

# SHARK IS DUKE

## KAHANAMOKU'S

## FAVORITE GOD

By RUTH STACKER

There is no subject more often discussed in all Hawaii than that Duke Paoa Kahanamoku, Hawaii's champion swimmer, is unbeatable over his favorite distances of 50 and 100 yards, and to this much religious superstition is attached. Every Hawaiian born into the world is presented with a particular fish god, be it the mullet, the eel or the shark. And in various seasons of bloom of the tropical flowers, so the natives claim, the different gods paddle shoreward to listen to the troubles of their people.

### The Time

When the lehua, the national flower of Hawaii, blooms, then comes old man shark, turns a listening ear—do sharks have ears?—well, perhaps it is only an understanding, and all the individual troubles of the people are demolished. Sometimes, if there are feuds and fights, then the fish gods take it up in the great big ocean, hold council and sometimes battles, and, according to the native belief, it is a question of the strongest god. This talk about shifting your burdon is very literally taken.

To the Kahanamoku family, the mano, or shark, is chief high god. He was chief high god to Duke's father, and his father before his father, and so far Mr. Shark has been a very satisfactory administrator to the troubles of the Kahanamoku family.

### Manoo's Aid

Duke's father—Captain Duke, they called him—was a splendid old type of pure Hawaiian, and in conversation one day he told me that it was through the venerable old manoo that Duke had such a successful swimming career. He told that he had the direct promise from the chief shark of Honolulu harbor and Puuloa that in Duke's two favorite distances he would never be defeated. Captain Duke felt that he had more pull with the gods than the average native because he had been high retainer for King Kamehameha, most dearly loved of all Hawaiian rulers.

And though merely a Hawaiian superstition, practiced through ignorance, Duke, most powerful swimmer in the world, only once was beaten in the 50 yards, but on that day made a new record in the 100 yards and one in the 220 yards. Since then, in all his eight years of swimming, he has never been beaten in the 50 or century distances and he has hung up world records almost out of range of any of today's swimmers.