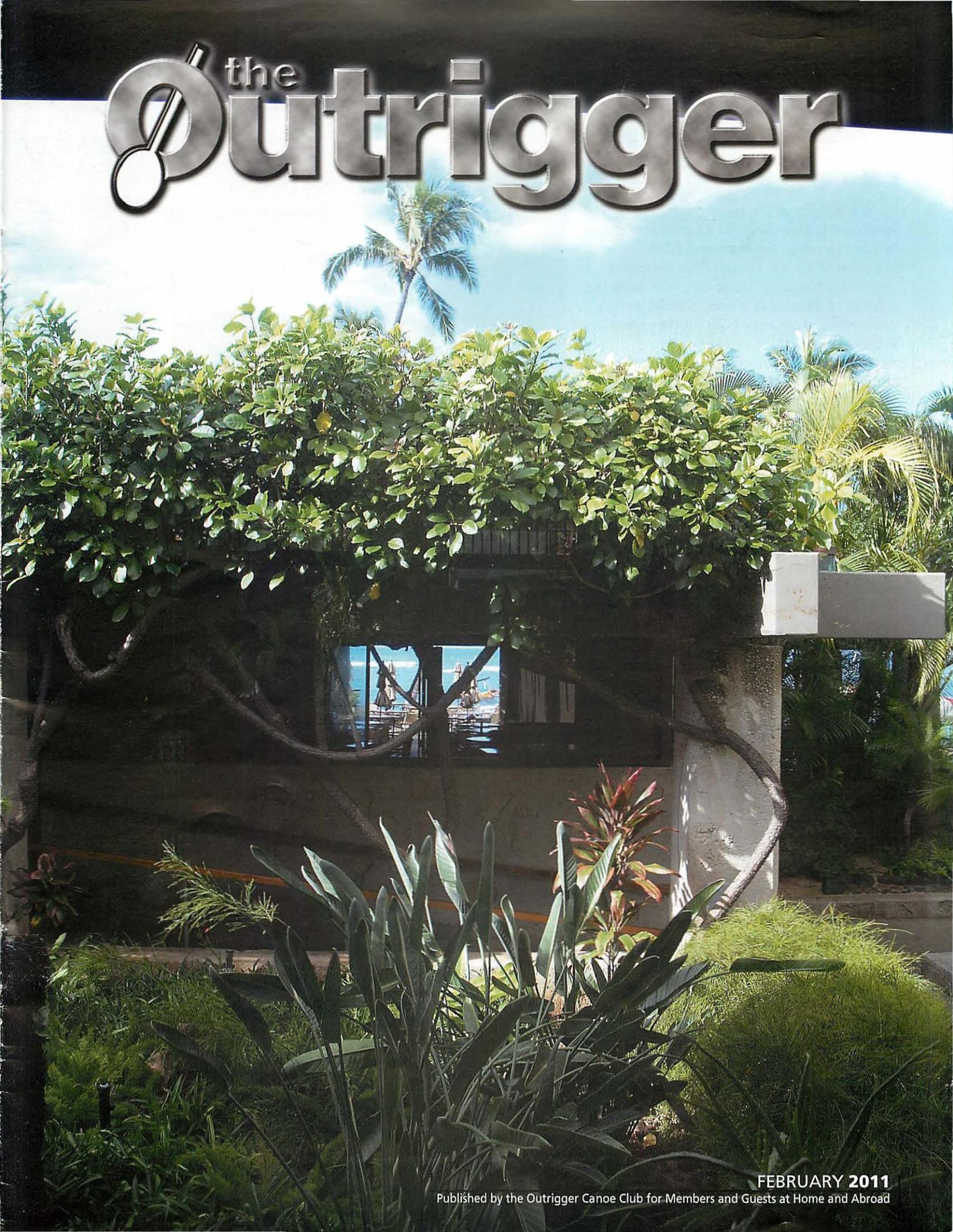


# the Outrigger

The background image shows a tropical setting. A building with a balcony is partially hidden behind a thick wall of green trees and bushes. A palm tree stands tall in the background against a blue sky with light clouds. The overall atmosphere is lush and serene.

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# AN EVENING WITH *Vladimir Ossipoff*

By Barbara Del Piano

On November 29, a sell-out crowd gathered on the Koa Lanai for an interesting and informative evening featuring Mary Philpotts McGrath, former Club President and noted Hawaii Interior Designer, who led a panel of experts in a discussion of design elements and details of our Club's exemplary architecture.

