

# People Report

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## Aftermath of amputation: surgery robs him of spirit

By BEVERLY CREAMER  
Advertiser People Section Editor

Thomas Creighton's life has been turned inside out.

At a time when he should be able to sit back and enjoy waves of critical acclaim over his new book "The Lands of Hawaii: Their Use and Misuse," when he's on the brink of publishing another book, a novelistic approach to the history of architecture in the '50s and '60s, it has all turned to dust in his mouth.

He sits in his luxurious Kahala apartment, wondering, sometimes, whether life is worth living.

"I pick up something to read and I don't read it," said Creighton, one of Hawaii's best-known and most influential architects. He stared straight ahead, his voice emotionless, without enthusiasm.

Two months ago, Creighton's left leg was amputated just below the knee after an unsuccessful operation to improve the circulation in that leg.

The stump rests on a stool in front of him. It is wrapped in an athletic bandage to help shrink the swelling and to protect it from bumps. The bandage is important. Creighton broke the stitches open once in a fall in his apartment.

"It was like a nightmare," said Gwen, Creighton's small, endlessly energetic wife.

"I was running ahead to open the bed and he went out there and fell on

the walker in the hall. I thought he was going to wait for me. All I saw was Tom in a heap not saying anything and the walker on top of him."

Gwen ran into the hall screaming for help. Luckily, neighbors on the same floor were home at the time and helped her pick him up. She is too tiny to lift him herself.

"Thank goodness there were people here," she said.

Gwen moved over to her husband and deftly unwrapped the athletic bandage and began to massage the stump. That's critical, she said. If the cut nerves don't heal cleanly there will always be pain, and pain could prevent Creighton's successful use of a prosthesis, an artificial leg.

As Gwen continued to massage the skin flap that is neatly sewed up and across the cut, her husband looked away. He still has a difficult time looking down and seeing his leg. Even touching it has been hard for him.

"OK," he said to his wife, "that's enough. Thank you very much."

She ignored his sensitivity momentarily and then gave in to it and wrapped the stump once again in its bandage.

For a man whose involvement in community affairs in Hawaii was total, there is a despairing change in Creighton's life. Since the amputation he has been at home almost constantly. It has been a struggle just to

begin relearning the simple things of everyday life: how to take a shower, get into bed, cross a room.

He went into such a serious depression that he even lost interest in writing, something that had become a major passion in his life.

He has written a planning column for The Advertiser for the past eight years, dealing with some of the stickiest problems facing the state, and drawing fire for many of his opinions.

It's a role that delighted him. There has rarely been a legislative hearing on planning in the past decade that hasn't seen an appearance by Tom Creighton taking someone to task over what has become to him a sacred cause—preserving the beauty and charm of the Islands.

(In his new book he documents the history of Hawaii lands from ancient times to the present. It's the first book, he says, that deals with what has happened to our use of lands since statehood.)

But now, for a person who has helped define the environmentalist approach to preserving Hawaii for the public good, and who in the dozen years he's lived here has spoken out strongly against the horrors of over-development without consideration to whose feelings would be hurt, his personal reality has suddenly become a burden almost too painful to bear.

"The first feeling is one of tremendous discouragement," he said, speaking slowly. "To hell with everything. It's a feeling of what's the use of living anymore. What's the use of keeping on going and what's the use of writing.

"It's the damndest thing. I've completely lost interest in writing... The first operation was the first half of November. The book came out about then and I could care less. I just didn't give a damn. I heard that it was for sale in Honolulu Book Stores and that was it.

"So then I had to face the fact that I now have no left leg... I don't think I still have completely gotten used to the fact that I've lost the leg. Every once in a while I forget the thing and want to get up and walk again.

"I still am scared. I dread the prosthesis... It's going to be a long process... Gwen Creighton looked lovingly at her husband. "Oh honey, it's on the way to freedom," she said. "You'll be able to walk like anybody."

