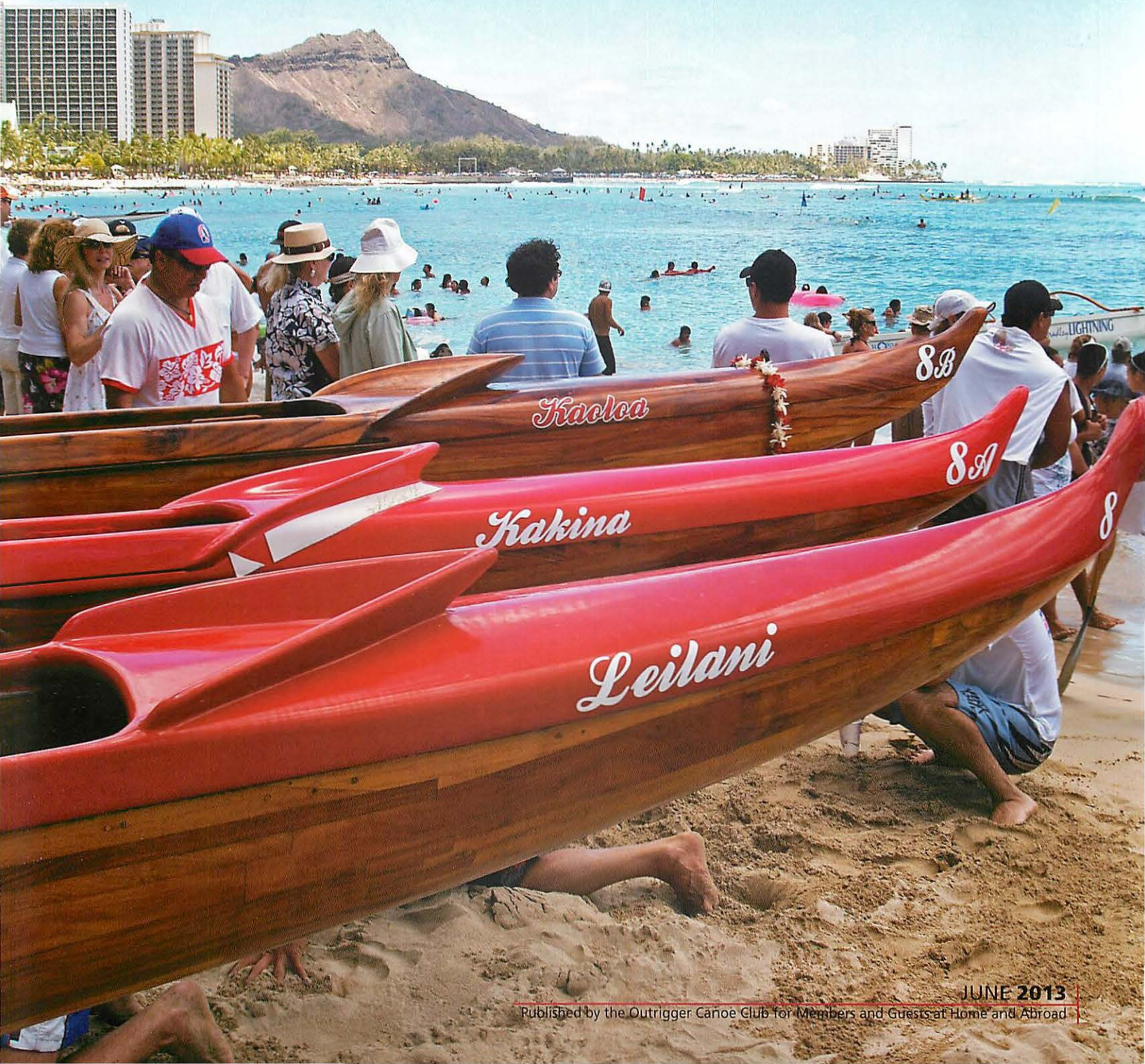


the Outrigger



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History of OCC's Racing Canoes



The Pride of the Outrigger: koa canoes *Hanakeoki*, *Leilani*, *Kakina* and *Kaoloa*.

