



By Ron Haworth

## Where Has All The Koa Gone?

The days of koa canoes on Waikiki Beach are waning in memory. Notably gone is *Moi Lii* used in the Norman Rockwell Pan Am advertisement with Steamboat sitting in four seat and tourists in two. Iconic *Ka Mo'i* once steered by legendary beach boys for Outrigger Canoe Club Beach Services and more gifted OCC steersmen, now hangs in the Ka Mo'i Boat House at Outrigger Canoe Club.

David Kahanamoku in August 1967 steered *Ka Mo'i* on a good wave before legend says he told his second captain at rides end... "Take over, boy"... and slipped asleep into the sea, dead of a heart attack.

Charles Amalu, David's close friend and lifelong paddling companion...even to the final wave...once told this writer, "He would have wanted to go no other way; often we talked of this."

"I hope to die out there," David would say and point to the sparkling sea.

How many have earned such freedom of choice?

*Ka Mo'i* dates to 1931 when it was built in Kona. A beach boy crew paddled it in the 1957 Molokai race. Then weighing approximately 650 pounds it is likely the heaviest to compete in the race. It was later put on display at Ulu Mau Village at Ala Moana Park until the village closed in 1977. In 1982 it was leased to a Poipu restaurant and rumored to be used as a salad bar until the restaurant was destroyed by Hurricane Iwa.

It survived that calamity and Hanalei Canoe Club then prepared it for exhibition in the Princeville Hotel where it remained until 1992 when the hotel was heavily damaged by Hurricane Iniki. Again a survivor it was relocated to the nearby Hanalei Bay Resort and hung in the lounge.

In January 1999 Tay Perry, Kawika Grant, and Allan Dowsett went to Kauai to retrieve *Ka Mo'i*. In late 2000 a complete renovation was begun which took two and one half years. Reflect on the *Ka Mo'i* (The King) enduring legacy next time you relax and talk story and savor a pint or swirl the grape in the bar honoring its name.

## Waikiki Surf Club...It's all in the Name

The Outrigger Canoe Club Walter J. Macfarlane Regatta held on July 4th mandated koa canoes through 1979. Oahu Canoe Racing Association lifted this regatta rule in 1980 and Waikiki Surf Club's *Malia* in 1981 has the distinction of being the last koa to race in Macfarlane.

But that is not to say 'kama'aina koa' has vanished entirely, several canoes are displayed in Waikiki hotels, notably and fittingly, the Outrigger Waikiki Beach and Outrigger Reef Waikiki Beach Resorts. Ala Moana Hotel, (managed by Outrigger Resorts), is also a keeper of tradition.

## Kahuna Kalaiwa'a

Tay Perry, present chair of the Outrigger Canoe Club Historical Committee, appreciates and knows koa canoes as does a blue grass horse breeder pedigree; he has built in the past 50 years five from the log and restored 16. Currently he is nearing his third year working weekends shaping a new six man koa for Kawaihae Canoe Club which he will finish by year's end.

He estimates the felled log from the North Kona forests of Hualalai at well over 100 years old.

When this writer last saw the unfinished *Waihou*, (new water), Tay sat on a stool with one hand on the manu, in his other a chisel; a time wrap linking the centuries, creating a 'living' canoe from a barked koa tree that grew when King Kamehameha I lived.



*Ilima*

One example of his restoring skills is on display at the Outrigger Reef. "The *Ilima* was once owned by David Nottage," Perry explained. "It is a rare two man koa once common but only a handful remain. When it was originally built there were hundreds of similar canoes of this type. It came to Oahu in the 1950s, probably from the Big Island because of the abundance of koa, before Nottage acquired it in extremely poor condition from a kama'aina family in the late 1960s."

The *Ilima* is 15-feet long and weighs approximately 150 pounds and was primarily used for inshore fishing.

"Termite damage was extensive," Perry said. "Before I finished I had replaced the bottom and mo'o with koa. The new ama is wiliwili, and the i'akos hau; new seats and wae were installed. My past experience in canoe restoration dates this canoe between 1920 and 1925. Because this type of canoe was numerous and unimportant no one kept records of the builder; nor is the given name known. Nottage named it *Ilima* for the flower of Ohau."

