

# OCC's Koa Canoe History

By Tay Perry & Marilyn Kali

## Part III

Last in a series of articles about the Club's koa canoes.

### *Ka Mo'i (The King)*

The *Ka Mo'i* is reputed to have been built by James Takeo Yamasaki and Kyuhei Takimoto in Kailua, Kona circa 1931 from a single koa log. The original log was from the North Kona forests on Hualalai.

According to Club lore, it took 14 people to carry it from the street to the beach. It was finished by James "Box" Kaya, an employee of the Outrigger Canoe Club in 1933. Jimmy as he was known, removed nearly four inches of thickness from the hull to lighten the boat so that it would be manageable in Waikiki. He was also largely responsible for the beautiful lines the hull has today.

The original canoe weighed about 650 pounds. Today it weighs in at 547 pounds. (Compare that to our racing canoes *Kakina*, *Leilani* and *Kaoloa* which weigh close to 400 pounds.)

Though its original builders probably intended it as a large fishing canoe, it did not serve as such. From the time of its arrival and completion in Waikiki the *Ka Mo'i* was a surfing canoe and on occasion a racing canoe. When the canoe was finished it was placed in service on the beach fronting the original Outrigger Canoe Club with the OCC Beach Services.



The refinished *Ka Mo'i* after its blessing. It now hangs in the *Ka Mo'i* Boat House.

A six-man canoe with two passenger seats and a child seat behind the steersman, it served the tourist industry and Club members from that time until the Club moved to its Diamond Head location in 1964. It was used in attempts to revive the sport of canoe sailing in the late 1940s. The *Ka Mo'i* was used by a beach boy crew in the Molokai to Oahu Race in 1954.

Steamboat Mokuahi Sr. used, cared for and maintained the *Ka Mo'i* during its most active years in Waikiki, and according to some the two were inseparable after the end of World War II until OCC moved to its current location.

After Duke Kahanamoku's funeral in 1966, the canoe was placed on display at the Ulu Mau Village at Ala Moana Park. There the moisture, termites and lack of attention took their toll. When the village closed in 1977 it came back to the Outrigger and an uncertain future. Some saw it as a useless relic, just taking up space.

Fortunately others saw it as a piece of our heritage, something that should be preserved to remind our young people of the times that came before them and the people who made what we now have possible.

In 1978 a group including Bob Fischer, Timmy Wong, Charlie Martin, Bill Cook, Mike Mason, Walter Guild, Wayne Faulkner and others began working on the canoe to make it seaworthy again.

They removed 50 years of accumulated varnish, patches made with pitch and tar, as well as termite damaged wood. A technique for making new patches, designed not to destroy the old butterfly patches was developed. Research was done to make certain that the restoration was authentic. Redwood seats and plywood bulkheads were replaced with koa; brown paint was removed from the 'iako to return them to their original natural state.

They finished their work in time to display the canoe at the Macfarlane Regatta on July 4, 1978. The canoe was paddled to the race site and back that day.

July 4, 1978 was the last known time the *Ka Mo'i* was paddled for more than two decades. After this event the canoe remained stored on the Outrigger Canoe Club premises until 1982.

To our knowledge the canoe was placed on a lease to a restaurant in Poipu on Kauai in 1982. It is rumored that it was

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used as a salad bar until the restaurant was destroyed by Hurricane Iwa.

It survived this calamity and was worked on by members of the Hanalei Canoe Club and prepared for exhibition in the Princeville Hotel where it remained until 1992, when that hotel was destroyed by Hurricane Iniki.

The canoe again survived and was taken to the nearby Hanalei Bay Resort where it was hung from the lounge ceiling.

In November 1998, at the request of the OCC Historical Committee, Tay Perry and General Manager John Rader went to Kauai to locate the *Ka Mo'i* and to determine how to arrange for its return home.

On January 17, 1999 a party consisting of Tay Perry, Kawika Grant and Allan Dowsett went to Kauai to retrieve the *Ka Mo'i*. With the help of the Hanalei Canoe Club they were able to deliver the canoe to the dock.

The most recent restoration work on the *Ka Mo'i* commenced in August 2000. The condition of the canoe was far worse than originally estimated. A complete and total overhaul was begun and lasted for two and one half years. Work was completed on the canoe itself at the end of January 2002.

