laughter).

JB: That sounds like him.

LW: He was a son of a gun.

JB: But no airlines in those days.

LW: No, it was all by boat.

JB: Where'd you guys stay?

WP: The first year, we stayed at the Manago Hotel and the next time we stayed at a little cove, there's a hotel there now, can't think of the name of it, and we had to take a bus from there, go up to the main road, and down to Kealakekua.

LW: I don't know what year it was or how many clubs stayed there, but we stayed in the lumber yard. You took a mattress from the Itasca and that was your bed, (Laughter) among the stacks of lumber.

WP: We and the Outrigger and the Queen's Surf with Willie Whittle and Charley Amalu stayed there. Melvin Paoa and I got some firecrackers and tied short strings on the wick and set them off in different places, and bang here and bang there, and Willie Whittle came out with a paddle and said, "Who in hell's doing that?", and chased everybody all around and we sat down and laughed. He'd run up here, and one would go off there.

JB: Lambert, you said some of the club went down to Francis Brown's place.

LW: Oh Yeah, Keawaiki. That was the year when I came back on John Ford's yacht

in 1933, because I was too sick on the Itasca. I thought maybe I wouldn't get sick on the yacht. They stopped over at Francis Brown's place and had quite a time.

JB: After that regatta, there were other regattas after 1933.

WP: They had some here on the Canal.

RW: And one right down here in the harbor in '36 or '37.

WP: I was married then, and hadn't trained much, and wasn't much good to Hui Nalu. Tom Forbes was the coach of a Hawaii team and they cleaned up.

LW: That was Miloli'i and they had one or two female paddlers, and they won! (Laughter)

WP: I wasn't going to mention that. We'd pass them on the turn, and in the straight-a-way they ran away from us. I remember John D. Kaupiko saying, "You let the girls beat you?" They used to call him "Old Man". I couldn't quite call him that, I thought it was derogatory to call a nice guy like that "Old Man". He didn't seem that old.

JB: I've got some clippings here of 1935, when Honaunau won, and they won 6 of 8 events, on August 25, 1935. That's when Julian Yates, according to the clipping, was coaching, and this was his ambition, to have a winning regatta. But they had some University guys on the team, they had Tony Morse, Bill Ahuna and one of the Apolianas, so they brought some ringers in, and that really made him happy because he always wanted to win a regatta. They said he was the guy behind all sports in the Kona area, and he took it upon himself to get a good crew together and they won.

WP: Bill Anahu - didn't he go to U.C.L.A.?

LW: No - Santa Clara.

WP: He was Hiram's nephew, wasn't he?

LW: No. Believe Bill died during World War II. He went to Santa Clara with Bill Toomey, he played end for Santa Clara.

JB: In that regard, in '35 the clipping that I saw, Honaunau won 6 out of 8, but Hui Nalu won the Kids crew. You were probably paddling on it, you two guys.

RW: On names, among the old timers we shouldn't overlook was Peter Makia, he was the one who made a lot of the members' surfboards. He was one of the guys who used to go out surfing, take a chair and sit on it coming in.

WP: He had wonderful eyesight - he'd say, "look there, there's a school of fish.", I'd say, "Where?", I couldn't see it. (Laughter)

LW: He was a hell of a fisherman. He was good, fisherman and surfer.

WP: I was with him off Diamond Head one time, about 20 feet of water - I couldn't go down that far, no tanks or anything, and I mentioned, "Any sharks around here?", and he said, "Oh yeah, plenty, but they won't bother you." (Laughter) "But my white meat!" He said, "Push'em aside."

RW: He was a tremendous guy, really.

JB: Who were some of the other old timers and characters around the clubs?

WP: Tough Bill was quite a character in his day. I remember one incident they pulled. They were surveying something, and they'd just built the Royal Hawaiian Hotel, and the surveyors had left a transit and some equipment at the Moana Hotel near the Hui Nalu club. These guys got a hold of it, and had these lines - Tough Bill, Pua Kealoha and some others, and they were moving people off the beach, and people would say, "What are you going to do?", they'd say, "We're going to put a road through here." (Laughter) They played all kind of jokes on the tourists.