By Marilyn Kali

Part 1 *Hanakeoki*, *Kakina* and *Leilani*

The art of racing outrigger canoes, once the sport of Hawaiian royalty, will be revived once again this month when the Oahu Hawaiian Canoe Racing Association begins its regatta season.

The OHCRA perpetuates the ages old tradition of racing in sleek koa canoes, as opposed to the newer fiberglass canoes.

In the case of koa canoes, new is not always better.

Outrigger is the proud owner of three koa racing canoes—the *Leilani* and *Kakina*, both built in the 1930s, and the *Kaoloa*, built in 1986. This season our paddlers will be racing in the newly renovated *Leilani*, as well as the *Kakina* and *Kaoloa*.

Since its founding in 1908, the OCC has owned and raced five koa canoes.

When you step into the canoe this year before your first race, take a minute to think about the proud tradition of outrigger canoe racing and the thousands of Club members who have raced before you in these beautiful koa canoes for the past 105 years.

Hanakeoki

The Club's first koa racing canoe was the *Hanakeoki* which was built by Kealakahi in Kona around 1900 and owned originally by Dr. Alford Wall. The name means "working George" and refers to George Carter, who was Territorial Governor.

The *Hanakeoki* had a calabash shape.

The first recorded regatta for the *Hanakeoki* was September 16, 1906, two years before the founding of the OCC.

The canoe was one of three entered in the regatta at Honolulu Harbor in the Territorial Championships. The crew of *haole* in the *Hanakeoki* were later to become the founders of the OCC.

The other two canoes were the *Alabama* (with a Hawaiian crew from Kona) which was owned by Arthur M. Brown, and Prince Kuhio's canoe, the *A* (also with Hawaiian paddlers from Kona).

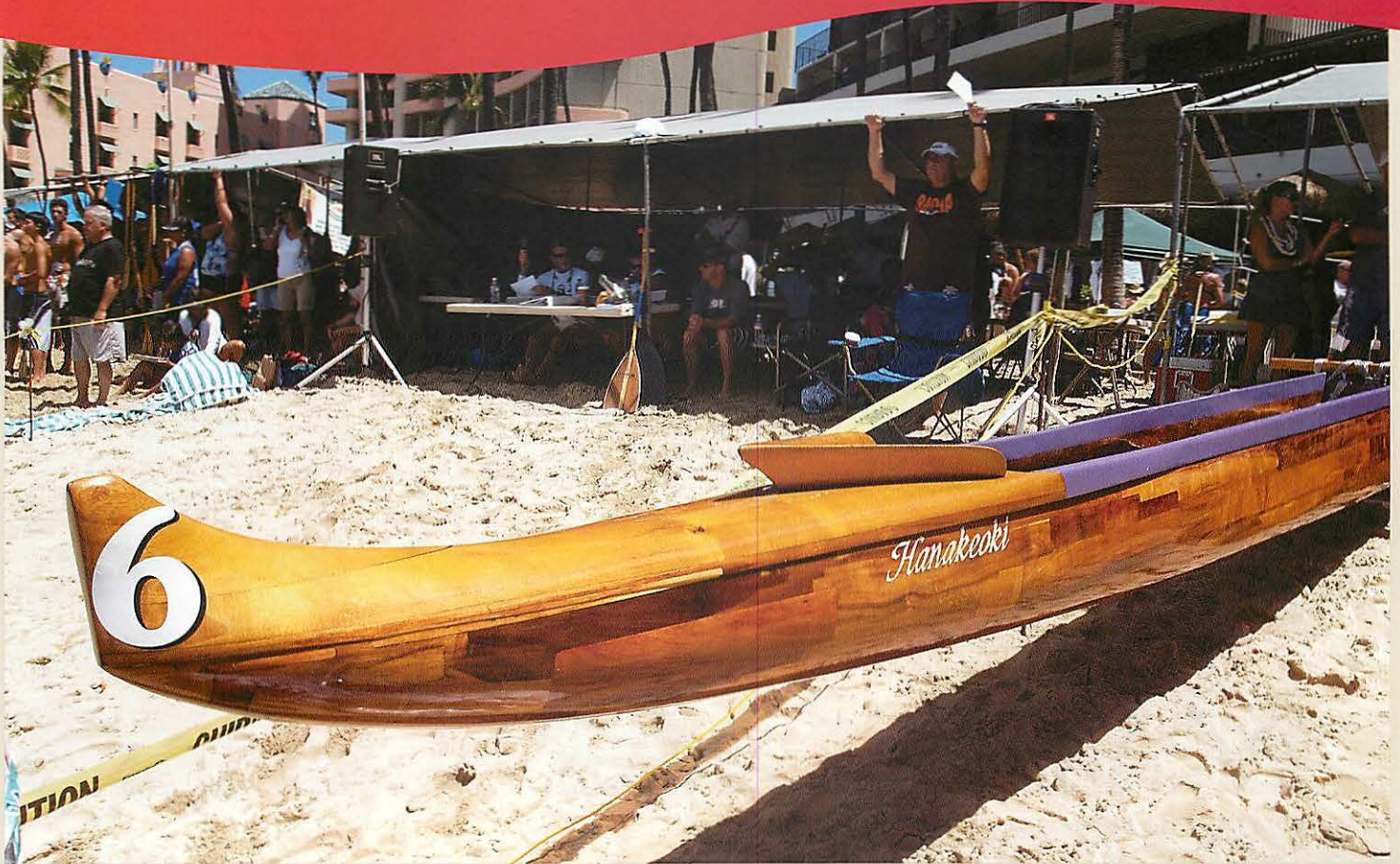
The *A* won by a half-length over the *Hanakeoki*. It started the age-old debate: do paddlers win the race or is it the canoe?

