

*Only One Man Has Swum It*

# Rough Molokai Channel Falls to New Conquest

By GORDON MORSE

A Hawaiian man once swam from Molokai to Oahu, and he is the only one to date.

Two surfboard riders have conquered the 35 miles of rough channel, and they are the only ones to dare try it that way.

Two men also paddled outrigger canoes between the Islands, but only one made it all the way.

**NOW TWO** water skiers got in the act this weekend by trying to skim their way across the Molokai Channel. Only one of them made it, 18-year-old Larry Stahr of Kaneohe, and he did it on one ski. The other skier, Edwin Suzuki, gave up Friday morning about halfway across the channel.

Hawaiian war canoes with dozens of men at the paddles used the rough Molokai Channel as a regular highway before the white man came to Hawaii, and in recent times six men in outrigger canoes have used it as one of the most grueling races of all time.

But the channel has proved a mighty foe of the solo swimmer, surfer or canoer.

**WILLIAM K. PAI** of Kaneohe was the first and apparently the only man to swim from Molokai to Oahu. He did it on Aug. 26, 1936, when he was 30 years old.

He had conquered the water between Hawaii and Maui, and later tried to swim from

Oahu to Kauai, but without success.

He took 19 hours for the Molokai to Oahu swim. He left Ilio Point at 6:09 a.m. on a Friday and headed for Waikiki Beach, but ran into a school of Portuguese men-of-war off Koko Head and was forced to land near the Blow Hole at 1:05 a.m. Saturday.

**THE FIRST** man to attempt the channel on a surfboard was Gene Smith, former Honolulu policeman. He made his trip on a 13-foot board on Nov. 7, 1938.

He was alone, and paddled from Molokai's Ilio Point to Makapuu Beach, Oahu, in eight hours, 47 minutes.

Tom Zahn, a mainlander who adopted Waikiki as his home, was the second man to cross the channel on a surfboard.

He paddled his 16-foot board from Molokai to Waikiki Beach in eight hours, 55 minutes during the Aloha Week outrigger canoe race in 1954.

**THEN, LAST** year, Island-born Harry Shaffer and Tom Schroeder attempted to paddle a small two-man outrigger canoe from Molokai to Oahu.

Harry had eaten too much venison the night before and became sick several miles off Koko Head the next morning.

He was relieved by another paddler, so Tom became the only one to conquer the channel.