

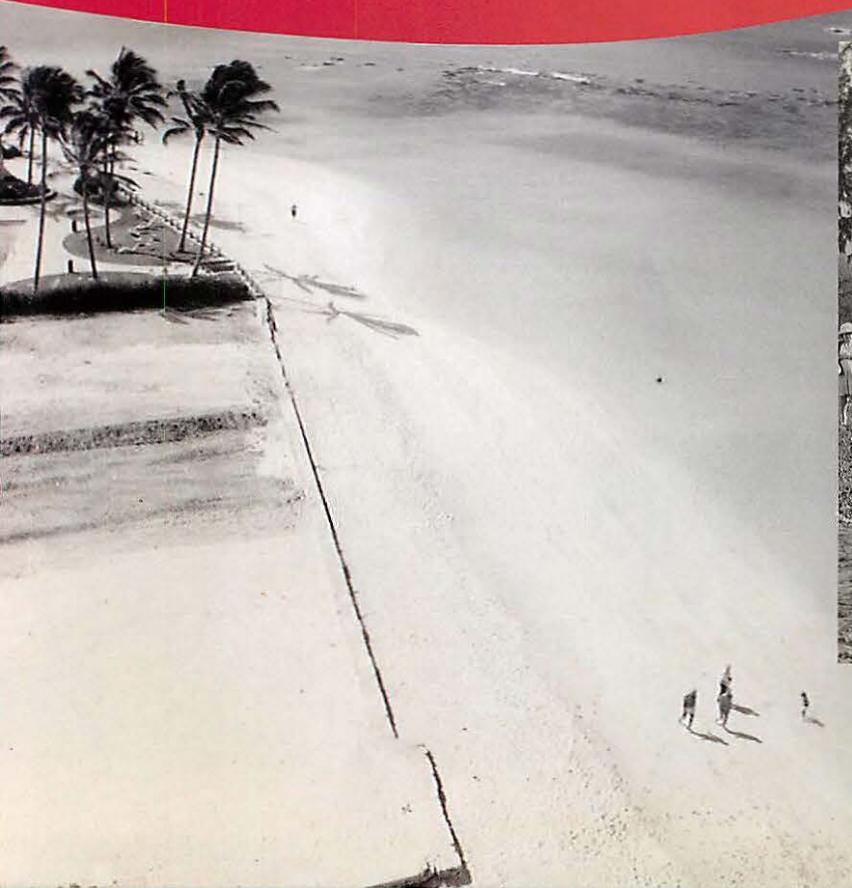
the **Outrigger**



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A New Beginning for the OCC



LEFT: The OCC beach after the lagoon had been dredged and before construction began.

RIGHT: Members gather for the ground breaking ceremony.

By Barbara Del Piano

The area between the Elks Club and the Colony Surf had been cleared of vegetation with the exception of the giant monkeypod tree that spread its canopy over the front entrance.

And then on January 23, 1963, on the barren, sandy ground, close to the water, a group of Outrigger members gathered in a circle with bowed heads, as they witnessed a momentous ceremony; breaking ground for the new home of the Outrigger Canoe Club.

President J. Ward Russell stood with shovel in hand, while Kahu Edward Keahi Kapoo blessed the area. Then Russell dug his shovel into the ground.

This was the culmination of years of struggling to remain in the heart of Waikiki, despite changing times escalated by statehood, the great building boom of the 1950s, airlines flying to the Islands where luxury liners previously were the only form of transportation, and of course, the burgeoning tourist trade that forever changed the face of Waikiki.

The Club had seen a gradual rise in its lease rent in the 55 years since Alexander Hume Ford had secured the one-and-a-half acre parcel from Queen Emma's estate for \$10 a year. It was only because of the help Matson Navigation Co. provided when they took over the lease on the property in 1937 and sublet it to the Outrigger at reasonable terms, that the Club was able to survive.

However, in 1958 Matson sold the lease to a mainland developer who planned to build a condominium on the site. It also sold the Royal Hawaiian Hotel to Sheraton Corp. Despite valiant attempts, there was no way in which the Outrigger could remain at its choice Waikiki location; nevertheless, many loyal members

adamantly refused to consider moving.

Fortunately, a lease on one half of the Elk's Club property at Diamond Head had been acquired by the Outrigger in 1959 under favorable terms secured by Wilfred Godbold. When all efforts to remain in Waikiki failed, the only alternative was to build on the Elks site.

