

The Outrigger Canoe Club and the Molokai-Oahu Canoe Race

The idea of a canoe race from Molokai to Oahu originated with Toots Minvielle sometime around 1949. He wanted the OCC to sponsor such a race, but Club officials were cold to the proposition. As stated in the Club History (pages 104/105), they feared for the safety of canoes and paddlers in the rough Channel waters.

Toots persisted, however, and after the Hawaii Canoe Racing Association (HCRA) was organized in 1950, that organization picked up the ball. With Aloha Week, Inc., they inaugurated the first race in 1952. The course was from Kawakiu Bay on Molokai to the beach at the Moana Hotel. Our Club did not participate that year or the following year—this according to Jimmy Smith, who was a member of the 1954 crew, the Club's first entry in the race. He states further that the 1954 OCC crew entered without official Club sanction, assisted by Toots Minvielle and using the old *Hanakeoki*. Only four OCC members were on the crew: Jimmy Smith, Allen Wooddell, John Russell and Bill McCracken; the other five were service men. This crew finished fifth out of eight starters and was given a great reception by our membership at the finish. Outrigger was finally on the band wagon!

Over the ensuing 20 years, the Molokai race has undergone many changes. One important change was in the substitution rule. From 1952 through 1956, nine paddlers were allowed, but the three alternates could be used only once and a relieved paddler could not get back into the race. In 1957, this rule was changed to allow nine paddlers with unlimited substitutions. In 1973, when the HCRA crews raced from Kaunakakai, Molokai, to Sans Souci, 12 paddlers were allowed, together with unlimited substitutions.

The OCC broke into the winner's column first in 1956, using only eight paddlers, establishing a record which still stands for course and substitution rule. Archie Kaaua, who is coaching our fibreglass entry this year, was a member of that crew. (See

photo on this page). OCC won again in 1965, 1967 and 1968, establishing, in 1968, the current record of five hours, 55 minutes and 16 seconds. In addition to the four first places above mentioned, our Club has taken second place four times, in 1959, 1960, 1969 and 1971. (The 1960 second place is noteworthy because OCC was only two minutes back of record-holder Waikiki Surf, thus establishing the fastest miles-per-hour speed for all OCC crews up to now). OCC took third in 1970 and 1974.

When the fibreglass division was established in 1963, OCC entered a



Winning OCC 1956 crew (l/r): M. Lyons; D. Carr; Bob Danials; Dennis O'Connor; Arch Kaaua; M. Auerbach; George Downing.

crew in that class and took first in it and a very respectable fourth overall.

Some performances by OCC crews which set no new records, still deserve special mention. In 1961, the Club entered a predominantly young and inexperienced crew which performed amazingly well under hazardous conditions where for long periods of time the crew could not see either island or even their escort boat. Among the kids of 15 was Mark Buck, who has since been on three winning OCC crews and has served for some

years as head paddling coach. Ever since the 1961 race, our teenagers have played an important part in the Molokai Race.

In the 1966 race, with high seas running which made the channel a hell for small craft of all kinds, the OCC crew, with four of its paddlers novices, was leading at the half-way point, when it swamped. After two hours of heroic effort to bail and continue the race, they had to abandon the effort and concentrate on bringing the *Leilani* home safely. How the badly damaged canoe was finally gotten into the cabin of Sherry Dowsett's *Hula Kai*, the good Lord alone knows, but the "impossible" deed was accomplished; the canoe was eventually repaired, and this year has won

virtually every race it has entered.

In the 1968 race, OCC got off to an immediate commanding lead. Half way across the channel, leading *Healani* by a whole mile, the *Kakina* overturned, *ama* down, in heavy trade wind swells. With memories of the '66 swamping in their minds, the crew took eight minutes to right their craft, during which time *Healani* came within yards of catching up. Then our crew got going again, opened up another mile lead, and won, setting the present record.

Five different records

Because of rule and course changes, the following records now stand:

Course	Distance	Substitutions	Year	Record Holder
Kawakiu to Moana Beach	38½ mi.	9 — limited	1954	Hui Nalu
Kawakiu to Hawaiian Village	39½ mi.	9 — limited	1956	OCC
Kawakiu to Hawaiian Village	39½ mi.	9 — unlimited	1960	Waikiki Surf
Haleolono to Hawaiian Village	41 mi.	9 — unlimited	1968	OCC
Kaunakakai to Sans Souci	53½ mi.	12 — unlimited	1973	Waikiki Surf
Haleolono to Moana Beach	40 mi.	9 — unlimited	1974	Lanikai*

*No new record set in '74 because winning time did not beat OCC's 1968 time over a longer course.