In 1910, after Outrigger again lost to Prince Kuhio's *A*, OCC captain Kenneth "Rusty" Brown reportedly said that the men of Kona had won because of their superior canoe. Kona graciously agreed to a second race with swapped canoes and six days later defeated Outrigger for the second time.

After the race, according to the *Honolulu Advertiser*, Prince Kuhio reportedly kidded the OCC, telling them: "that they could take his canoe *A* to Hawaii and race flying fish until they worked up some speed."

Once Outrigger purchased the *Leilani* and *Kakina* in 1933, the *Hanakeoki* was primarily used for training. The canoe could win under certain circumstances but had a hard time competing with the lighter and sleeker *Leilani* and *Kakina*.

In 1947, OCC Beach Captain George Downing wanted to enter the 4th of July Macfarlane Regatta. He didn't have a canoe, so borrowed the *Hanakeoki* from Outrigger. The official competitors were OCC, Hui Nalu, McCabe-Hamilton & Renny and the



The *Hanakeoki*, first owned and raced by OCC members in 1908, is now owned by Makaha Canoe Club. She's shown on Waikiki Beach in 2008 at the Walter J. Macfarlane Regatta.

Hawaiian Civic Club.

Downing, along with Wally Froiseth and John Lind had so much fun that they decided to start their own canoe club, the Waikiki Surf Club, and became official competitors in the Macfarlane race from 1948 on.

Outrigger first entered the Molokai race in 1954, the third year the event was held, and finished fifth in the *Hanakeoki*. Only four members of the OCC crew (Bill McCracken, John Russell, Jim Smith and Allen Wooddell) were OCC members. The others were a pick up crew from the military.

OCC also raced the *Hanakeoki* in the Molokai race in 1955 with an all-OCC crew (Doug Carr, Paul Dolan, Al Lemes, Frenchie Lyons, Jack Mattice, Tom Moore, Bob Muirhead, Hall Schaffer and Tom Schroeder) and finished fourth.

In 1959, the *Hanakeoki* was hanging in the old canoe shed at the Club. It was loaned to the Beach Boys to use in the 1959 and 1960 Molokai races.

After the Molokai race, Harry Field of Maui Canoe Club appealed to the Club to borrow the canoe for their Prince Kuhio Regatta. They agreed to repair the canoe and pay shipping expenses. The Board approved the loan of the canoe for two years.

In 1965, the *Hanakeoki* was loaned to Hui Nalu, whose famous canoe the *White Horse* was used during the filming of James Michener's epic movie *Hawaii* in Makua. The *White Horse* had been damaged during the filming of the movie and they

used the *Hanakeoki* while repairs were made.

