



By Ron Haworth

BOAT DAY INTERRUPTED



The *Lurline* arriving at Aloha Tower in the 1930s.

Boat Day of yesteryear is a nostalgic watermark in Honolulu's past when the Royal Hawaiian Band, hula dancers, waving coin divers, and flower lei laden vendors were as colorful as the famous Matson menus.

Kama`aina Outrigger Canoe Club members will remember it as "the only way to travel" between home and California before air travel and the Honolulu Airport wasn't much more than a steam bath Quonset hut on Lagoon Drive.

Those never to be forgotten times, during an era which began when the Aloha Tower was the tallest building in Honolulu and the Big 5 were the monarchs of Territorial commerce, will always remain lei scented in memories.

It was a time tear dampened cheeks conflicted with brave smiles on the faces on both those departing and those remaining; it was TO YOU SWEETHEART ALOHA as we will never again live when multi-colored paper streamers from ship to shore were the final tether waiting to be broken by three mournful blasts of the ship's whistle.

This all came to an abrupt halt after December 7, 1941 when Oahu was attacked by Imperial Japan. The *SS Lurline* was midway between Honolulu and San Francisco that fateful day. On hearing the news she immediately sealed watertight bulkheads and commenced a zigzag blacked out course to San Francisco where she was totally reconfigured into a drab gray troopship. War had blacked out Aloha.

All four converted Matson liners made a total of 119 war voyages covering 1.5 million miles carrying 736,000 troops. All survived and came home.

Lurline Day

Seven years were to elapse till *Lurline* once again resumed crossing between California and Honolulu and the unique life for which she was built... a five day trip of deck chair napping over an open book, tall frosty drinks by the pool, wooden horse racing jockeyed by the toss of dice, evenings dancing to wartime tunes of Glenn Miller till ... finally ... the last strains of *Moonlight Serenade* ebbed into pillow and sleep.

At the conclusion of hostilities the *SS Matsonia* in 1946 was the first Matson ship to shed her camouflage and resume

Photos Courtesy Matson Navigation Archives



Lurline on Boat Day.

service in bridal white with twin gold funnels trimmed in royal blue. But it was *Lurline's* return in April 1948 which prompted the greatest spontaneous public demonstration in Island history. And Outrigger Canoe Club was in the vanguard of the pageantry and Aloha Tower still reigned over Honolulu.

Forecast June 9, 1948

Outrigger Canoe Club Greet Lurline in Hawaiian Style

"The outstanding and most beautiful feature of the reception to the *Lurline* in Honolulu Wednesday, April 21, was the Regatta made possible by the Outrigger Canoe Club. Putting out from Pier 2, led by Charles Amalu's canoe, the *Princess*, the 14 outrigger canoes furnished by the Club and captained by Club steersmen, met the *Lurline* scattering flowers on the water and escorting her to Pier 11.

The crews in the canoes appropriately were Kamehameha School students and were dressed in malos and other Hawaiian garb.

The 14 canoes, including the double canoe which carried the king and queen, were decorated with flowers. Other Club canoes also met the ship off Diamond Head; one a sailing canoe steered by Tommy Arnott. The canoes carried fruits and flowers reenacting the golden days when Hawaiians met arriving ships with Island fruits of the land for trade.

At Pier 11 the king and queen then took part in a true Hawaiian style welcome with chants of greeting. The entire pageant was colorful and thrilled the arriving visitors, and spectators lined the shore from every available point of vantage.

The day's pageantry was planned and carried out by "Yabo" Taylor, assisted by Amalu, Bob Fischer, Sally Hale, Harold Yap, "Toots" Minvielle, and the Canoe Committee"

Historian Barbara Del Piano touched on that memorable day in *OUTRIGGER CANOE CLUB, THE FIRST 100 YEARS 1908 - 2008*.

A Spun Spindrift of Aloha

Lurline's final aloha Boat Day was in June of 1970 when she sailed for San Francisco. Honolulu International Airport

was no longer a steam bath and air conditioning and trade winds cooled “gull wings” and speed had conquered “getting there was half the fun”.

In her vanishing wake she left a tearful spindrift rainbow and 30 years of fond memories forever cherished by those who sailed aboard her or Matson siblings... *Malolo*, *Matsonia*, *Mariposa*, and *Monterey*.

American Hawaii Cruises Tries To Revive the Nostalgia in 1980

Ten years to the month after the *Lurline* forever left our waters the Chamber of Commerce of Hawaii and OCC member Bob Costa sought to mine those Boat Day treasures when prior to her maiden seven day inter-island Hawaii cruise fortunate guests were invited to sail on *SS Independence* from Pearl Harbor to Diamond Head before returning to Aloha Tower where they were to be greeted by festivities all but absent since *Lurline's* departure.

The Royal Hawaiian Band and hula dancers, along with a capacity crowd on the upper balcony of Pier 10, gave Boat Day new life. Only a Matson ship and coin divers were absent.

The Passenger Vessel Act 1886 prohibited foreign flagged ships from transporting passengers directly between two United States ports. As result when *Independence* was joined

by her sister ship *SS Constitution*, and because they were U.S. flagged, passengers could again sail between Hawaii and California whenever either ship was scheduled for dry dock on the west coast; and so in its true meaning was Boat Day fleetingly revived .

The *Constitution* had a movie career and was used for the 1975 film “An Affair to Remember” with Gary Grant and Deborah Kerr. She also hosted a 1986 Magnum P.I. “All Thieves on Deck.”

Her final curtain call came 700 miles north of Oahu in November 1997 when she sank while under tow to the ship breakers, thus escaping the impersonal cutting torch to bow out in dignity and sink into history. A King Neptune resting place for a ship *Grace Kelly* sailed on for her Monaco wedding to become a Princess.

Aloha Tower is no longer the tallest building in Honolulu, but it has withstood the ravage of time and development and remains a regal guardian of a fragrant flower lei Boat Day past. If only we could rewind her landmark clocks.

“To You Sweetheart Aloha.”

Koa Log Footnote

On arrival in Hawaii the Independence was Oceanic Independence but Oceanic was dropped prior to Constitution joining the fleet.