

Famous Men I Have Met

By

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(Mr. Ford has lived in Hawaii for most of the past 30 years. He was the founder of many civic clubs here and of the Pan-Pacific Union. He is now retired, living on Maui, and this article is one of his rich store of reminiscences.)

XIII—JACK LONDON

I think Jack London was the best pal I ever had.

I once taught him to ride a surfboard, had to tow him back to shore from the big surf and laid him up with sunburn for two full weeks flat on his stomach, and Jack forgave me. But I never could make an accomplished surf rider of him.

I induced Jack to pay me a visit in Hawaii with all sorts of promises, and kept some of them.

I built him a tent house on the Outrigger club grounds under the shade of a sheltering palm, and there he lay after I had brought him from the surf where he had been on his opu for two hours on a surfboard while I tried to explain the art of catching a "nui nalu," or big wave.

Instead he caught hives or something that raised large blisters all over his body, and he was so painfully sunburned I had to help him on his surfboard and tow until I got to shallow water.

Jack was writing what I consider his best novel while he was in Honolulu that trip—The Star Rover. Every evening I used to lie and listen to what Jack had written during the day.

He then never took a break until he had written at least 2,000 words after breakfast, which took nearly to lunchtime. After supper he would read his writing to Charmian, his wife, and me. She was always all attention, but if I fell asleep, which I usually did, Jack knew that his morning's work was up to or above par—it was my way of showing appreciation, and he understood.

Jack London used to help me get my inter-racial groups together at weekly suppers at the Outrigger club, when I was forming the Pan Pacific union. I had recently returned from the New Hebrides and other cannibal islands. Jack was thrilled with the stories I told him and a year or so later in his own yacht, the Snark, he covered much the same ground I had.

Next: Robert G. Ingersoll.