

The Third Annual Rosa Invitational Canoe Race was held on Sunday, December 21, 1975 upon an azure sea under clear, sunny skies.

One of canoeing's lesser-known events, the Rosa Invitational, nevertheless, has in short order acquired a matchless reputation as a marvelous ending to the OCC's paddling season. This most recent running of the Rosa helped to embellish that reputation.

Early Sunday morning, twenty-four competitors gathered on the beach at Portlock to quaff an initial can of ale and decide who would be paired with whom in the four canoes entered in the race. Everybody's favorite Portuguese politician, Fred Hemmings, Jr., explained the race rules to the assembled throng, then produced a calabash containing the names of twenty paddlers who would man the blades in the four boats. Previously selected as steersmen were Bruce "The Boastful Barrister" Ames, Thomas Conner, Brant Ackerman, and Walter Guild. As the names of the paddlers were alternately drawn from the bowl by the four steersmen, cheers or groans went up from the companion boat crews, coaches, and spectators, depending on the degree to which it was thought a paddler would help or hinder his teammates.

The race began promptly at 11:30 a.m. following a solemn benediction given by the resident chaplain of the Rosa Hilton. At the sound of the starter's gun, Captain Ackerman's boat dashed into a short lead, followed closely by Captain Ames' canoe, with Captains Guild and Conner holding their charges just to the rear.

For those of you who may not be aware, the challenge of the eight-mile paddle from Portlock to the OCC is compounded by a requirement that each paddler consume six

The Rosa Invitational

by Tim Guard

beers (the 12 ounce variety) enroute to the finish line. The beers are distributed to the canoes at various more-or-less predetermined check points along the race route. This year it was agreed that each pit stop would be for a mandatory three minutes, no matter how quickly the beers were chugged by each canoe crew.

This reporter presumes that Captain Ames' wristwatch is either of the Spiro Agnew variety or has but twenty seconds to a minute. In any event, no sooner had the Ackerman crew glided to a stop at the first check point than Captain Ames slalomed right on by, barely pausing to receive his beer ration. From that point on to the finish of the race, it was dog eat dog. Canoes rushed up to the check point, beers were thrown to paddlers who half swilled, half spilled the contents into their mouths and down their chests, and then the race was resumed with barely a thought for observing the three minute "rest" requirement.

As the race progressed and the canoes headed down towards the Diamond Head Lighthouse, the apparent order of finish began to take shape. The Ackerman crew continued to maintain a fragile lead over its competition but then the Conner crew began to close the gap, helped in part by some risky maneuvering near the surfline off the lighthouse. Just as it appeared that the Conner crew might shoot into the lead, one of the larger waves of the day broke across the bows of the boat, filling it and very

nearly washing both the canoe and its alcoholic crew on to the reef. At this point, all Captain Ackerman had to do was hold off a meager challenge offered by the Ames canoe in order to reach shore the victor.

But then, from desperately far back, the Guild crew began to make its bid. Hindered significantly by its 195-pound steersman whose newly-acquired muscles tied up on him like a gordian knot, the Guild crew was helped in part by a piece of line found floating in the water off Black Point. When plucked from the water and wrapped around the front iako, it was discovered that the far end of the line was attached, much to the amazement of the crew, to a twin-engined powerboat. In short order, Guild and his paddlers accelerated to eighteen knots and closed quickly on the leaders. By the windsock in front of the club, the Guild crew had driven into the lead, and hurried to the beach to land a flea flick in front of Ackerman's wildly protesting paddlers.

A Board of Inquiry convened shortly after the end of the race determined that the assistance the Guild crew received was something short of a divine act of God, so they were relegated to their proper position at the back of the pack. The deserving winners mounted the victory platform to receive a hard-earned reward: more beer.

Soon after the race had ended, winners and losers joined together for a celebration of the Holiday season and the kinship that brings together the OCC's Molokai paddlers for the annual running of the Rosa Invitational. Good cheer abounded and everyone agreed that the Rosa, although not well known, was indeed the premier event of canoeing.



Invitational paddlers (l/r): Kimo Austin; Bruce Ames; Bill Bright; Paul MacLaughlin; Barry Hall; Nat Norfleet and Mike Rodrigues. Perpetual trophy in foreground. Photo Sofos

At right, above, first three crews sprint in confusion for finish. Photo Sofos

At right, below, Marshall Rosa (with moustache) and crew at finish of race. Photo Sofos