The *Hanakeoki* was sold to Makaha Canoe Club, a new canoe club in 1972. Look for it this season. Now more than 113 years old, the *Hanakeoki* is the oldest koa racing canoe still in competition.

Leilani, Kakina and Malie

The story of the *Leilani* and *Kakina* and their sister canoe, the *Malie* (now known as the *Malia*), starts in the 1930s (some say 1933, others 1935). This is the story told by Outrigger's famous coach and Club Captain, the late Dad Center.

Center worked for American Factors. They had a big establishment on the Kona Coast where they produced oil, fuel and lumber. In the late 1920s, private land acquisition on the Big Island started to make it difficult for people to get logs for canoes.

In the early 1930s, a company named Takemoto Hardwoods was taken over by American Factors for indebtedness. The company's primary work was cutting koa for sale and making furniture. The company hired all canoe builders because they knew where the best koa was and they were willing to stay in the mountains to cut it. They also had the strength to bring the koa logs (that weighed many tons) from the mountains to sea level.

Every time they saw a good log, they wouldn't cut it for lumber they'd save it for a canoe. Because of the scarcity of koa, logs for canoes were not readily available for sale. The canoe builders

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The *Kakina* circa 1940s.

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at Takemoto were among the few who continued to have access to the logs and to build canoes. At the time of the takeover by Amfac, they had quite a few canoes in various stages of completion.

Dad tried to find a market for the unfinished canoes. He offered three canoes to the Club, but OCC decided it only wanted two of them.

Dad hired Jim Yamasaki of Kailua, Kona to finish the canoes. Yamasaki was a craftsman finisher and all-around carpenter who prepared canoes to be raced in Kona. When Dad bought the canoes, they were roughed out but weren't sanded and didn't have any seats in them. Yamasaki used wood sculpturing tools to finish the canoes.

When the canoes arrived in Waikiki, Outrigger gave them a water test. Of the three, the *Kakina*, which had a shallow draft and didn't hold much weight because it was only 38-feet long, was the fastest. The *Leilani*, which was a little longer (39-40 feet) and one-inch fatter in back, floated a lot better, was next, and the *Malie*, slightly longer and the heaviest, was slowest.

Outrigger purchased the *Kakina* and *Leilani* and Dad Center kept the *Malie*.

The Club held a contest. Whoever put up the most money to help purchase the canoes got to name them. Bob Topping, owner of the New York Yankees, donated the most money and he named one canoe after his girlfriend, *Leilani*.

The second canoe was named *Kakina* by past-president Lorin Thurston. *Kakina* was a family name.

The third canoe, still unnamed, was taken home by Dad. He built a shed over it and it was watered every time he watered his plants in his yard.

When Waikiki Surf Club was looking for a koa racing canoe in 1947, they asked Ah Kong Pang who handled OCC canoes, where they might find one. Kong told them to see Dad Center because he had a canoe in his yard.

WSC paid Dad \$3,000 for the canoe "on the payment plan," Downing said. "It took us eight years or so to pay for it, but he was very gracious about it."

After listening to Dad talk about how well the canoe ran in

calm water, the canoe was named *Malie*. Sometime over the years, it was renamed *Malia*.

Outrigger was quite chauvinistic at the time. Women were not allowed to race in the *Kakina*. The men were afraid they might break "their" canoe. The women had to use the *Leilani*, then considered the second best canoe.

In the 1950s, the OCC Beach Services had numerous koa canoes—the *Ka Moi*, *Moi Lii*, old *Kakina*, *Eleu* and the *Honaunau*. Every three months they had to be drydocked for caulking. Jimmy Kaya was the head carpenter. Each of the beach boys had their own favorite canoe.

"When we purchased the *Malie*, we had no concept of weight, we just used it," Downing said. "About a year later it was on the beach next to the *Kakina*. When we lifted the *Kakina* it was so light. When we weighed them, the *Malie* weighed 545 pounds, the *Leilani* 480 pounds, and the *Kakina* was 401 pounds.

