



HAULED ABOARD — Dr. Bob Smith, left, and John Marshall help Harry Huffaker aboard the Spooky Luki after cold water and a bad current defeated him within sight of Maui.—Photo by Ron Haworth.

From Big Isle almost to Maui *Cold, drift beat swimmer*

By Ron Haworth
Star-Bulletin Writer

"It's awful lonely out there in the dark."
Dr. Harry Huffaker, Oahu's swimming dentist, was talking about the Alenuihaha Channel. And he knows how lonely and dark it can get.
Huffaker spent 17 hours and seven minutes in the channel Saturday, attempting to be the first man to swim the 30 miles from the Big Island to Maui.
He was defeated by cold

water and a bad current two miles from his goal.
Swimming conditions were less than ideal when Huffaker plunged into four-foot seas off Upolu Point on the Big Island and they got steadily worse.
The cold water immediately began lowering his body heat and it was only through efforts of companions paddling a surfboard by his side that Huffaker was able to remain on course.
MOST OF HUFFAKER'S companions on the swim

The Star-Bulletin's swimming and surfing columnist rode on the escort boat (and at times on a surfboard) while Dr. Harry Huffaker was trying to swim from the Big Island to Maui Saturday. Here is his report.

were from the sponsoring Outrigger Canoe Club. All were volunteers.
They were aboard the Spooky Luki, skippered by Zander Budge, which circled the swimmer during his long fight to swim the channel.
By dawn Saturday, Huffaker had covered eight miles and maintaining 52 strokes a minute. The sea was running six feet, but the wind was light.
At 8:30 a.m., Huffaker paused to drink some orange soda. The sun was shining but was not warm enough. He complained mildly of the cold water.
The ocean swell had decreased, but the wind had come up.
Huffaker gave his first hint that all was not going well when I was escorting him on the surfboard.
HE ADMITTED feeling nauseous from swallowing salt water. His face was gray-white and strained.
He asked for something to eat at 10:30 a.m., halfway across the channel.
He treaded water while I sat astride the board and fed him tiny pieces of tuna. It was all he could do just to grip the scraps of food.
He looked at the overcast sky and said, "If only the

sun would shine. I'm so cold."
Noon came and Huffaker appeared no weaker. His companions on the escort boat began to discuss the landing spot.
Maui was close.
And, although his stroke was slower, Huffaker seemed in high spirits. Dr. Bob Smith prescribed a can of hot beef and noodle soup.
HIS ARMS AND shoulders were coated with coagulated petroleum jelly to reduce the effects of the cold water.
But water had leaked under his goggles and his eyes were red.
As he neared Maui, the crew of the Spooky Luki realized that a cross-current was sweeping Huffaker to the south.
For every inch he swam he drifted five inches south.
Huffaker was pulled aboard and wrapped in blankets. Dr. Smith examined him and said he suffered no serious effects.
"He is in a state of hypothermia, or body heat loss, and I would venture to guess his temperature is ten degrees below normal," Smith said.
The Spooky Luki then turned toward Oahu and a hot shower and warm bed for the swimming dentist.

Swimmer's wife waited and worried

By Keith Haugen
Star-Bulletin Writer

KAUPO, Maui — What does a wife do while her husband swims from Island to Island?
She waits and she worries.
Chris Huffaker, 28, rode with friends along the rugged southwest Maui coastline waiting for her husband, Honolulu dentist Harry Huffaker Saturday.
Shortly after 1 a.m., the

30-year-old dentist-swimmer had dived into rough water off Upolu Point on the Big Island in an attempt to become the first man to swim the Alenuihaha Channel — a distance of 32 miles.
SHE WAS OBVIOUSLY worried and had no comment when a newsman told her that her husband was described as being "blue in the face, very cold and his feet almost a luminous white."

There were anxious hours of moving cautiously along the coast waiting for sight of the boat.
Then word came that he was being taken into the boat. He had failed.
She smiled and fought back tears.
THEN A FRIEND on the boat told her that Harry was all right.
She cried. But they were tears of happiness.

She bit her lip a little when told that the men were holding a heat lamp on her husband . . . then smiled when she learned he was asleep under a pile of blankets.
"He's never been in the water that long before," she said proudly. "I'm glad there weren't any sharks."
HOURS LATER when they finally were reunited at the George Carter home at La Perouse Bay, she was again

the picture of pride.
If Harry Huffaker had failed in anything that day, you couldn't tell it by looking at or listening to his wife.
Moments later, while her husband relaxed and talked with newsmen, the pretty blonde housewife was busy in the kitchen, cooking hamburgers for her husband and the others.
Can she swim?
"Just enough to cool off," she joked.



THE BAD NEWS — Mrs. Harry Huffaker, waiting on the Maui beach, bursts into tears on hearing that her husband has been forced to abandon his swim. — Photo by Keith Haugen.

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Will Try Again
Swimming dentist Dr. Harry Huffaker is already making plans for his next attempt to swim the Alenuihaha Channel.
Huffaker failed in his try to swim the channel between Maui and Hawaii Saturday after swimming for 17 hours and 30 miles.