

# First Woman Canoe Racing Coach

By Marilyn Kali

For the first time in the 79-year history of the Outrigger Canoe Club, the head canoe racing coach is A WOMAN.

"I'm real flattered to be the first woman," says Michele St. John, "but my main concern is to get the job done and done well. There are some real big footprints to walk in and following Brant Ackerman, Henry Ayau and Walter Guild is going to be tough."

But anyone who knows Michele has no doubts that not only will she follow those footprints, she'll make some of her own.

"Let's face it, we're Outrigger. Not only do we want to win, we're expected to win. We have a tradition to uphold.

"But there's another side to paddling, too. It should be a summer fun program for kids and adults. Paddling should be fun, it should be exercise, it should be a way to meet other Club members. It builds self esteem and the camaraderie gets people through some good and rough times in their lives."

Michele, a paddler since 1971, began coaching novice women's crews in 1978 and has thoroughly enjoyed giving a lot of Club paddlers their start.

However, the organizational aspects of running the Club's highly successful

canoe racing program are something else.

"I knew it was difficult just from being an observer," she said. "But



*Michele St. John*

now that I know how intricate it is, I'm continually amazed.

"It may sound easy to get coaches for each of our 31 crews, but then you have to take the coaches and paddlers' work and school schedules into consideration when you set up practice times, make sure you have enough practice boats rigged, schedule time in the trainer for each crew, etc. It's a big job."

A meeting of all Canoe Racing Committee members and coaches was

held in April so that they could see what each other does. "We're trying for one big unit working together," Michele explained.

A Steering Clinic was held in May for all interested Club members.

Michele also plans to introduce a warm-up program on race days. Chiropractor Randy Shibuya will hold 10-minute stretching programs three times each race day so paddlers can stretch out before they get into the boat.

A pep rally is scheduled for Friday, June 5 at 4:45 p.m. on the Volleyball Courts. All paddlers are expected to attend.

"Outrigger is a family club," our head coach says, "and I would like to get all the families out this year to the races. Parents, come watch your kids. Kids, stay and watch mom and dad. Bring your lunch, your sunscreen and your umbrella. Make this a paddling summer at Outrigger."

You won't have any trouble finding Outrigger on the beach. We have the white tent with the red Outrigger on it. If you can't see us, listen for us. We yell the loudest. And if you can't hear us, look for us in the water. We have the best koa boats on the island and we're gonna be the ones across the finish line first! 🏊