

# My First Crossing of the

# KAIWI CHANNEL

By Halie Harrison

With my stomach twisting and turning and the feeling of my lunch coming back up, I never knew how terrible a boat ride could be to Molokai. Our departure had been delayed to midday allowing the trades winds to fill and really get the ocean moving.

My dad Robby Harrison, boat captain Ikaika Harbottle, four little boys and I were a few minutes away from starting our journey to Molokai for the Molokai to Oahu race the next day, July 31. I would be taking the challenge of racing in the Stock Stand Up Paddle division.

At the boat landing in Hawaii Kai the winds didn't seem too strong. I thought to myself, "Hmm this shouldn't take us too long." Boy was I wrong. After five hours of a rough and wet ride in Howie Klemmer's 18-foot Boston Whaler we were all relieved to finally reach the Friendly Isle.

I had never been sea sick before and although I didn't lose my lunch my stomach did not feel happy. I was really glad when I got my feet on the beach at 6:15 p.m. Ikaika and the boys went to anchor the boat and set up their camp site down the beach while my dad and I raced up to the pre-race dinner that had started at 6 p.m.

As we were walking towards the rooms on the beach, people were telling my dad that we better hurry because the dinner was over already. My dad dropped his things and ran. Coming back to me a few minutes later he had managed to find one last plate for me. With my stomach now settled that burrito tasted really good.

After dinner we were relaxing with my coach, Kainoa Beupre and some of his friends when I realized I had left my bag of sunscreen on the escort boat. I thought we could just get it in the morning but my dad insisted that it was important we get it that night because it can be chaotic in the morning as everyone is trying to find their escort boats. I knew I had to be lathered up before I got wet for a long day on the channel.

My dad ran down the beach to where Ikaika and the boys were camping, borrowed a surf board, and paddled out to get the sunscreen bag. He's a good Sherpa! While he was gone we had made ourselves comfortable on the lanai of a vacant unit that was under construction.

When dad returned I was very comfortable, snuggled up on a padded lawn chair with

a sleeping bag. He suggested we get going up the road to our place but I was happy sleeping right where I was. So he pulled up a lawn chair next to me and after he went upstairs to ask the people partying above us to please quiet down, we both drifted off into a sound sleep.

The next morning I awoke at 6 a.m., had some food, and got everything together that I needed for the day. By the time I got down to the beach everyone came together for the pule (Hawaiian prayer). After this, I scattered around to look for my escort boat which had my paddle on it. I finally found the boat, got my paddle and paddled out to the starting line minutes before the horn went off.

As I started paddling I stuck with our plan to stay north of the pack. Because the stock board has a skeg and not a rudder I did want to let the winds and surf blow me too far south which could make it harder as I got closer to Oahu. I felt pretty lucky to have such good conditions on my first crossing of the Molokai Channel.

The wind directions were good at 15-20 mph and the maximum swells were eight feet. Throughout the race the main thing that was going through my mind was finishing before the cut off time of nine hours. The first half of the race seemed to go by really fast.

As I approached Hanauma Bay time seem to go a little slower because I was working really hard to get closer to the cliffs but they didn't seem to be getting closer. I was starting to get very tired while knowing that I had to paddle upwind another two miles once I passed China Walls.

Heading around the point I saw Heather Baus, who was in my division, about 500 yards ahead of me. At this point I really had no idea what time it was or who was ahead of me. As I was trying to catch up with Heather I heard my named being screamed. When I looked over my shoulder it was my family and best friends in two different boats screaming at the top of their lungs, "Go Halie".

I started to hit the windier part of the last stretch and I could now see the finish line with hoards of people. I was slowly starting to catch up to Heather. As I pulled up beside her she yelled, "Go get um Halie" with encouragement. I was now only two minutes away from

the finish line, battling up-wind with renewed energy.

I crossed the finish line at Hawaii Kai in 6 hours and 24 minutes with total relief that it was over. I ended up getting first place in my division as the youngest girl to solo the channel in the SUP division. Not bad considering the treacherous boat ride the day before and sleeping on a lawn chair, huh?

It was an awesome experience and so many people helped me accomplish this goal. My dad did many paddles with me and helped me get comfortable in the open ocean while my mom often picked me up at the OCC, after doing runs from Hawaii Kai, did the 4th of July race with me (she won!) and always made sure I was eating well.

Kainoa, who graciously offered his help in coaching me, spent many hours with me training, shared much of his SUP and channel knowledge and introduced me to industry people who have been generous with equipment support.

Ikaika was an awesome escort captain and I appreciated the support from the boys, family and friends. And my sponsors Maui Jim sunglasses, Sweet Waterwear, Pualani Swimsuits, Wet Feet, and Ron House boards. Thanks you guys! I couldn't have done it without you!

The prone paddleboard race was won by Jamie Mitchell for the 10th straight year in 4:40:31. OCC's Scott Gamble won the Men's Stand Up Paddle division for men 30-39. Other Outrigger members did well in the race too:

Scott Gamble, 1st, SUP Unl M30-39, 4:30:10  
Todd Bradley/Greg Pavao/Tapa Worthington, 2nd, SUP Team3, 5:03:30  
Brian Rocheleau, 5th, PB Unl M30-39, 5:08:17  
Mike Cote/Jack Bark, 1st, PB Stk, Team2 U79, 5:10:09  
Keoni Watson, 7th, PB, Unl, M30-39, 5:14:53  
Eric Abbott, 1st, PB Stk, M18-29, 5:26:59  
Austin Kino/Kaniela Lyman, 4th, PB Stk, Team2 U79, 5:34:33  
Scott Rigg/Marc Haine, 1st, PB Stk, Team2 100+, 5:41:50  
Scott McPhail, 8th, SUP Unl, M40-49, 5:47:15  
Kanesa Duncan Seraphin, 2nd, PB Unl, W, 5:50:19  
Halie Harrison, 1st, SUP Stk, W, 6:24:48