RW: Yes - on top of that, it was really funny. Members from both Outrigger and Hui Nalu had great means of communication by hand signals. By signs they said whether your wife was calling, or a telephone call, or whether they want a beach towel, they made all kinds of signs and knew exactly who you wanted, and answered your call.

JB: Tell us about Dudie Miller.

WP: He really founded the club, right? He was a great musician and had his own troupe, and was strict. If he saw some of the guys fooling around too much, he'd say, "You stay off the beach for two or three days."

RW: He was a real disciplinarian.

JB: Then Hui Nalu moved out of the Moana Hotel because of new management?

LW: They renovated the area, and did away with the so-called club area that they gave to Hui Nalu.

That was the so-called clubhouse area, where they had this corridor that was about 12 feet wide and all the boards were stacked in there, one on top of another, and when you wanted to surf you had to go find your board, and if

your board was in there first, you had a hell of a time getting it out - Oh boy, you gotta move how many boards to get yours out. And then at the end of that, you turned into a little area they called a dressing room. I think they had one or two showers, a couple of benches and a whole bunch of nails and I think they had lockers on one side.

RW: Yes, they did, the lockers were for the old timers.

WP: And in those days, you'd leave money in your pants, or a wrist watch and nobody'd bother.

LW: But a towel - a towel was always used about 15 times. (Laughter)

RW: But you know the club was a good learning experience for us. A lot of the beachboys had a musical background, in fact that's where I first learned to play ukulele and guitar. In later years, "Kalakaua" became a good musician and had his own group, likewise some of the other people formed different groups and got involved in commercial entertainment and made out all right.

JB: I didn't realize that. Who'd teach you guys - some of the old timers?

RW: We'd just sit around and learn to play. Guys like Joe Akana, Squeeze Kamana, and Tough Bill - I used to watch and you'd ask them, and they'd say, "Go get an ukulele and follow them". You couldn't, but they'd show you some chords and you'd sit around and some of us Junior members would get together with some old guitars and ukuleles and gradually learn.

WP: You know what used to amaze me, Bob, these guys would play, you'd come in and say, "What key?" I don't think any of them could read music, and they'd start to play right in with them.

LW: On the corner of the Moana Hotel was Joe's Fatt's restaurant, to the right of that they had some canoes under the hau trees, and they'd sit around and play music. You'd go out surfing, and then play music.

JB: Tell us about the restaurant.

LW: Joe Fatt's restaurant. I'm sure he wasn't happy with the beachboys. (Laughter) But I can recall one bowl of poi and one serving of opae - 10¢ (Laughter). You'd go out and catch your own fish, and buy poi from him and opae and you got your lunch.

WP: And there was an old Chinese guy - he'd bring manapua and all kinds of things, and the beach boys would come around. He wouldn't record anything on paper

- he'd say, "You owe me 10¢". Some of the guys would go away and come back years later, and he'd say, "Hey, you still owe me 25¢." (Laughter) Remember that guy - around his shoulder he had this little sling, what a memory that guy had! You couldn't fool him.

JB: What other incidents or things you remember, fond memories, do you have?

LW: The thing that stands out in my mind in the old Waikiki is that big clock that stood in front of the Outrigger Canoe Club. That's where when you went out in big surf out by Castle - you tried to end up in front of the clock. That was a ride! That was a ride!

RW: Those days it wasn't trick riding or anything - it was distance, see how far you could ride.

WP: Yes - Duke and Dad Center rode from Castle right in to the clock.

JB: How far would that have been?

WP: Mile and a half, I guess.

JB: Is that right?

WP: Oh sure, long ride. I think the current was different then, because the waves used to be right across, now you can't, because you have Castle Surf, then Queen's Surf, then a break, then Canoe Surf and all that. I think when they put the canal in it changed it.

LW: I guess so, maybe the currents and the tides. You really have to move fast coming across to hit all those places and end up in front of the clock. That was it - one ride and that was enough for the day.

WP: I think putting in the Ala Wai Canal changed it and that, plus they dredged to bring in the cannons in to Fort DeRussy - made that channel to Fort DeRussy.

JB: Tell us about some of the beachboys that were around there.

WP: I can mention a few names. Chick Daniels was one of them, Peter Makia.

RW: He was another one we could learn music from. Another one who played music was Splash Lyons.

WP: Splash was good at picking.