Downing went to John D. Kaupiko and asked him if there was a weight limit for racing canoes. He told him no. "We told him we wanted to make the *Malie* lighter. He said to be careful and not make it too light. Some canoes used to be made out of cottonwood and they were too light. We assembled all the tools to make the *Malie* lighter, and were ready to begin cutting her. But when it came down to making the first cut, we just didn't have the heart."

However, Downing said, he was convinced that weight made a difference and thus acquired a semi-racing canoe called the *Lanakila* from the Honolulu Fire Department in 1949. It was 35 feet long, which was short for racing, and weighed only 265 pounds.

"I'll never forget when we went down to put it in the water it only took two people. We won every race beginning in 1949. This was when we finally established that light canoes could win."

The late Bill Capp was OCC canoe racing chairman in 1950, and one of the founders of the Hawaiian Canoe Racing Association. "It was apparent," Capp said, "that it would be necessary to establish some kind of rules if canoe paddling was to be perpetuated in the islands. This included such things as eligibility of paddlers, race distances and canoe construction.

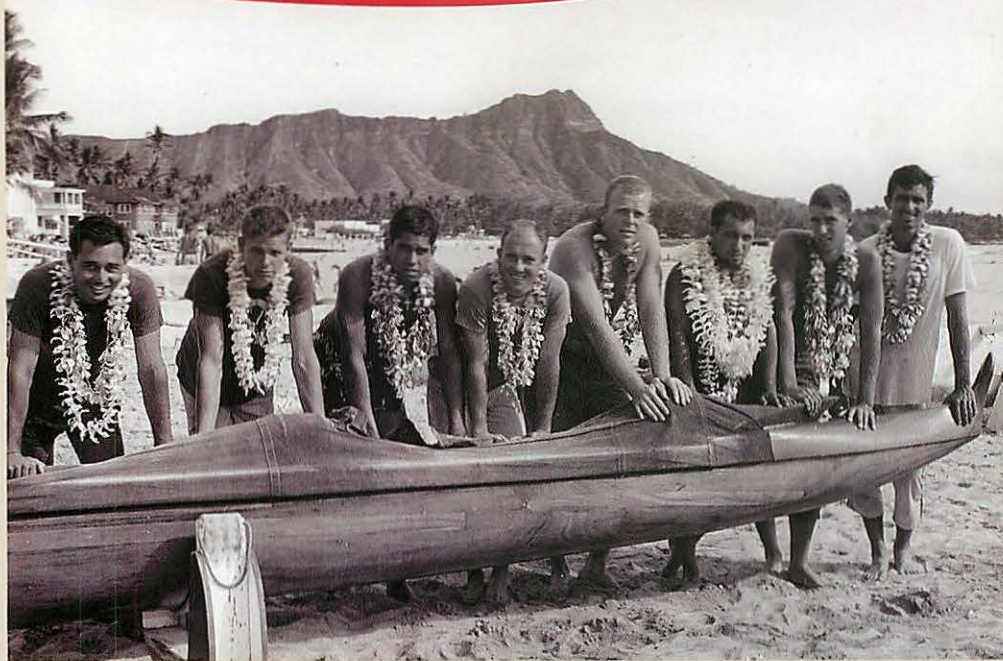
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The *Kakina* after her most recent renovation.

History of OCC's Racing Canoes

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Outrigger won its first Molokai Hoe and set the course record in 1956 in the *Leilani* with a crew of Merlyn Lyons, Doug Carr, Bob Daniels, Bill Baird, Dennis O'Connor, Archie Kaaua, Mark Auerbach and George Downing.

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"One day at the Club I heard several paddlers discussing canoes and one of them said, 'I wonder who the crazy guy was that set 400 pounds for the minimum weight for koa canoes.' I explained that I was the one and that we weighed all of the racing canoes and the lightest at the time was 401 pounds. Consequently, 400 pounds was adopted."

The Star Bulletin noted in a story in 1969 that the weight was agreed upon to discriminate against Surf Club's 268 pound canoe.

The experts agreed that 400 pounds was probably a good choice, although a few argue that 450 pounds might have been better because the added thickness would have eliminated a lot of the hull damage which occurs in rough seas.

"The Hawaiian people knew the native koa wood. They knew that koa wood was a high density material and prone to cracking if made too thin," Downing said.

