

Women Paddlers Against the Sea in Molokai-Oahu Race

By Jack Wyatt

Special to the Star-Bulletin

Wind and weather conditions permitting, it's time for the Molokai-to-Oahu race for Na Wahine O Ke Kai women paddlers Saturday in their annual attempt to conquer the sometimes tempestuous Kaiwi Channel. "The paddlers are excited and ready to race, the men are supportive and want to see it happen, and I'm about to have a nervous breakdown hoping that the channel won't be too rough," said event director Hattie Anderson, who had to cancel last year's women's race because of hazardous sea conditions. The Molokai-Oahu canoe race for

women paddlers, like the Olympic marathon footrace for women runners, has been a long time coming, but fortunately, both events have become a reality.

"I just knew women could paddle the channel if given the chance," Anderson said after Na Wahine O Ke Kai's first official race two years ago.

A RECORD 17 WOMEN'S crews have entered the approximately 38-mile cross-channel contest, which includes 10 teams from Oahu, three from Maui, one each from Kauai, Kona, Molokai and California.

The race, which opens Oahu's Aloha Week festivities, begins at Molokai's Hale O Lono Harbor at 7

a.m. and finishes at Waikiki's Ft. De Russy Beach six to seven hours later. Outrigger Canoe Club, the winner of the last Na Wahine O Ke Kai event in 1979, is expected to defend its crown. Twelve women—six paddling and six rotating substitutes—make up each crew.

It was but a few short years ago that the Coast Guard, male race officials, and some men paddlers stated that the channel between Molokai and Oahu was no place for a lady. "Too rough and too dangerous," they said.

"We've come a long way," said Connie Maguire, one of Na Wahine O Ke Kai's early organizers. "It took years for us to convince people that

women do indeed have the strength and stamina to paddle 40 arduous miles from Molokai."

AND NOW, ACCORDING to one outspoken woman paddler, the chauvinistic men who once believed the Molokai race was their own personal bastion are standing in line to help the women.

To cancel last year's race in the wake of the many male paddlers who were quick to say, "I told you so," was one of Anderson's most difficult decisions.

"The wind was blowing 35 miles per hour and the swells were 25 feet high," Anderson recalled. "I checked with the weather bureau, the Coast Guard, and individual crews

before making the decision to abandon the race. Because of safety reasons, if I had it to do over again, I'd cancel in a minute."

According to race official Carleen Ornellas, both koa wood and fiberglass canoes have been entered.

Regardless of the type of canoe, the women paddlers will be out to finish first at Waikiki because that's the big prize," she explained. In the women's race two years ago, Outrigger used a fiberglass canoe in its winning time of six hours and 35 minutes, but for Saturday's contest, the OCC women will be paddling a koa canoe named Kakina.

THE HUI NALU LADIES, who

won the recent Dad Center Lanikai-Waikiki distance race, have been entrusted with the club's new koa canoe. Koa canoes are also entered by race favorites Healani, Lanikai and Waikiki Surf clubs.

When the men's Molokai race paddlers elected to pull out as part of Aloha Week's program earlier this year and chose to hold a Molokai-Oahu race of their own on Oct. 11, the women happily jumped into the vacant date.

"We're excited to have the Na Wahine O Ke Kai women paddlers as part of our festivities," Harry Cooper, Aloha Week's executive director, said.

OCT 2 1981

Games at Waimea

Waimea Falls Park will be the site of a Hawaiian games competition between canoe clubs Sunday starting at 1:30 p.m.

The clubs — Kailua, Koolau, Lanikai and Outrigger — will compete in a variety of games including disc rolling, spear throwing, rock-balancing and tug 'o' war. First place prize is air fare to Molokai, the start of the annual Molokai-to-Oahu canoe race Oct. 11.