Designed by Hawaii's most celebrated architect, Vladimir Ossipoff, the unique and innovative features of the Clubhouse blend naturally into its tropical surroundings, making it seem as though it had always been there...yet maintaining a totally fresh and contemporary feeling. Nearly half a century old, the timeless architecture of the Outrigger Canoe Club might well be fresh off the drawing board.

Another in its series of Outrigger Historical Committee presentations, now completing its 17th year, the evening consisted of a lively discussion and interpretation of the architect's theory and philosophy of design.

The panel consisted of former partners Sid Snyder, Alan Rowland, Barclay McCleod, Hank Reese and Franklin Gray. Also present was Owen Chock, of Wimberly and Cook, who handled technical details of the Club's construction, and architectural historian and author Don Hibbard.

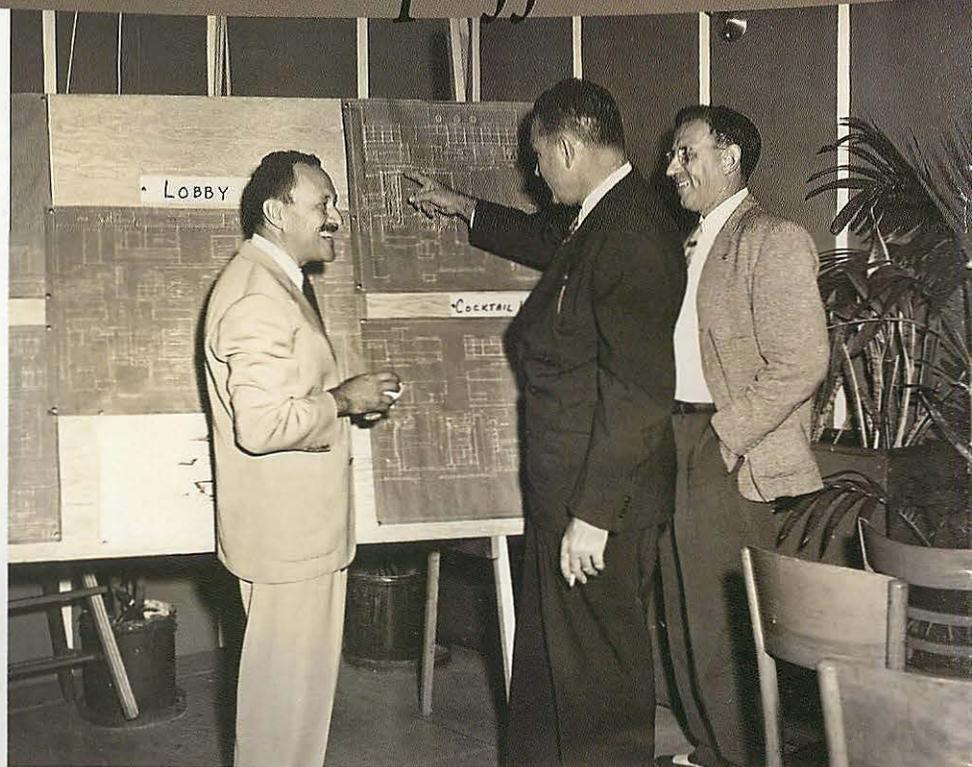
Their contributions to the evening's informative presentation, in addition to relating practical aspects of the Club's design and construction, included many humorous and personal anecdotes about Ossipoff himself and their personal experiences working with him. A guest of honor was Ossipoff's daughter, Valarie.

One of the exemplary elements of the Outrigger's design, pointed out by Sid Snyder, is that although no matter how many times a person may walk through the Clubhouse, he or she is not consciously aware that it is actually a combination of six separate buildings: Garage, Lobby, Locker Rooms, Kitchen, Bar and Dining Room.

As each segment is joined to another, light, air and landscaping become an integral part of the design as it flows from room to room...space to space.

Although the focus was certainly on Ossipoff, the panel gave special recognition to Outrigger member Cline Mann, who as the chairman of the New Site Building Committee, did a great job facilitating the move from the old location and making sure the construction job ran smoothly.

As exemplified by the Outrigger Clubhouse, Ossipoff's designs took full advantage of surrounding environmen-



Architect Vladimir Ossipoff shows architectural plans for the new OCC at Diamond Head to Paul (Fragie) Banks, Dillingham Corp; and OCC's Bob Fischer.

tal elements. Jeffrey Fairfax, one of the nation's most prominent restoration architects, aptly described the Outrigger in his book, *The Architecture of Honolulu* as "...not a building as such, but a series of congenial spaces flowing indoors and outdoors...as it moves toward the ocean it becomes part of the beach itself...still pleasantly resisting confinement."

