

# Bill Smith Jr. Credits Three Men For His Greatness As a Swimmer

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In probably his greatest hour of triumph Melvin William (Bill) Smith, better known as Bill Smith Jr., the world's greatest middle distance swimmer, didn't forget the three men who projected him into greatness as a world champion and holder of numerous world records.

Speaking before 300 persons who filled the Outrigger Canoe club pavilion to overflowing last night to welcome him home, Smith said he wished Soichi Sakamoto, Kiyoshi (Keo) Nakama and Mike Peppe were present at the historic occasion to share the honors showered him.

It was Sakamoto, Maui school teacher and aquatic mentor, Bill said, who "coached me to the world titles."

It was Nakama of Maui, another champion swimmer who still is on the mainland, who roomed with Smith at Ohio State university and who encouraged and otherwise helped Smith to his greatness.

And it was Peppe, Ohio State's aquatic coach, who took up the final development of Smith into a swimming great by tutoring the finer points of the sport.

Bill also credits the start of his great career in The Star-Bulletin junior mile swim at the Waikiki natatorium in 1940 when he finished first.

"Swimming," Smith said, "is the most important activity in the United States navy today. About 50 per cent of the men in the navy are unable to swim."

Immediately after Smith joined the navy in 1943 he became a swimming instructor at Great Lakes naval base. Last year he was transferred to Shoemaker, Cal., and several weeks ago Smith returned to Honolulu as an athletic specialist in which capacity he is teaching swimming to men of the navy.

"Anybody that is somebody in sports on Oahu seemed to be at the reception and dinner for the great athlete who was toasted by Duke P. Kahanamoku, former world's sprint swimming champion and now sheriff of Honolulu." "I'm proud of this young fellow," Duke said over the microphones. "Join me in saying thanks to his father and mother for bringing up such a splendid athlete. . . . I'm glad someone is carrying on swimming for Hawaii."

Duke was introduced by Riley H. Allen, editor of The Star-Bulletin who, as toastmaster of the party, made the lengthy program a lively one.

After being called by Mr. Allen, Governor Stainback of Hawaii welcomed Smith home and presented the swimming champion with a platinum wrist watch, a gift of the sports leaders in Honolulu.

Earle K. (Liko) Vida, president of the Honolulu baseball league, presented Smith, on behalf of the circuit, a life membership to the Outrigger Canoe club.

Bill Eaves, head of the Hawaii senior basketball league, presented Smith with a gold writing set while Secretary of Hawaii, Gerald C. Corbett, presented in behalf of the Nuuanu Y swimming club, a pair

of seagoing zebra bookends to the champion.

In behalf of the Honolulu baseball and Hawaii basketball leagues, H. P. Faye, president of Honolulu Chamber of Commerce, gave Smith life passes to games of these organizations.

Harry Funaki, representing the golfers of the territory, also honored Smith with a gift.

Prof. Gregg M. Sinclair, president of the University of Hawaii, paid high tribute to Smith and his performances.

As principal speaker of the banquet, Prof. Sinclair called Smith a swimmer extraordinary, an excellent representative of the democracy of Hawaii, and a young man who so beautifully exemplifies the qualities of courage, tenacity, and fair play.

He told of Smith's rise, how he overcame obstacles in his battle for health which enabled him to become a champion.

Prof. Sinclair related the incident when he met President Howard L. Bevis of Ohio State university and the warning he gave Mr. Bevis that from now on the Bill Smiths and Nakamas are going to the University of Hawaii.

Dan Aiona's Rainbow troupe provided the music and hula dancing selections.

The party was in charge of a committee headed by Theodore (Pump) Searle. Others making it the success it was included Don Watson, Leon Sterling, Cecil Benny, George D. (Dad) Center, Bob Williams, Adam Ornelles, Herbert Keppeler, Carl Machado, Jack Botelho, Mackay Yanagisawa, Bob Fisher, Dan Aiona and E. K. Vida.