OCT. 8 1981

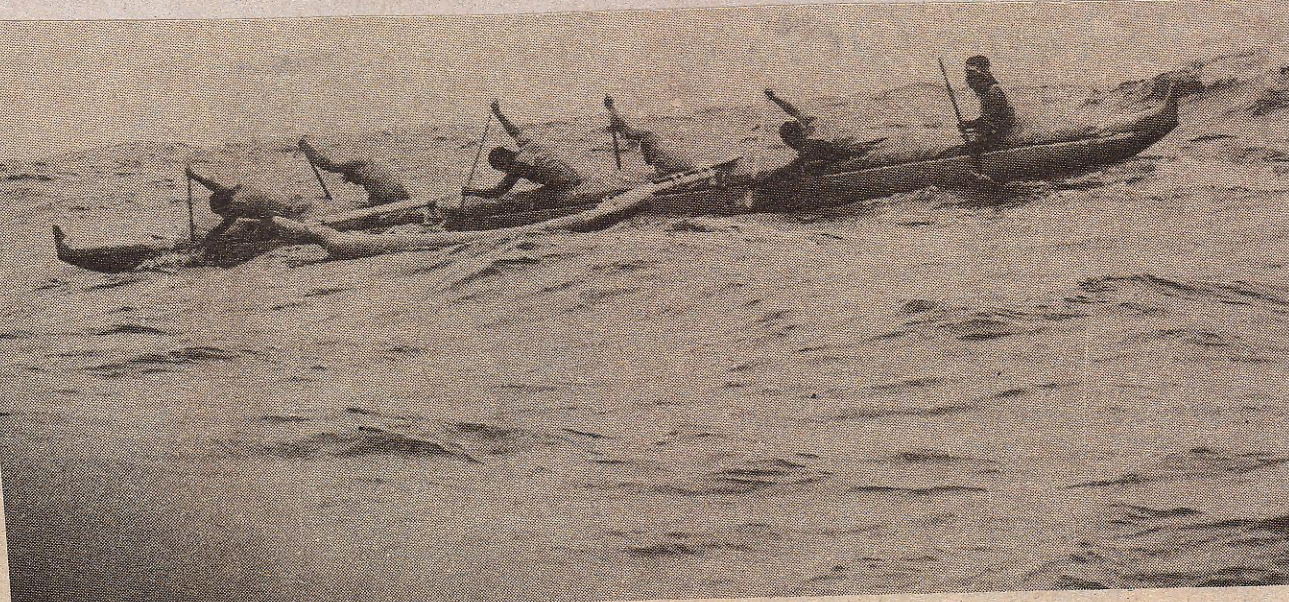
Molokai-Oahu Race A Grueling Event

A fleet of outrigger canoes, their determined crews bent to paddle, will skim across the waters of Ft. DeRussy Beach around 1:30 p.m. Sunday, October 11 in the exciting finish of the annual Molokai to Oahu race.

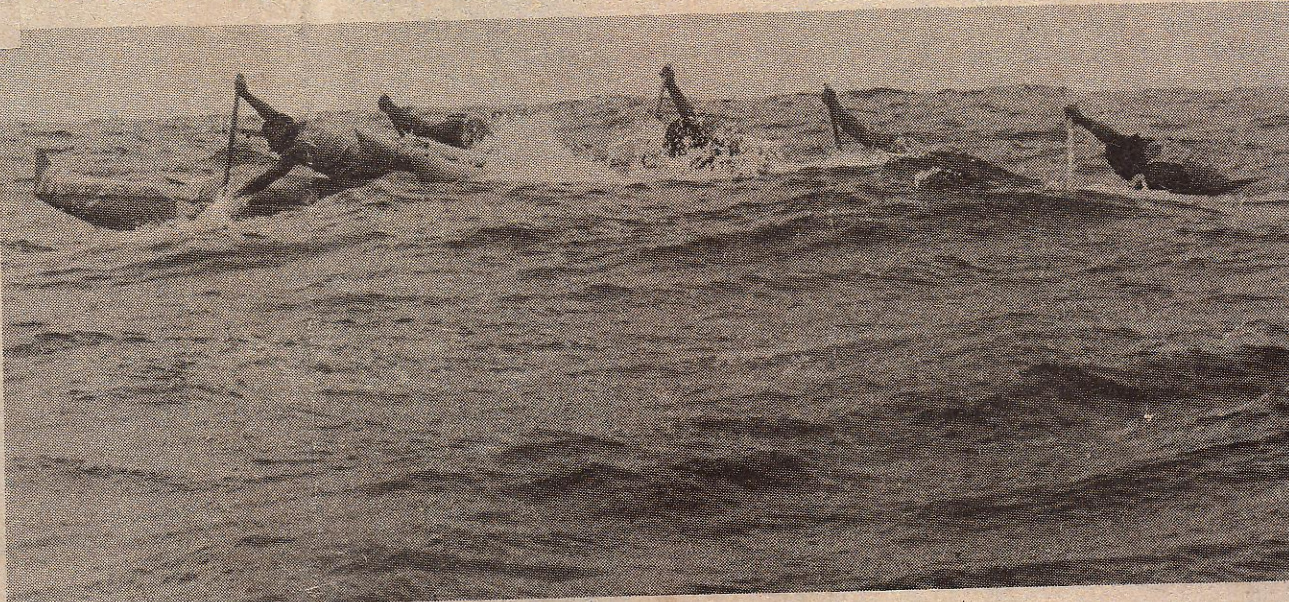
Although the route is a grueling 40.8 miles, the winning canoes normally cross the finish within seconds of each other, each struggling with their last reserves of strength to win the prestigious race.