Creighton had been in severe pain for about a year before the operation. He was suffering hardening of the arteries in his left leg; his toes hurt so much he finally could not

even walk on them.

He spent months in bed before doctors at Kaiser Foundation Hospital decided on a last-ditch effort to save the leg by implanting a plastic vein from his thigh down his left leg to his foot.

Creighton said X-rays showed veins in the foot "to hook into," but when the surgeons got there the veins didn't exist. They were forced to hook into several tiny veins and hope it would work.

But the operation didn't work, infection took hold, and amputation became a necessity.

The possibility of losing a piece of his body had never crossed Creighton's mind. It was so far from anything he'd considered that he rarely even noticed others with such handicaps.

The Creightons have always loved to walk and they relished long walks along Waikiki Beach in front of the Outrigger Canoe Club, of which they're members.

Creighton remembers seeing a man down there at times, a man who walks with a limp, pacing the beach. He recalls saying to his wife that the stranger probably had a false leg.

But Creighton promptly forgot about the man with the limp and others with such handicaps. "I hadn't related it to myself whatsoever," he said.

Nor had he ever given much thought to things like wheelchair ramps in buildings. Now they've become crucially important to his ability to move about.

The building where he lives in Kahala has two little steps down to the driveway. He'd never paid any attention to them.

Now they prevent him from going out—unless, of course, there is someone to lift his wheelchair over them.

"I suddenly realized all places should have ramps," he said.

Said Gwen: "You really start to realize the difficulty for wheelchairs."

After Creighton fell in the apartment, it became abundantly clear that he needed professional help at home to adjust to his new condition.

He had taken some physical therapy sessions at Kaiser but it was taxing to travel to the hospital twice a week.

So Gwen turned to Kaiser's home care coordinator, Kazue Okuhara, and was referred to the Honolulu Home Care Service, an agency run by St. Francis Hospital to provide a



Creighton in his apartment: "The first feeling is one of tremendous discouragement."

total package of health services to patients in their homes.  
The service is provided at the suggestion of a patient's doctor.

Now Creighton is visited several times each week by physical ther-

papist Jo Frasier. Her expertise is beginning to give him another chance at life.

Whenever there is a problem that seems insurmountable, Gwen says soothingly: "Jo will solve it, dear."

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**Jack Wyatt**

**The Outdoors**

**The Froiseths**

Her name is Kealiipuaimoku Rose-hill Froiseth, but her friends call her Moku. She is a mother of five, married to an ex-beachboy named Wally and she loves the sea. Moku is also president of the Waikiki Surf Club, which seems to be her full-time job.

"I guess when you've been around the beach for as long as Wally and I have, surf boards, canoes and paddles become your way of life," said Froiseth, in her kind and gentle way.

But sadly, things have changed on the beach over the past 25 to 30 years. For the better? I'm not so sure. Everything now is built up so, and the beach is so crowded. I guess that's what they call progress," she shrugged.

Froiseth recalls the "fun" days back in the late 1940s when WSC was just being formed; when she and Wally, plus George Downing and John Lind, and other founding members use to hang around the old Waikiki Tavern.

"For some years we used the tavern's basement as a lockerroom for showering, and kind of clubhouse," she remembered. "There was only Hui Nalu and Outrigger canoe clubs on the beach at that time. But competition was still, as it is now, very keen. We borrowed (and later bought for \$2,000) the Malia koa outrigger canoe from Dad Center. It had perfect lines, and was the fastest canoe in the Islands."

According to Lind, who served as WSC's president for 11 years, the club was instrumental in starting the Molokai-to-Oahu Canoe Race (which WSC has won 13 times in koa and fiberglass divisions); the Hawaiian Canoe Racing Association; the Makaha International Surfing Championship; the annual Waikiki Paddleboard Championships, plus several other Island surfing and paddling classics.

"When Rudy Tongg let us use the basement of the tavern for a beach club," said Lind, "Waikiki Surf Club members went out and signed up 600 members in 30 days."