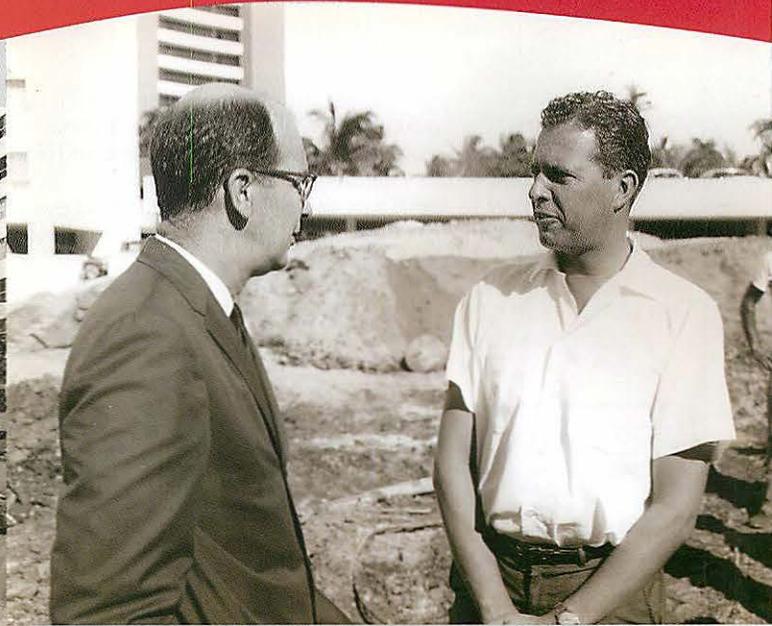
Vladimir Ossipoff, one of Hawaii's outstanding architects, was commissioned to design the new Club, despite the fact that there was still an active contingent fighting to remain in Waikiki. Many members resigned.

Under the guidance of President Russell, two committees were formed: a New Building Finance Committee, and a New Site Building Committee. The former was headed by Tom Singlehurst to raise funds for the project; the latter, headed by Cline Mann, to oversee site preparation, beach improvement, landscaping and construction.

Both committees worked tirelessly to get the job done as there were only seven months remaining until the lease at Waikiki ran out. When a two-month extension was granted, the Committees set their completion goal for the annual Christmas Open House on December 25, 1963.

While the clubhouse was in the planning stages, coral was dredged from the ocean floor to provide a swimming area of three and a half acres. A groin was built on the ewa side of Colony Surf, and a rock wall was constructed along the Elks property. The coral was later used as a foundation for a new beach.

When Ossipoff completed his design in a timely fashion, it was accepted unanimously by the Board. Truly a work of art, the de-



LEFT: The OCC beach is under construction.

RIGHT: Ward Russell and Cline Mann go over plans for the Club.

sign was a masterpiece of blending indoors and outdoors, subtly flowing from one to the other. It included ample parking, volleyball courts, a fine dining area, Hau Terrace, snack shop, offices, Board Room, locker rooms, gift shop, and surfboard and canoe storage. Pacific Construction Co. was awarded the building contract and construction started immediately.

Because much of the preliminary work had already been completed, both time and money were saved. Fortunately, the weather cooperated and the project proceeded smoothly, with just one day of rain during the entire period.

Still, time continued to be a pressing factor, despite the two-month extension. Then an unexpected event took place at the site of the "Old Club". The developer, unable to fulfill his commitments, backed out and the property was put out to bid. Sheraton Hotels, which had acquired the Royal Hawaiian, sent negotiators from the mainland to work out a deal for the property on which they intended to build a 17-story luxury hotel.

While talks were going on, Roy Kelley, local architect and hotel owner, came up with a better offer and was awarded the lease, much to the surprise of Sheraton and the entire community. With no immediate plans to build, Kelley gave the Outrigger a reprieve and allowed the Club to remain, rent-free, until after the New Year.

As the structure emerged, from drawing board to actual concrete, the design began to blend harmoniously into its surroundings, taking advantage of the location and natural elements such as sunlight, wind and weather patterns.

Rather than a single structure, the design featured six separate buildings, joined together. Jeffrey Fairfax, nationally-known restoration architect, describes the clubhouse 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."

A unique architectural feature was embedding blocks of coral from the ocean into the concrete exterior of the building; koa and other natural materials were used extensively throughout.

Meanwhile, Cline Mann and his committee were busy overseeing the construction and making sure that work proceeded smoothly. They also planned the landscaping, determined that it would appear to have been there for ages.

Eighty coconut trees, each around 25 years old, were hauled to the site on flat-bed trucks, lifted by cranes into holes already prepared. Good-sized hau trees to shelter the terrace were also planted.

The deadline was met, the annual Christmas Open House was held on December 25, 1963, and the Outrigger Canoe Club experienced a new beginning. Thanks to the efforts of J. Ward Russell, Cline Mann, Wilford Godbold, Thomas Singlehurst, and many others, the traumatic transition was successfully completed.

Although its surroundings and location had changed, the organization remained dedicated to its original mission...*"as a place where the sports of old Hawaii shall always have a home."*