The rough waters of the Kaiwi Channel between the two islands require more than straight paddling skills. The crews must be expert in handling the canoe to navigate strategically.

The traditional race began thirty years ago as a local cultural event. It has grown since then into a significant sporting event, drawing around 35 crews each year from places as far away as Tahiti and



The 40-mile outrigger canoe race from Molokai to Oahu is a grueling test under the most ideal conditions, but when seas are running high and weather is marginal, it becomes the supreme test. Pictured above is one canoe shortly after it left Molokai at dawn. The waves almost engulf the canoe in the lower picture.



The finish of the Molokai to Oahu long distance canoe race is an exciting event to watch. By the time they reach Ft. DeRussy Beach around 1 p.m. the hardy crews will have paddled 40 miles through the rough, open seas of the Molokai Channel.

OCT. 8 1981

Minvielle Father Of Molokai Race

Ancient Hawaiians depended on the outrigger canoe for their livelihood, navigating through rough seas to catch fish.

Today, A.E. "Toots" Minvielle uses the outrigger canoe to cast a net of friendship throughout the world. Sometimes the water gets rough, but as president of the Hawaii Canoe Association, Minvielle is willing to rock the boat to promote the sport of canoeing and his Hawaiian homeland.

"I just got back yesterday from West Germany," he relates, brimming with the enthusiasm of a just-returned traveler. "We put on an exhibition of Hawaiian canoe racing for the European Canoe Championships. We had teams from Germany, Hungary and France paddling our canoe just to see what it was like.

Minvielle leans back in his chair and smiles at the memory of the simple but fulfilling cultural exchange. A nimble man in his seventies, tanned a macadamia nut brown and wearing an aloha shirt, Minvielle would look at home on any golf course. But instead he sits in the office of his land surveying company, handling his business affairs and cooking up far fetched schemes like getting canoeing on the roster of Olympic sports.

His obsession with canoes dates back more than 60 years when he joined the Outrigger Canoe Club. The ultimate in canoe competition, the annual Molokai to Oahu race traces its origin to Minvielle who began plotting for such a race sometime before World War II. "People thought it was crazy," he recalls. "They said it was dangerous. I say it's dangerous to cross this road out here — every dog has its day."

Minvielle still paddles "with a bunch of fellows from the other side of the island. We're all past 40 and not into racing because of the young element."

They may not take on young Polynesians but the group of recreational paddlers had no qualms about challenging the English Channel in 1978. The first, and only outrigger canoe to cross the English Channel did so in four hours and 11 minutes. "We showed the English how to do it in jig-time under manpower," Minvielle says proudly.



A.E. "Toots" Minvielle

The group left the outrigger canoe they brought with them from Hawaii in England. "We thought it'd be nice to dedicate it to the Captain Cook Museum in Middlebrough," he explains. "Besides, it would have cost too much to have it shipped back," he adds with a wink.

"They don't make the koa wood canoes much anymore," he says wistfully. "On the Big Island, up in the mountains, koa trees grow this wide." He stretches out his arms as if to hug an elephant. "The Hawaiians didn't have such things as an ax, hammer or nails — just a stone adze. But they cut down these giant trees, got them down without cracking or breaking them and hollowed them out."

