



Potent trio (l/r): HCRA President J. Ward Russell; Canoe Racing Chairman Jeff Kissel, and Head Coach Tom Conner. Photo Scoop

Molokai - Oahu Race — promises challenges, and keen competition

by Jeff Kissel, Chairman Canoe Racing Committee

On October 16, the canoe racing season will close with the most prestigious race of the year — the Molokai to Oahu Canoe Race. When the first rays of sunlight shine on Hale O Lono harbor, a fleet of forty canoes from all parts of the Pacific will start to race for Magic Island.

Competition will be keener this year than ever before. In addition to the exceptionally strong crews from Tahiti we've seen a marked improvement in our own as well as other Hawaiian crews. Depending on wind and sea conditions the '77 race could be the most exciting ever.

A great deal of controversy surrounds this year's event. Aloha Week Inc. is the race sponsor, and the rules that govern it are written and administered by a special Aloha Week Committee. It was with difficulty that the paddlers convinced the committee to start the race from Hale O Lono instead of Kaunakakai, thereby returning to the original concept of a channel race.

Controversy has raged over hull design. What is a Hawaiian outrigger canoe? Until this year no attempt had been made to draw up any more than a weight specification. Partly because of the stunning performance of the Tahitians in their own hull last year, several individuals and clubs, ourselves included, designed or constructed canoes which, while definitely not Tahitian, were significantly faster than present Hawaiian hulls. Basically these fiber glass boats are prototypes for future koa canoes, as fiber glass is both less expensive and easier to modify than

koa. At present there is an active search for a suitable koa log for a new canoe for the Outrigger.

Change is always unsettling to some and the change in hull design is no exception. Our club has always upheld tradition, and at the same time, made major contributions to the improvement of all of our fields of athletic endeavor. The construction of the new canoe, Manu'Ula is no exception. It represents new and better equipment in the best tradition of athletic endeavor. As one of the principal custodians of the finest traditions of canoe racing, it is our duty to pursue every avenue for the fullest development of the sport.

The Hawaiian Canoe Racing Association is reacting to the effort to modify canoe design by drawing specifications which will tend to minimize the changes permitted to the present hull design and preserve the substantial investment which the clubs have made in koa canoes. This is understandable. It was for economic reasons that the Outrigger chose to make its new first hull of glass.

This is a time of transition just as the period after World War II was a time of transition. Then a weight standard was established, and the six-man racing canoe took on its present appearance. These times are difficult, but with a reasoned approach to the problems and a dedicated group of individuals, new ideas are given an opportunity to bloom. We emerge stronger and more able to cope with the problems of the future.

It appears that the Aloha Week Molokai/Oahu Race Committee has decided against permitting advanced canoe designs in this year's race. Even without the new hulls, the event will be a tremendous challenge for the participants. The Outrigger paddlers would appreciate your support, not only for their efforts on the race course on October 16 but also in their constant endeavor to bring new and more challenging dimensions to this sport.