The Outrigger is a perfect example of Ossipoff's integration of natural surroundings, landscaping and architecture into one complete and harmonious whole. His attention to details such as location, sunlight, wind direction, and typical weather patterns were all taken into consideration in the overall design of his projects.

The present structure is not Ossipoff's only association with Outrigger. In 1949 he was commissioned to give the old Clubhouse on the beach at Waikiki a "new look." The outcome was widely acclaimed as a vast improvement. Among the many changes he made was eliminating the distinct separation of the first and second floors. By locating the cocktail lounge at a level between the two, he integrated the two areas, creating a casual flow from one to the other.

Ossipoff was known for incorporating native materials into his designs, yet utilizing the latest technology in building materials. The former is exemplified by Outrigger's columns embedded with coral from the ocean directly off-shore. The latter, by his design for the Diamond Head Apartments built in 1958. Located just a few doors from the Club, this attractive condominium was the first



Groundbreaking was held on January 23, 1963. Shown are Walter Collins, OCC President Ward Russell, Tom Wells, Vladimir Ossipoff, and Tom Whisenand.



Two days after the groundbreaking this is what the Club site looked like.

fully pre-stressed concrete structure more than six stories high in the entire world.

Over the years, many repairs, renovations, and modifications have taken place at the Outrigger. The pipes have rusted, the roof has leaked, and areas such as the Koa Lanai and Locker Rooms have needed refurbishing. This work has been performed, keeping the Clubhouse in top physical and structural condition. But with each renovation, the integrity of the Club has been meticulously maintained.

In the late 1990s, an Architectural Review Committee was tasked with making recommendations for changes at the Outrigger to incorporate new demands of a greatly expanding membership. Although the suggested changes were favorably viewed, the membership vehemently voted down the plan that would alter the concept and compromise the integrity of Ossipoff's original design.

Coincidentally, the Historical Committee's presentation took place not long after the Club, through the auspices of Sid Snyder, acquired ownership of the exquisitely crafted scale model of the Outrigger Clubhouse made by Yale University architectural students under the supervision of Dean Sakamoto, architect and professor at Yale University School of Architecture. (See page 4.)

It was shipped to Hawaii for a major exhibit of Ossipoff's work held at the Honolulu Academy of Arts in 2007. Made of bass wood, the intricacy of the model is truly a work of art. The model was on display for the evening and elicited many "oohs" and "aahs" from the spectators.

Ossipoff joined the Outrigger in 1950 and was elected to Life Membership in 1988. Born in Vladivostok, Siberia, in 1907, the future architect spent his early years in Japan where his father, a Colonel in Tzar Nicholas II's army, served as a military attaché in the Russian Embassy in

Tokyo.

After the Russian revolution, his family remained in Tokyo, relocating to California after the great earthquake of 1923. Ossipoff graduated from the University of California at Berkeley with a degree in Architecture in 1931. That same year he moved to Hawaii to begin an illustrious career that spanned nearly 70 years.

During a brief stint at Theo. H. Davies, where he produced primarily traditional residential designs, Ossipoff absorbed the essence of the Islands and their innate beauty. Recognizing the potential for incorporating the many desirable and unique tropical qualities into his architecture, he created a distinctive and environmentally sensitive style that became his trademark and which became known as "Hawaiian Modern".

Ossipoff was critical of the post-World War II years of rampant growth in Hawaii, fueled by statehood and the rise of the tourist industry. Disdaining the over-development engendered by social changes that took place in Hawaii after the war, Ossipoff was way ahead of his time in vigorously promoting environmentally sensitive designs that took advantage of the Islands' culture and tropical climate.

Supported by the Hawaii Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, of which he served as president for two terms, Ossipoff waged a "War on Ugliness" in an attempt to make the people of Hawaii aware of the beauty of their surroundings and the importance of preserving the unique native qualities that make Hawaii the Paradise of the Pacific.

Other notable Ossipoff designs include the Administration Building at the University of Hawaii, with its outstanding Jean Charlot murals, and the Kalihi-Palama Library both built in 1949. Hawaiian Life Insurance Building on Ala Moana was constructed in 1951, the Pacific

*continued on page 4*



The Hau had yet to grow over the Hau Terrace in this 1964 photo.



The signature columns imbedded with coral welcome members into the Club.

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Club in 1959, the IBM Building in 1962, Thurston Chapel at Punahou School in 1967, and Honolulu Airport in the 1970s.