"WSC filled a giant need in the community at that time. The kids were on the streets, or they were surfing and paddling without direction. The surf club has done much for Island youngsters over the years," he said, proudly.

During the canoe racing season, WSC has about 200 paddlers in all age groups and in the special teams competing. "We enter each HCRA regatta," explained Moku Froiseth, who last paddled about seven years ago when she was less busy.

"We also try to participate in each of the regatta's 20 events. Over the years, WSC has spawned top coaches who have inspired our young paddlers. Many of our novice members have graduated from our program and become coaches themselves.

In addition to the Malia, Waikiki Surf Club has five fiberglass canoes which are used for training. To support WSC's racing program, Froiseth is continually WSC's racing program. Froiseth is continually fundraising—her biggest job as president.

"Now that I retired from my job at Pearl Harbor," said Wally Froiseth, between building paddles at his Kaimuki hilltop home. "I can now devote a little more time in helping the youngsters get started in paddling."

"It's been gratifying for Moku and me to see our own children, and the youngsters of our friends, develop through our age groups. If it wasn't for the canoe clubs, there would probably be a lot of kids on the streets today."

But the soft-spoken Moku Froiseth has some doubts about this coming canoe racing season. "With the HCRA (Hawaiian Canoe and Racing Association)," she explained, "things are pretty much up in the air."

"There's been a split among the Island canoe clubs, and the HCRA, as we have known it in the past, is undergoing reorganization. I'm not sure what's happening."

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### Paradise of the Pacific

Excerpt from Issue of May 1979

### Surf Polo Originates Here

Surf polo is a brand new game originated by the Kahanaomoku family, whose colorful swimming history is known all over the world. The idea of using the popular surf board other than for riding the waves and for competition, prompted water sport enthusiasts to try a new game with practically the same rules as water polo, yet far more exciting and interesting from the spectators' viewpoint. The first practice between the Gold Hui Nalu and the Outrigger Canoe Club, resembled a cross between a comedy and a race with the officials and the many whistles.

The field was marked by two poles 60 feet apart. The goals were represented by ropes ten feet long, raised six feet above the water and held by two more poles. Seven players constituted a team. The ball was a very light inflated beach ball, colored and easily visible. It was too light to throw far, and too light to cause any injury. The referee, umpire, linesman and other officials, as timers and scorers, were beached or benched on stands arranged in the water—a very unusual position for officials when the sea is choppy. The ball was put in play by one surf rider, who paddled out to the center of the playing field, and when the whistle blew, left the ball and got back to his position. The signal would then start men from either end of the playing field towards the center. The men were obliged to lie flat on the board—no pulling, holding or kicking permitted. The object of the game was to throw the ball, from an area marked, ten feet inside the goal posts, below and inside the place designated as "goal."

This throw, if fair, counted as goal or one point. The game was played in two halves of twenty minutes each with ten minutes rest between halves. The team with the largest score at the end of the play period was the winner. There were many rules that were new and were tried with the purpose in mind of establishing a definite rule book to guide other clubs and organizations interested in this new sport. The result brought a very successful schedule between the two teams of the Gold and the Red.

The final games brought better and more experienced teams. The result created a champion. The Hui Nalu gold shirts won the title by defeating the Hui Nalu Blacks and other teams entered. The scores were less interesting to watch than the splendid way in which the boards were handled by these experts. Swimming has always been synonymous with Hawaii but the surf board is a part of the Islands. The skilled players paddling with their dark skinned bodies against the blue waters and white surf made a picture that many a photographer took for permanent records.

Surf polo is a game that will grow in popularity. Perhaps for the beginning it will be confined to the Islands where the boys are eager to play and amuse visitors. It will take time to develop it as a serious contest as there are few beaches, and the pools at the present time are too small to encourage or interest a group in the new sport.