"Canoes were designed thick on the bottom and tapered thinner on the sides. This allowed the canoe to absorb pounding when going through and/or over waves. The tapered thickness would allow the energy to be distributed up to the gunnels of the canoe. This kept the hull from cracking.

"It takes time for a canoe to be understood. Each canoe has its own personality. You have to learn how to rig and balance each canoe to take advantage of this personality. You must rig it differently for each occasion. You have to remember that the canoe hull stays the same; it's the rigging you have to adjust to meet the occasion."

With the weight set at a 400 pound minimum, canoe owners began working on their canoes. Up until now, Outrigger and most canoe builders, used brass bolts and butterflies to fix cracks in the koa canoes. The butterflies would stop the crack from spreading. You had to keep caulking these cracks until they leaked again and you'd have to go through the whole process again.

But by 1955, the system was changing.

"We started installing wooden wedges which we called a window patch. These glued-in patches replaced the cracked sections of the hull with a new solid piece of wood. In the 30s, they used pitch to seal the cracks. In the 40s, it was caulking. Nobody believed that glue would hold two pieces of wood together under stain," Downing said. "But it did."

Downing said he learned about this new patching concept from Alfred Kumalae. "Not everyone knew how to deal with a cracked canoe. Kumalae was a master craftsman who shared his knowledge with his friends, including Wally Froiseth, Rudy Choy, Wood Brown and me."

In 1956, Outrigger decided to renovate the *Leilani*. It was bigger than the *Kakina* and floated a lot better because it had a bigger belly. And it was still the women's canoe so if anything

happened in the renovation, the men's *Kakina* was still safe.

The first thing they did was remove 60 pounds of metal (bands, screws and bolts) and 40 pounds of other junk, including oak ribbings, from the canoe. "We raised the *Leilani* in mid-section to increase her depth, but didn't change the bottom shape," Downing said.

Because it was now 100 pounds lighter and quite thin, plywood was laminated on the inside circumference of the hull, under each seat, for reinforcement. When this was finished, the canoe weighed 407 pounds.

Downing insisted that the *Leilani* was a good racing canoe and could beat the *Kakina*. "*Leilani* has her own personality. There was just something about her. I thought she worked best in the open ocean as compared to the *Kakina*."

Downing coached the Club to its first victory in the newly renovated *Leilani* in the 5th annual Molokai Hoe in 1956 setting a record of 7:54 (which remains today due to a race course change).

OCC raced the *Leilani* in the Molokai race in 1959 (no entry in 1957-58, and 1964), 1960, 1961, 1962 and 1965. (Outrigger raced in fiberglass in 1963).

In the 1966 Molokai race, held in 15 foot swells, midway through the Molokai Channel, the *Leilani* was hit by a rapid series of 20-foot swells with such velocity that she could not shake them off.

Before the crew could bail or jump out, and with a ripped cover, the *Leilani* was swamped. For two hours they tried in vain to refloat the canoe. Only after the crew had succumbed to exhaustion and the continuing effort in the still rising seas became too dangerous, did the crew put the *Leilani* under tow.

Sherry Dowsett and his crew on the escort boat the *Hula Kai*, did everything possible to bring the *Leilani* in under tow. But with the high seas, it was impossible and the canoe was starting to break up. Finally the *Leilani* was brought aboard the escort boat. No one to this day can describe how they got the canoe



The OCC women paddled to victory in the 1943 Macfarlane Regatta in the *Leilani*; steersman and coach Bob Fischer, Greta Ross, Nita Hayes, Clare Cross, Anna Morris, Roselle Robinson.

Domie Gose who worked on a koa canoe for the first time.

Domie cut the canoe down the middle and more than 40% of the wood on the bottom was removed and replaced. The gunnels and seats were kept in place to prevent warping until the hull reconstruction was finished. Then he removed the bow and stern manu, along

onto the boat.

The boat was severely damaged and many thought it couldn't be put back together again. However, master canoe craftsman George Perry completely reconstructed the *Leilani* and had it ready for racing in the 1967 season.

Right after the *Leilani* was rebuilt, Perry turned his attention to the *Kakina*.