RW: He picked the steel guitar.

WP: Melvin Paoa was no slouch. They all had beautiful voices - They all could sing. Hiram Anahu.

RW: Panama Dave was another one.

- LW: Melvin wrote a couple of good songs, too.
- WP: Melvin was really talented, but he was never serious about anything.
- LW: I think he wrote "Waikiki". No, that was Andy Cummings. What was it he wrote? He wrote "Chickadee". he wrote some good songs, Melvin did.
- JB: You've all heard that beachboy record - with all the beachboys singing - what's his name - Waltah Clarke - put out a record - the music was good.
- WP: Lot of us used to go on the Moana Pier and play music out there. I don't know when that was built - I remember when I was a little kid - it was quite a place for a tourist to go. You could get closer to the surfers. An aside to that - the beachboys would catch waves and do all kinds of tricks on their boards.
- RW: That was always a challenge. When the waves were a certain height, the challenge was to go under the pier and through the pillars. The young kids were daring and sometimes you cracked up under there, but to make it through there was quite an accomplishment.
- LW: And when you were a kid - you had to get permission to go beyond that pier to go surfing. Oh yes. The old timers like Nabox, the lifeguard, "You don't go beyond that pier unless you get the OK, boy."
- WP: You got to be mature - you gotta be a man.
- JB: And you were telling me, Lambert, about how the beachboys would police the beach and discourage undesireables.
- LW: When the soldiers came down, there'd be a fight - they were chased off the beach.
- RW: A lot of them came down with the idea of one purpose - they were trying to chase wahines, but instead of coming down sober, they came down half way drunk so they thought at that particular time they could do anything they wanted, just felt they owned the beach - not realizing the trouble they were going to run into.
- LW: Babe Carter, Willie Whittle, Eddie Whittle, Lei Whittle - they practiced their boxing skills (Laughter) on those guys.
- JB: That's what I always heard, too. They policed the beach and took care of undesireable people.
- WP: I remember one of the Whittles was sitting there and a sailor walked by, bumped his arm and didn't say "excuse me" or anything, and Willie Whittle said,

"Hey, you hit my arm", and the guy said something about "nigger" and Willie went "Whack!" and the guy went down.

JB: We were talking the other day about using redwood boards and you were using the steam room.

RW: Well, Peter Makia was at the Moana Hotel across the street, that was where the workers were, back in the cottages. They allowed us to use the steam room to dry the boards, which we bought in planks - so we took them back there to dry for a month or so, brought them back to the beach and Peter Makia would help us to draw the design, start and get us all involved in how to make surfboards.

JB: So you were learning how to make your own boards.

WP: There was a guy named Robinson, at Amfac or Lewers and Cooke, who would help you get a board three inches thick, twelve feet long, width depending on what you wanted, and it cost us ten bucks.

LW: Dried'em out and shaped your own board.

WP: You'd go through all these planks and make sure you got a light one.
(Laughter)

LW: That steam room was used by the hotel. The caretaker of the bathhouse used to dry off swimsuits and towels that they used for the tourists. We used to use that ourselves.

RW: Those swim suits - black or dark grey.

JB: Robert and Lambert - your dad, Kim Wai was very much a booster and a very heavy influence on Hui Nalu.

WP: And his boys.

LW: Well, he was quite an athlete, you know. He was a good track man and a good swimmer. Of course he was the one who worked - so he'd drop us off at the beach every morning, on the way to work, and pick us up after work so he could go for a swim. So we were there all day long. So we were raised by the beachboys. In fact, I learned to swim off the pier. As I recall, Sergeant Kahanamoku took me out, threw me off the end of the pier and told me to swim - that's how I learned to swim. And Robert and I had two brothers who were very active in Hui Nalu who have passed away. Francis was killed in World War II on the island of Leyte in the Philippines, going ashore with General

MacArthur. Conklin passed away early on in San Francisco while working there.

WP: Someone who was almost overlooked - was a great swimmer - Pua Kealoha - he almost beat Duke. He'd keep right up with Duke - he was a heck of a good swimmer. then of course Warren Kealoha was a good back stroker - they weren't related, but Pua was a little fat, wasn't he? On the heavy side.

LW: Not in those young days. He got fat after a while. I saw some pictures of him and he had a beautiful body. He was a hell of a swimmer.