The work involved stripping the former finish, removing all of the metal fastenings, rebuilding the stern, patching the cracks, termite damage and dry rot. The existing fir and plywood manua were discarded and new ones fashioned from a koa log. The ama and 'iako are new with wood gathered from the Maunawili forest by Club members.

The principal members of the restoration crew in the order of time participated were Tay Perry, Kawika Grant and Allan Dowsett who contributed more than 85% of the total hours worked. Also participating were Norman Ho, Jay Dowsett, Mike Mason, Clarence Au, Cale Holman, Norm Dunmire and Bret Chuckovich. In all, a total of 1,155 man hours were contributed to this project. All of the labor was volunteered.

Donors of material were George Norcross of Epoxy Sales of Hawaii and Ted Wilson of Fiberglass Hawaii, Inc. The Friends of *Hokule'a* and *Hawaii Loa* provided us with space, electricity, equipment, moral support and lunch.

The *Ka Mo'i* was launched again in a simple Hawaiian ceremony conducted by *Hokule'a* navigator Kawika Kapahulehua at Sans Souci beach on February 25, 2001. This launching party included mostly the workers, close friends, and those associated with its history. Upon launching, it was paddled out to sea and then back in to the Club for its homecoming blessing which was conducted by the Rev. Thomas Van Culin.

There is a lot of history of the *Ka Mo'i* that is not known to any one person. This canoe has had an intimate relationship with the Outrigger Canoe Club, belonging to it for more than 70 years. Many members have their own experience and history with this canoe. There are many thousands of people who have had thrilling surf rides in it who will never forget their experience.

Sadly, most of the steersmen who have surfed this canoe have passed on. They would have been overjoyed to see the *Ka Mo'i* as it is today; finished and ready for the sea.

The *Ka Mo'i* hangs in the Club Bar, which was renamed the *Ka Mo'i* Boathouse in its honor.

Long live the *Ka Mo'i*!

### **Stephanie**

The *Stephanie* was originally owned by Henry DeGorog who served as general manager of the OCC during the war years of 1942 to 1945. Its early history and builder are unknown.

DeGorog purchased the canoe on the Big Island for \$200 for his family's personal use. The canoe has four seats. He stored it on Club grounds. He named the canoe for his water-loving toddler daughter Stephanie.

When he accepted a job in San Francisco in September 1945, he offered the canoe to the Club for the price he purchased it for. The Board accepted his offer.

The canoe was used occasionally by members and the Beach Boys, but mostly sat in the canoe shed.

In 1964 when we moved to our current location, the canoe was refinished and hung over the bar. It remained there for nearly 35 years. By the late 1990s, the canoe needed considerable refurbishing so it was removed, and plans were made by the Historical Committee to replace it in the Bar with the *Ka Mo'i* when it was returned from Kauai.

The Outrigger Hotel chain offered to make the \$8,000 in repairs needed for the *Stephanie* in exchange for the OCC leasing it to them for a period of 10 years. They restored it and it was displayed in the lobby of the Outrigger Wailea Resort on Maui during that time.

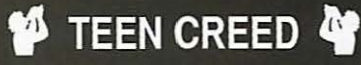
The lease expired in 2011 but the canoe is still with Outrigger Hotels. The *Stephanie* is now on display in the lobby of the Outrigger Reef Hotel in Waikiki. It is soon to undergo renovation by Tay Perry.

Its future is uncertain but the Club will retain ownership of the canoe.

The Outrigger Canoe Club is fortunate to have owned seven koa canoes. These canoes are so much a part of our heritage as a Club, as well as our culture and history as Hawaiians, whether by blood or spirit.

We hope the membership will continue to cherish this heritage and continue to care for and love these canoes which have given us so much pleasure over the past eight decades.

They are our legacy.



## TEEN CREED

- Choose not to let your parents down: they brought you up.
- Be humble enough to obey - YOU will give orders someday.
- Choose companions with care - YOU are what they are.
- Choose only a date who would make a good mate.
- Be master of your habits or they will master you.
- Choose not to be a show-off when you drive - Drive with safety and arrive.
- Choose not to let the crowd pressure you - Stand for something or you'll fall for anything.

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