The importance of the outrigger canoe to Hawaiian history becomes evident when you consider that without it, Captain Cook would have discovered an unpopulated paradise. "It's too bad that the Hawaiians kept no written record of when they first came here or the names of those who first touched the shore."

The first Hawaiians landed to the quiet and anonymity of an unspoiled paradise. The exhausted crews of the Molokai to Oahu race this Sunday will paddle in to the cheers of a crowd which recognizes their hard-won victory over the elements.

OCT 12 1981

California rules the waves Off Shore shatters Molokai record

By Stephen Tsai
Advertiser Sports Writer

The Molokai Ho'e is supposed to be the marathon of outrigger canoe paddling, but Off Shore Canoe Club of California yesterday treated it like a sprint, winning the 30th annual 40.8-mile men's Molokai-to-Oahu race in record time.

The nine-man Off Shore crew, using a borrowed koa boat, crossed the Fort DeRussy Beach finish line in five hours, 25 minutes and seven seconds, shattering the previous mark of 5:43:52 set in 1978 by another California outfit, the Blazing Paddles.

The pace was so fast that even the seventh-place crew, Hanalei Civic Canoe Club, bettered the 1978 record. Another California crew, Imua, placed second in 5:29:53, followed by Ihilani of Tahiti. Defending champion Outrigger placed fourth and was the first Hawaii club to finish.

"It was a dog fight," said Off Shore captain Billy Whitford. "We just had the breaks, we just won the race."

The race was a fight from the start, with Off Shore and Imua battling for the lead. After three hours Imua held a slight lead.

Then, as the three crews approached Oahu's Windward side, Imua's chase boat began to experience engine trouble, forcing Imua's paddlers to go 55 minutes without a crew change. The normal interval is 15-20 minutes.

Offshore took advantage of Imua's problems, pushing its way to the front of the pack to take a lead it would not yield the rest of the way. Imua finished second with a time of 5:29:53.

Imua crew members Mike Swenson and Per Hurlig didn't use their chase boat trouble as an alibi. "We went 55 minutes without a change and

it hurt, but it wasn't the deciding factor," Swenson said.

"They were stronger than we were, but we kept the pace for the first two hours. We even had a two-minute lead," Hurlig said.

Kaiwi Channel was flat and glassy. The absence of large waves meant most teams had to paddle hard throughout the race and could not gain a breather by riding waves.

Whitford said despite the outcome of the race, his team would have preferred to paddle in rougher conditions. "It's a killer when you don't have Mother Nature behind you. It's just a grind," he said.

Teammate "Fast Eddie" Fraser agreed. "We thought it would be rough," Fraser said. "The weather was windy on Friday, but on Saturday it flattened out. Same as today."

"It was a horse race. For three hours they were leading us. Then we saw Imua going high, and we knew we couldn't stay with them there, so we went low. We played cat-and-mouse with them, it was the only thing that we could do."

Said Off Shore's Jay Kearny, "We wanted to be out to the Point (Molokai's Laui Point, where the crews can make their first changes) first, so there wouldn't be a lot of chop when people were changing boats."

While Imua claimed the second spot in the race using a fiberglass boat, the next two places went to clubs that raced with koa canoes.

Ihilani placed third with a time of 5:32:57 and the Outrigger, the defending champion, finished fourth, clocking 5:38:37.

OCC coach Walt Guild, who said his crew made few mistakes during the race, said he likes the move towards faster long distance races. "We're not as fortunate as a lot of teams, since

OCT 10 1981

41 canoes to vie in Molokai race

By Stephen Tsai
Advertiser Sports Writer

The men's Molokai-to-Oahu outrigger canoe race, regarded by many as the grand prix of marathon paddling, will celebrate its 30th anniversary tomorrow with one of the largest entry fields in the event's history.

Forty-one clubs, including teams from Hawaii, Tahiti, California and even Chicago, are entered in this year's 40.8-mile race.

"The 41 teams entered are the most we can recall in a while," said race director Mel Kalahiki. "The large field makes it hard for the officials, but it is good for the sport. The interest will be a shot in the arm for canoeing."

