

# Seven Outrigger Crews Honor Michael Tongg

By Erika Eberhart



Photo by Tiare Richert-Finney  
The Girls 18 finished first in their division and 10th overall. From left, Jean Cullinan, Leigh Cullinan, Linnea Schuster, Gracie Thacker, Shannon Brown, Brooke Hunter.

On Sunday, April 22, 2007, seven Outrigger Crews put their paddles in the water to dig deep for Michael Tongg, an avid paddler who has been battling lung cancer since 2003. Over 300 crews committed to this outstanding event to honor Tongg, who is 63 and has been a mentor to numbers of paddlers on Oahu. He was not only the President of the Hawaiian Canoe Racing Association (HCRA) for close to 20 years, but he was also the President of the Polynesian Voyaging Society.

The event, named after Tongg's favorite saying, "Paddle From the Heart", drew 48 Outrigger paddlers who donated both their money and their time to paddle their hearts out for Tongg. In addition to the paddlers, Liz Perry, Michele St. John, and Tiare Richert-Finney followed every crew in the Whaler to motivate the paddlers and show their support for this event.

The participants were:

Men's 60's: Jaren Hancock, Kimball Thompson, Kent Giles, Fred Lowrey, Joe Dubiel, and Bruce Ames.

Men's 55's: Kenny Bailey, Billy Mowat, Tom Arnott, Jimmy Kincaid, Doug Bechert, and Chris Crabb, also known as the "Blues Brothers."

Men's Open: Craig Gamble, Dave Fan, Will Estes, Stew Kawakami, Rob Harrison, and Chris Siegfried.

Women's Golden Masters: Susan Heitzman, Barbara Bryan, Maureen Kilcoyne, Carol Cook, Maile Ostrem, and Keanuvenue Rochlen.

Women's Masters: Paula Crabb, Laurie Lawson, Genie Kincaid, Wendy Wichman, Kaili Chun, and Kisi Haine.

Women's Open: Vanessa Beaton, Maile Cluney, Pam Jenkins, Erika Eberhart, Jenifer Bossert, and Kristin Lee.

Girl's 18's: Gracie Thacker, Leigh Cullinan, Jean Cullinan, Shannon Brown, Linnea Schuster, and Brooke Hunter

All of the Outrigger crews did well overall. However, the day was more about honoring Tongg than competing against each other. There was so much energy in the air that day, we can only hope it will help this amazing man continue his fight against cancer so he can mentor more paddlers in the years to come.