Kakina

The *Kakina* had been damaged in 1961 when a kid's crew coming back from the Ala Wai in the dark was hit by some waves outside the Kaiser Buoy.

The canoe was destroyed. The Club trailer was sent to pick up the pieces and it sat in the OCC parking lot for months until they could find someone to rebuild it.

George Blanchard finally took it to his home in Pauoa Valley and put the *Kakina* back together in its original form.

Perry worked on the *Kakina* during the summer of 1967. He cleaned it up a lot and raised the gunnels and hull, giving her new gunwales and manu and brought her back to racing form.

The *Kakina* returned to active racing on the 4th of July in 1967 with an impressive series of wins and then went on to win the Molokai races in 1967, 1968 and 1975, setting records in 1968 and 1975. The Outrigger men also crossed the Molokai Channel in the *Kakina* in 1969-73, 75-76 and 78-81.

After the *Kaoloa* was built, the *Kakina* sat in storage for a number of years, while the Club raced in the *Kaoloa* and *Leilani*.

In 2001, the *Kakina* was brought out of storage and updated. The Canoe Racing Committee's Bill Danford and Walter Guild wanted to turn the canoe into a more efficient downwind surfing canoe capable of keeping up with the modern fiberglass designs.

Joe Quigg provided a design template that would combine the best features of the Bradley and Mirage fiberglass designs. The committee then turned the design over to OCC carpenter

with the gunnels and replaced them with spruce. He glassed them with fiberglass and polyester resin and installed a plastic rail system to accommodate the long distance canvas.

The gunnels were replaced with red cedar and the seats were widened to add strength.

When finished, Quigg felt the canoe compared favorably with the measurements of the modern fiberglass Mirage canoes.

The OCC men raced the *Kakina* to a 12th place finish in the 2001 Molokai Hoe, and the OCC women finished fourth in the Na Wahine race. It was the highest finish by a koa canoe in Na Wahine competition in ten years.

In 2008 the *Kakina* was again renovated to remove all non-wood materials and bring it into compliance with the requirements of the Hawaiian Canoe Racing Association for the state championship regatta.

Domie was called upon again for the task. He replaced the *Kakina's* manu and gunnel with koa.

Using wooden spacers, Domie gradually lengthened the *Kakina* by nearly seven feet and added four inches to the width bringing the *Kakina* to its present 44 feet 11 inches. He widened the center of the canoe by four inches. He also made the ends shallower and sharper. The water line dropped to 34 feet, creating less resistance and friction to the hull which minimizes any loss of hull speed during the turn on the flag in a regatta.

The more refined bow and stern complement the new rocker and modern hull design that is comparable with today's fastest fiberglass canoes.

The work was done in the OCC shop and took seven months to complete. It was completed in time for the 2009 regatta season.

The *Kakina* is in the finest racing shape it has ever been in.

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Leilani

In 1974, the *Leilani* underwent still another transformation. George and Tay Perry remodeled the bow of the *Leilani*. They split the canoe from the three seat forward, widened the bow and lengthened the canoe slightly.

OCC raced the *Leilani* in 1974 and 1978 in the Molokai race.

Still the bow of the *Leilani* was heavy. In the summer of 1982, Sonny Bradley rebuilt the forward 10-feet of the canoe from the number three seat forward. He cut and lengthened the *Leilani* by about a foot. Following the keel line up, he added one piece of wood at a time until the front looked like an Egyptian slipper and was 1 1/2 inches thick.

He finished the job just in time for the 1982 Molokai race. In that race, Outrigger was dead even with Hui Nalu and Imua as they approached the Club on the way to the finish line in Waikiki. They were hit by a large wave at Rice Bowl and swamped. The OCC crew managed to finish third, but the *Leilani* had an 8-foot crack and two cross braces had broken.

Before the 1983 racing season, veteran canoe builder Joe Quigg took on the job of remodeling the *Leilani* once again.

"After we'd watched the Tahitians beat us in their new-style canoes, we knew that the only way to get a boat like this was to build a new one. However, we knew this would take a few years and we wanted to maximize the potential of the *Leilani* while we commissioned a new canoe," Quigg said.

"The *Leilani* was cut in half and lengthened to 42-feet 4 inches.