"Depending on the ocean, it will be a good race. The competition is really great. All of the teams from California will be good. We don't know anything about the team from Chicago. All we know is that they were the first to pay their entry fee."

Fred Hemmings, the race's executive director, said, "From a sporting point of view, we're glad to have 41 teams. This shows the attention and attraction the race is attaining."

This year's race, called Molokai Hoe, will be sponsored by the Oahu Hawaiian Canoe Racing Association and various private companies.

The previous 29 races were hosted by the Aloha Week committee and were used to kick off the organization's annual celebration.

However, funding cuts by the committee in recent years forced race officials to look for new sponsors.

"Aloha Week is into promoting tourism, and they do a good job," Kalahiki said after Thursday's Molokai Hoe press conference.

"Although they were trying, it was always funded from the state," he explained. "Gradually the state was taking funds away from the race. As time went on, the association said it would do the race for the Aloha Week committee. The association set up a committee to work with Aloha Week, but it didn't work out (so) we

created our own race."

Along with the new sponsors, the race also has new prizes. The overall winner is rewarded with a new \$4,000 fiber glass canoe.

Team members of the first koa canoe to cross the finish line will each receive koa paddles, while fiber glass paddles will be presented to the club that places first in the fiber glass division.

Second and third place finishers will receive koa bowls as prizes.

Last year's overall winner was the Outrigger Canoe Club. Hemmings said that he is pleased with the way this year's race has been planned. "As far as I'm concerned, we've done the best we could do."

One of the changes in this year's race that Hemmings endorses is having separate divisions for the koa and fiber glass boats.

"The idea of having separate divisions gives definition to the sport," Hemmings said yesterday. "A good analogy is that there are different balls in golf and some can go farther than others. That's why they have separate categories. The same is true in canoeing."

"Some people say we should have open classes. But the race would be of technology instead of ability. It would throw out the heritage of the sport. It's an athletic event that is designed to preserve the Hawaiian heritage."

The new racing divisions coincided with the increase in the number of clubs going with the koa canoes. Kalahiki said the switch to the wooden vessel is a strategic move, claiming that a koa canoe can handle rougher currents better than a fiber glass boat.

"Some clubs take two boats with them. The one they will use depends on the weather," Kalahiki said.

The race will begin at 8 a.m. and the first boat should arrive at the Fort DeRussy Beach finish line within six hours.

According to Kalahiki, the best places on Oahu to watch the race are at Diamond Head and Hanauma Bay.

MOLOKAI HO'E RESULTS

1. Off Shore 5:25:07, 2. Imua 5:29:53, 3. Ihilani 5:32:57, 4. Outrigger 5:38:37, 5. Hui Aa Ote Ra 5:40:12, 6. Blazing Paddles 5:41:01, 7. Hanalei 5:42:35, 8. Maie Nui 5:46:17, 9. Pirae 5:48:27, 10. Lanikai 5:50:11.
11. Hui Nalu 5:52:21, 12. Koolau 5:55:11, 13. Keoua 5:56:10, 14. Ilihoa Brigade 5:57:01, 15. Kamehameha (Hilo) 5:57:58, 16. Koolau 5:58:35, 17. Molokai 5:59:04, 18. Outrigger 5:59:35, 19. Lokahi 5:59:47, 20. Leeward Kai 6:04:40.
21. Napili 6:06:58, 22. Kailua 6:07:30, 23. Kibei 6:08:34, 24. Koa Kai 6:08:56, 25. Healani 6:09:27, 26. Waikiki Surf 6:11:07, 27. Lanakila 6:11:16, 28. Ka Mo'i 6:14:15, 29. Hui Lanakila 6:15:58, 30. Hanalei 6:20:08.
31. Kamehameha (Oahu) 6:20:46, 32. Na Kai Ewahu 6:21:05, 33. Kailua 6:23:27, 34. Windward Kai 6:26:45, 35. Lanikai 6:32:05, 36. Ka Mo'i 6:37:39, 37. Pohai Ke Aloha 6:49:25, 38. Kamehameha (Oahu) 6:55:18, 39. Hang Ohana 7:08:12, 40. Maunawili 7:24:49.