Perry finished restoration in February 2012 and David Nottage was able to enjoy *Ilima* till he passed away later that same year after which his family placed the custody of *Ilima* with Tay Perry and Friends of Hokule'a and Hawai'ioloa for charitable purposes.

## Firewood to Cultural Corner

The four-man *Kaukahi* reigns in royal surroundings in the Outrigger Waikiki Beach Resort's upper floor lobby 'cultural corner' with a full wall mural backdrop of a double hull sailing canoe off Waikiki and Diamond Head. To one side are glass display cases exhibiting numerous Hawaiiana artifacts belonging to Hawaiian Mission Houses Museum. The entire presentation is inspiring. A pedestal koa plaque, in part reads:

"Originally built by Hawaiians in the late 1800's, *Kaukahi* was an all-purpose fishing, surfing, and sailing canoe. Tay Perry restored it in 1996. When the canoe was first "found" on the Big Island, it was dilapidated and ravaged by termites and mistaken for firewood.



Kauahi is on display at the Outrigger Waikiki Hotel

*On May 1, 2001 the Kauahi was paddled to shore in front of the Outrigger Hotel on the beach. The canoe received a traditional Hawaiian welcome complete with Hawaiian blessing, conch shell blowing and 100 foot lei.*

Two nameless koa canoes levitate in Duke's Canoe Club and Hula Grill. Tay Perry recalled: "Tommy Holmes procured the two man for Duke's prior to its opening; Toots Minvielle once owned the other four man and his widow gave it to Shrieners for their Waimanalo location."



### **Bonjour Kauahi**

It was Tay's dad, George, who in 1962 actually rescued *Kauahi* from a Hilo garage and then stored it for 34 years before son, Tay, transformed the ravaged canoe into 'Cinderella' and escorted her to the Brest, France 1996 Wooden Boat Festival, but only after months of frantic restoration by volunteers, and donated koa by Peter Greenwell from fallen trees on his Kaloko Mauka property.

Perry believes it is the only koa canoe to sail in the Atlan-

continued from page 7

tic Ocean. He named the canoe himself as the original builder and name had long since been forgotten.

"I decided on the name because the simple translation means '*outrigger canoe*' and its other meaning was 'singleness of purpose' and because of my obsession to complete it on time for Brest and finish it with the degree of quality I desired it fit the circumstances."

The restored canoe was rigged in the traditional pre-discovery style and contained only Hawaiian woods.

Brest '96 had 2,514 entries but only five from the U.S. The Hawaiian koa canoe was deemed to have traveled the furthest to participate and was the center of attention because of size, beauty, and uniqueness.

The four man *Okole Maluna* resides in the Ala Moana Hotel but was at Queen's Surf in Kapiolani Park before the local favorite was razed. The canoe was originally restored by George Perry in the 1960's.

The koa canoes have left the sand and surf of Waikiki and in their wake towers a skyline never imaginable when they were a common everyday sight. As the years inevitably advance even their visual memory will be relegated to books reminiscing on the nostalgic history of old Hawaii.

In the meantime, Tay Perry's dedication continues to impede the ravishing hands of time.

### Koa Log Shavings

Outrigger Hotels and Resorts are to be commended for displaying koa canoes for their heritage and rich cultural importance to Hawaii. *Ilima*, *Kaukahi* and *Okole Maluna* grace premium lobby floor space and the mural behind *Kaukahi* is spectacular as is the plaque's informative description of her history, but Koa Log wonders why this wasn't carried forward for *Ilima* and *Okole Maluna* where no history is offered.

Outrigger Waikiki Beach Resort occupies a parcel of Waikiki Beach once home to our own Outrigger Canoe Club. Sadly, not a foot print of our past deeds remains on our birth-right sands. How appropriate if there were a koa display case near *Kaukahi* showcasing our Club's cornerstone contribution of modern Waikiki 'teething' and koa canoe preservation.

Outrigger..."Where the sports (and koa canoes) of old Hawaii shall always have a home".

It's all in the name.

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