Quigg skill sawed it down the lengths of the keel, cutting out 2 1/2" of width from the back, narrowing it to 19" wide. This was the first time the back of the canoe was rebuilt.

Next, Quigg planed the front end down one inch narrower, making the canoe 20 pounds lighter. He lengthened and lightened the front manu, raised the front gunnel one inch, put in new lighter, stronger seats and cut out all the cross bracings and other rotten remodeled junk.

When he was finished, the bow was 3/4 of an inch thick, the front end had been refined to match the Tahitian style canoes and the *Leilani* weighed 417 pounds.

The *Leilani* was now so fast in big surf that it took three paddlers to hold it on a big wave.

Outrigger won the 1983 Molokai in 5:45:09 in the newly renovated *Leilani*. However, the 1984 Molokai race will be remembered for a long time. In 3-4 foot swells, the *Leilani* surfed to a record finish of 5:18:19.62. This was the fastest crossing of the Molokai Channel ever by a koa canoe and set a record for overall finish. The *Leilani* koa record was broken by Hui Nalu in 1989 in 5:11:38.

Outrigger also raced the *Leilani* in 1985 and 1988 in the Molokai race.

In 1990, the *Leilani* was again remodeled. Quigg said he wouldn't consider the *Leilani* finished until she weighed 400 pounds. The cross beams were removed, eliminating nearly 20 pounds of weight in the canoe and new lighter veneer seats were added.

After the *Kakina* was remodeled in 2001, it was the *Leilani*'s turn to sit in storage. "We had two really great racing canoes in the *Kaoloa* and the *Kakina*," said Walter Guild. "We decided that

the *Leilani* was our spare in case anything happened to either of the others."

However, in 2011 when Domie started talking about retiring, the Canoe Racing Committee decided it was time to renovate the *Leilani* and make it into the best canoe it could be.

Domie began the process in late 2012. The CRC wanted to redo the shape so it resembled the newest Bradley fiberglass canoes, giving it more of a calabash shape.

Before he started, three maintenance workers spent a day taking measurements of the canoe. They didn't seem right, so Domie spent the next day taking them himself. They still didn't work. He finally understood that this was a Hawaiian canoe and needed to be blessed before he could start.

He tried in vain to find someone to bless the canoe, before realizing that the relationship was going to be between him and the canoe, and he would have to ask permission for the job he was about to do, not someone else.

Domie says he went to the Bar and asked for some wine. He brought the wine down to the shop level in the garage. He dripped some wine on the canoe and put both hands on the canoe. As he started to ask the canoe to let him fix her up so she could return to the water and carry Club paddlers to victory in races, he said "I felt a jolt of something. Every hair on my body stood straight up and I could feel how alive the canoe was. Ever since I asked her permission, everything has gone right. I continue to nourish her with drops of wine every day after I am finished with the work and thank her for how she has served the Club." Goose bump time.

With the canoe's permission, Domie began constructing the new hull over the existing hull, working his way from the middle out, until the old hull could no longer follow the newly intended rocker line. He laid in new koa wood four inches wide and 12 feet long for the foundation. He patched wood on the side to make it bigger and bigger until it had the right hull shape.

Then the bow and stern were removed. He added almost three feet in length to the stern, making it 44 feet 11 inches. The inside of the canoe was reinforced with koa strips for strength. The rocker is longer than the original. He also replaced the gunnels and manu with koa to comply with HCRA racing rules. The *Leilani* also has a new ama and 'iako. He also widened the gunnel slightly at seat one to make it easier to get in and out of the canoe.

Other special features include new hatch covers, hoop holders, canvas track and reinforcement battens that were hand fabricated by Domie, just like the manu ihu and manu hope. Custom seats were also designed to allow different paddlers to find their sweet spot.

At the first weighing in mid-April the canoe came in at 392 pounds. As work continued in April, the weight had risen to 398. As the canoe received its final finish, it had a final weight of 387.5 pounds.

The newly renovated *Leilani* was dedicated at special ceremonies at the Club on May 31 as the paddling season kicked off with its annual party.

Next month Part II: The racing canoes Paoa and Kaoloa, and other koa canoes owned by the Club Ka Mo'i and Stephany.