

IT WAS SO HARD TO SAY GOODBYE

By Barbara Del Piano



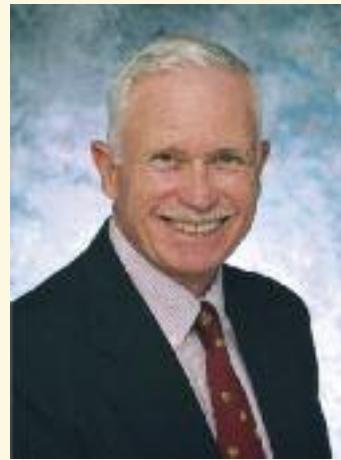
Bob Anderson



Rab Guild



Mary Philpotts-McGrath



Hal Henderson

It was a long time in coming, but finally on May 29, 1956, results of the vote taken at the Special Membership Meeting of May 25 were announced. There had been three choices given to members of the Outrigger Canoe Club: to move to the Elks' Diamond Head site, to accept the final offer of the new lessor, Waikiki Development Company and remain in Waikiki, or to say no to both proposals.

Nearly sixty percent of the members voted for the move, while just less than 20 percent voted to remain in Waikiki. A sizeable group of over thirty percent voted no to both proposals.

The numbers however, didn't tell the whole story. Most members who voted for the move were not really in favor of it, but were simply resigned to the inevitability of leaving their prime location.

The great building boom of the '50s was underway; hotels and condos were springing up around Waikiki, and the tourist industry was booming. A vast majority of members were surfers and paddlers and the thought of giving up the best surfing and canoeing spots on the island was painful indeed.

It had been a second home for countless members, many of whom had grown up on the familiar grounds that their parents, and in some cases, their grandparents, had enjoyed as well.

The move would not come until eight years later, but the die was cast. . .there was no turning back. . .the Outrigger Canoe Club was pulling up stakes, and to most members, the future was an unknown entity.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the move to Diamond Head, and even after half a century, memories of those who experienced the trauma of the move are as vivid as they were those many years ago.

Bill Morris, hated to leave. . . "Everyone hated to leave,"

he said. "We spent so much time there. . .we were so involved. But it was inevitable. The thought of losing the "Beach Boys" was especially painful." He chuckles when he recalls that it took two men to steer the *Ka Mo'i*, unless it was Duke or Steamboat.

Long-time paddler, Doris Berg Nye, says she felt terrible at the thought of moving! "The Outrigger was my front yard. . .my home away from home." To this day she waxes nostalgically, remembering the 'Old Club', with the volleyball courts so accessible and the lawn that was a gathering place to watch everyone coming and going.

Marilyn Haine says she and her late husband, Tom, future volleyball Olympian and Club President, couldn't imagine moving. "It was like leaving an old home. The only good thing, she says, was "that we knew there would be parking. The Club charged a parking fee so we parked on the Ala Wai and lugged all of our equipment and two small kids back to the Club."

Future President Robert "Rab" Guild states emphatically that "I was averse to the move! I was not happy with moving away from Waikiki because of the surfing. I thought of resigning from the Club. In retrospect, we are much better off here than we would have been in Waikiki; I joined the Uluniu to keep my board there."

Lex Brodie's widow, Evelyn, says Lex, a member since he was about 12 years old, found it very hard to accept the move, and along with Rab, joined the Uluniu.

Future President, Peter Balding, also a member since he was 12, says he grew up at the 'Old Club.' It was really difficult to leave but once he married and had children of his own, he realized it was impossible to remain. He gives credit to Cline Mann and Ward Russell for convincing him, that, for our children, it would be a better environment. "What you get in value from the Outrigger is second to none."

Peter and Lois Nottage resigned, rather than move, although there were other factors involved. It was a time when they were settling down to raise their family and had relocated to the Windward Side. Several years later, they were reinstated and found, to their delight, that the new facilities were great.

Hal Henderson, like so many members, says that "Most everybody didn't want to move, but we recognized, as the Board at the time did, that we had no choice. Our lease was not going to be renewed on terms we could afford. We were offered a couple of floors in the new hotel and there were some who wanted to accept that in order to stay.

"In my view, this would have doomed the Club as we would soon have been subsumed by the hotel, and at best, ended up as a commercial club with nowhere to store canoes or surfboards." Hal summed up his feelings by adding, "I didn't want to move, but recognized that if we wanted to remain the Outrigger Canoe Club, we had to. So I voted for it. I have no regrets."

Ivanelle Choy and her late husband, Rudy, were living in California at the time but kept abreast of the negotiations. Their major concern in leaving Waikiki was losing the special surf and also the beach services and the income it generated from the tourist trade.

M. L. O'Brien says it was hard to imagine the Outrigger without the famous Beach Boys, with Sally Hale in charge. But, M.L. says, "Things had to change. Waikiki was developing; we had to move or accept very limited facilities. A number of people left the Club at that point, broken-hearted at losing what, to many, was a second home.

"After growing up at the Outrigger," Mary Philpotts McGrath says, "...loving the central Waikiki location of our Club, I found it difficult to believe that "things" could be the same or better. In retrospect, we were so fortunate to escape before the suffocating development devoured us. After the move, we still had direct access to our beloved surf spots where a timeless showpiece of a Clubhouse was custom designed by Val Ossipoff. An added bonus is the beautiful Kapiolani Park which still surrounds us. Lucky we are!"

Future world championship surfer, Fred Hemmings, says Cline Mann took him to the Elks site and introduced him to the surfing spots in the area and they were great. He was not averse to the move, but feels that the 'Old Club' was a canoe and water sports club with a bar and restaurant, whereas the new site is a restaurant and bar, trying to be a canoe club.

Carol Akana Remillard was totally against the move but was finally convinced that there was no choice. Her disappointment was so great that, although she kept her membership, she didn't visit the 'new Club' for several years. She is now an active member.

Gertrude Berger remembers the move as a very traumatic time in her life, but knew the Club couldn't remain in Waikiki confined among tall buildings. Many friends quit, she recalls,

but she and her late husband, Harry, accepted the move without question. Harry was serving on the House Committee at the time and had visited many mainland reciprocal clubs that were in tall buildings, like the Jonathan Club in Los Angeles, and it didn't appeal to him.

Future President Bob Anderson, and his siblings Leith and Pam, grew up in the neighborhood of the 'New Club' where their uncle, Dad Center, taught them to surf and paddle at Castles and First Break; they actually preferred those surfing spots to Waikiki.

Also growing up around Diamond Head was Jim Gowney, who didn't want to see the Club move, but knew it couldn't stay in its old location forever. Being familiar with the area made it easier to accept the move.

Aggie and Joe Quigg spent many enjoyable hours at the site of the 'New Club' long before construction began. With good friends Jackie and Marcia Cross, they barbequed at the Elks site. Although they were on the mainland the year of the move, Aggie says "when we heard that the 'New Club' was to be on this property, we were quite pleased.

Shirley Tavares Wetzel spent much of her childhood at the Old Club and was devastated at the thought of moving. As a young mother, she wanted her son to have the same opportunity as she to enjoy the great environment of Waikiki. "It was definitely the end of an era!" she lamented.

When asked his reaction to the move, Ron Sorrell unhesitatingly stated, "It was painful! To leave the surf was like saying goodbye to a family member who was in hospice care."

That the move was successful and the Club continued to grow and prosper, is a tribute to the many members who accepted the inevitable, and over time, embraced the 'New Club' with the same loyalty and allegiance as they had the old.

Marian Arnott expressed her feelings and that of her late husband, future Outrigger President, Tommy, when she stated, "Where the Club goes, so do we!"

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