JB: Any other characters or incidents that you want to relate?

LW: I saw a picture out in front in the museum of "China" with the dog in front of his board.

RW: Willie Whittle used to surf with his dog, too.

WP: Then there was a Filipino boxer, "Battling Bolo" or some name, had a fox terrier on his board.

RW: Bolo was quite a golfer, too, and China Wilson - he was a shoe salesman at Liberty House. He always had his dog on his surfboard.

JB: Robert, you said you had a little tale to tell us.

RW: OK - how being a member of Hui Nalu helped us. We were taught how to fish and how to be self-sufficient in our younger days, but one thing that really helped in the future was in making goggles to fish with. It was a help because we learned this while a Hui Nalu member. During my service during World War II, it helped on one occasion - down on the island of Mindanao in the Phillipines. We were being attacked and the company was without food for about a week - the quartermaster couldn't come in and bring us food. Then one day, I decided to talk to our colonel, because we heard that General Lyman was in the area, and we asked him out of a clear blue sky, jokingly, if we could borrow the general's boat to go fishing, because we had seven local guys in the company who were good swimmers, good athletes, maybe we could go fishing and bring back some fish for the members of the company. So you know, permission was granted, because there was some relationship between General Lyman and our family, and he knew of the family. So in a couple of days we started to make our goggles and got things set so we told the Colonel, "OK, everything's ready." We loaded up our jeeps, manned with machine guns and automatic rifles, pistols and dynamite and took off. Some miles down the way we had to go through

a mid point of the enemy, and while going through, their snipers in the top of the trees, I guess they were just suicidal, started to shoot down on us. They were left there just to bother troops coming through. Later on the way down we encountered a machine gun by a split in the road. They were in the tall bush and I think the mistake they made, they opened fire too soon, as they heard us coming around the corner so we drove off in the side bushes and I called my gang together and told them how we were going to handle this, and so we did. I told them I'd fire the first shot, and we opened up on the nest. We blew those guys to hell. Funny - these local guys didn't give a darn - got back on the jeep and took off to go fishing. (Laughter) In the meantime, communication got down to the village, and they amassed about thirty canoes, as they were in need of food for their little village. When we got down to the general's boat - he had a torpedo boat - they took us out a few miles to some small islands, and then we started to look around for fish. We got near this particular island and the captain told us, "This is a good area, why don't you folks jump overboard and swim ahead, spot the fish and signal back to the boat?" We would go about 30 yards in front of the boat, swimming slowly. We saw schools of fish, knew it was ulua, so we tested to see how things would turn out. We tied white strips of cloth to the stones and tossed them in the water, watched to see how the stones settled down, to see if the fish would be attracted to the stones. When we first threw the stones, the fish scattered away and came back because they saw the white. Then we saw a good school, notified everybody to get back on the boat, and had the dynamite with a long line to it - we tossed it in and after so much time elapsed we touched it off, and BOOM, waited a couple of minutes because there was a lot of sulphur in the water, and it stings your skin. Then we jumped in the water and just pulled the fish out, grabbed them by the tail. They were huge ulua. The boat wired ahead and they brought down a two and a half ton truck, and we filled it. We took it back to the company. They started a fire, and the only thing they had - we managed to get some butter - so put the fish on charcoal and had ulua and coffee. (Laughter) How about that?

JB: Good story.

RW: The Filipinos were happy, too. They had plenty. They wanted us to come

down again. We came down one more time to help the village catch fish. We got canoes, not the General's boat, and they came out with a mass of canoes, the villagers were happy. The fish down there were plentiful!

JB: Who else has a story to add?

WP: No one will beat that!

LW: Can't top that (Laughter)!

JB: Thank you very much, you guys for your time. It's been fun so one of these days we'll get this transcribed, and get a copy for you. In the meantime mahalo and take care.

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NOTES: This oral history is the property of the Hawaii Maritime Center, and use of this material must be with their permission.

Oral histories, unrehearsed, are recollections, some going back many years, and may not be 100% accurate. However, recording the spirit, camaraderie and "remembering the good times" is just as important.

Microfilmed newspaper articles covering the 1933 and 1935 regattas on the Big Island are in the Hawaii Maritime Center Library.