

4th of July Memories of Walter Macfarlane

By Gerry DeBenedetti

It will soon be the 4th of July again, and time for the Walter J. Macfarlane Regatta. Who was Walter Mac and why was the race named after him?

OCC member and philanthropist Muriel Macfarlane Flanders, who died in January 2003, gave the Club her impressions of her brother, Walter Macfarlane, and stories of their life together in an Oral History.

Muriel's three children are Alice Guild, Mary Philpotts McGrath, and Judith Flanders, all OCC members. Many of her grandchildren are also OCC members, and continue the 4th of July traditions honoring their Uncle and Great Uncle, Walter Macfarlane, who never married and had no children.

Muriel used to attend the awards ceremony after the race, and was a major donor to the Outrigger Duke Kahanamoku Foundation.

The Macfarlanes came to Hawaii from Scotland, via New Zealand in the 1840's. Walter Macfarlane's mother was Alice Kamokila Campbell of the James Campbell family. Walter and his siblings grew up in Honolulu, spending the summers sailing, swimming and surfing. Walter was also known for his horseback

riding and polo playing.

One time OCC President, Walter Macfarlane is credited with "saving" the Outrigger Canoe Club from financial problems in the 1940's. Memberships were down, WW II was eminent, and there were lease problems. Through the sale of Life Memberships and solicitation, he kept the Club afloat. According to his sister, it was probably his greatest and happiest achievement.

When Walter Mac went to Mexico in 1943 he contracted typhoid, and returned to the San Francisco area for medical care. During the war medical supplies were scarce and he unfortunately died on June 4th. It was decided to name the next month's OCC canoe regatta in his memory.

His sister says "...when I see those kids out there in the sunshine, the beautiful water, beautiful waves, and everybody so happy and clean and salty...it's just the most beautiful memorial imaginable...he would have loved it."

The Macfarlane Regatta is the oldest annual canoe race in Hawaii.

Many of the Regatta trophies come from the Macfarlane descendants:

- the koa and sterling wave trophy to the overall winner
- the koa racing canoe given to the Boys 18 (made by Walter Guild)
- a sterling silver bowl for the senior women's race
- 2 milo wood bowls from the women's 35 masters and 45 masters

Editor's Note: The above information was taken from a 1993 OCC Oral History given by Muriel Macfarlane Flanders to a member of the Historical Committee. The reader should be aware that an oral history portrays the information as recalled, and may contain impressions that are not factual. The OCC magazine plans to periodically print portions of Oral Histories for the benefit of the membership. Comments are welcome.

Macfarlane Regatta T-Shirt



Members may order their Macfarlane Regatta T-Shirts at the Logo Shop, by calling 923-1585, or via the Club's website: www.outriggercanoeclub.com.