For a spectacular and most amusing game it has no equal. What will be done with the changes and improvements will soon be seen. Like swimming it should become most popular and many more organizations will no doubt form definite teams for next season. The number of new young clubs and the great surf board interest at the present time should warrant a very effective league next year. Surf Polo is so new that as yet it has not even been introduced to the local Hawaiian Association. The future of this new and fascinating game will depend entirely upon the men who started the movement. It is up to them and to the others now practicing, to make the game a part of the Islands, and a part of the general athletic program that is followed here by almost every enthusiastic believer in outdoor life.

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**Thomas Dahl**

Thomas Dahl, 82, a former manager of Thayer Piano Co. in Honolulu, died Thursday in San Francisco.

Memorial services were held Saturday in San Francisco. The family has suggested contributions in his memory be made to the Children's Hospital of the East Bay in Oakland, Calif.

Mr. Dahl was born in San Francisco. He lived here 30 years and managed Thayer Piano Co. before leaving the company in 1950. He moved back to San Francisco in 1959.

He was a member of the Honolulu Rotary Club, served as vice president of the Honolulu Chamber of Commerce Retail Board and was president of the Honolulu Retail Men's Association.

He also was affiliated with the music business on a national level as a member of the board of directors of the National Association of Music Merchants. Mr. Dahl also was a member of the Outrigger Canoe Club and the Pacific Club.

When he died, he was executive officer of the Heine Piano Co., with offices in San Francisco and Oakland. He is survived by his wife, Ruth Heine Dahl.

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**Cecily Cunha**

Cecily A. Cunha, 69, of 3019 Kalakaua Ave., a famed swimmer, died Dec. 28 in Palo Alto, Calif.

Graveside services over the ashes will be held at 11 a.m. Monday in Oahu Cemetery. Williams Mortuary is in charge.

She was born in Oakland, Calif. She moved to Hawaii at age 2 with her parents, the late Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Cunha. Thereafter the family divided its time between Hawaii and the Pacific Coast.

Miss Cunha's feats as a teen-aged swimming champion included holding the national junior title for the mile and the 440- and 880-yard Pacific Coast championships for women.

Also, she was a member of a polo team that won a tournament of the U.S. Women's Polo Association.

She was among the early women surfers at Waikiki and a distance swimmer of the Outrigger Canoe Club.

In 1926, she won the Silver Gate Race, a 3½-mile channel swim at San Diego, an event reportedly watched by 50,000 persons.

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**CUNHA — Cecily Angela Cunha**, 69, a former champion amateur swimmer, died Dec. 28 in Palo Alto, Calif. Born in Oakland, she was once dubbed "the Pacific Coast's leading feminine swimming star" and at one time held the world's record for 50 yards. She attended Punahou School and was a distance swimmer for the Outrigger Canoe Club. She moved in 1925 to California, where she became an open ocean swimmer. Services 11 a.m. Monday at Oahu Cemetery. Survived by cousins, Mrs. Alexander Ross, Richard Cunha, Hugh Dimond, Becky Edwards and Anne Mayou.

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**WRITE ON:** Honolulu maintains its "running capital" image as runners with local ties, Sue Stricklin & Mark Cockrill, were asked to author the first two chapters of a second-printing edition of Runner's World run-away best-seller, "The Complete Woman Runner"...



H'wood actress Susan Blakely took time off from filming "Airport '79/The Concorde" (with Robert Wagner) to zip into Honolulu to surprise her folks: retired Col. Larry & Louise Blakely of Mililani. Susan, who went to Punahou, also had a chance to rap with brother Bruce, the Outrigger Canoe Club Hobie Cat champ... Curious about how Waikiki celebrates New Year's Eve, a Japanese TV network filmed the hoopla here, including part of Tony Orlando's show, for satellite beaming back to Sashimiland... So many film & TV producers vacationing here over Christmas that they attracted H'wood agents as well. Zandy Bressler, for instance, was seen at the Kahala negotiating for his hot client Christopher Reeve, currently portraying the title role in "Superman."

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