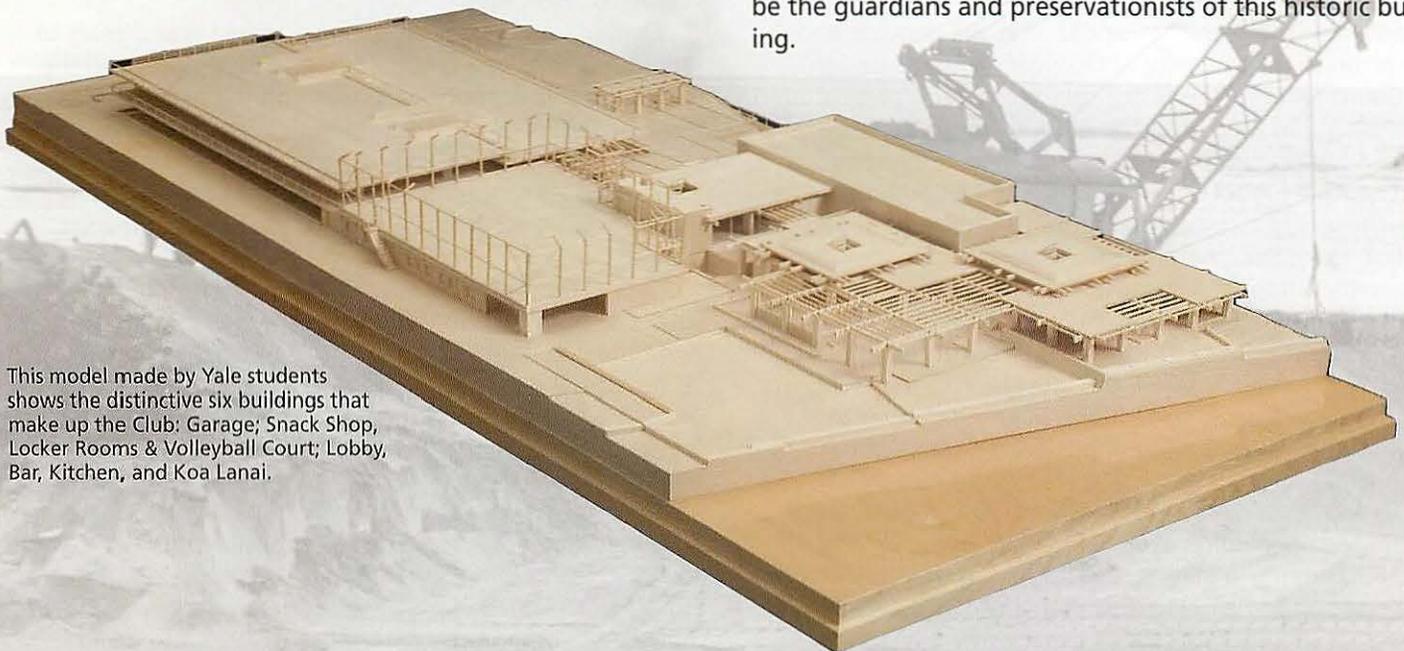
In the 1980s he designed the National Tropical Botanical Garden Research Campus in Kalaheo, Kauai. Many of the residences he created on Oahu and other islands, more than a thousand during his long career, are now more than 50 years old and are considered timeless masterpieces to this day. Each one was meticulously designed to suit its location, immediate surroundings and climatic conditions.

Ten years before his death, Ossipoff turned over the architectural firm he had led for so long, to younger partners including Sidney Snyder Jr. and Alan Rowland,

although he remained a consultant until his death. He designed his last residence just the year before. Today, the firm of Ossipoff Snyder and Rowland Architects Inc. is the oldest architectural firm in Hawaii. Ossipoff died in 1998 at the age of 91.

Often called "the Frank Lloyd Wright of Hawaii," Vladimir Ossipoff made an indelible impression on Hawaii's architectural landscape. His genius and foresight in creating models of beauty and practicality, while insuring harmony with nature and sensitivity to environment are major parts of his enduring legacy.

As Mary Philpotts McGrath reminded the audience in closing the November 29 program, as Outrigger members we are very fortunate to have such a beautiful Clubhouse designed by Hawaii's great architect, and it behooves us to be the guardians and preservationists of this historic building.



This model made by Yale students shows the distinctive six buildings that make up the Club: Garage; Snack Shop, Locker Rooms & Volleyball Court; Lobby, Bar, Kitchen, and Koa Lanai.