

Canoe-Making Now Less An Art, More a Science

By BOB KRAUSS

Hawaii's only outrigger canoe factory was at top production yesterday because the Christmas season has given the builders a lot of spare time from their regular jobs.

But they aren't losing money because a canoe builder today isn't paid in fish and poi. He makes \$7 an hour.

The man in charge is George Perry, a full time insurance salesman, whose part time hobby is designing, repairing and building koa outrigger canoes in a workshop at the end of Building Six in the Ala Moana Market.

His price tags for a koa racing canoe go up to \$5,000. For a specially designed ama (the stick at the end of the outriggers) you will pay as high as \$500.

Perry's "factory" has been responsible for a major portion of Hawaii's koa canoe production during the past five years. The work is done on weekends and holidays.

Recently his spare time canoe builders (top professional carpenters) completed a 39-foot long koa racing canoe for Cliff Weaver. Called Hokulele (Shooting Star), the sleek outrigger is the newest in Hawaii's fleet of rare koa canoes.

The vessel was built for display in the Canoe Room at the Queen's Surf and for racing by the Lanikai Canoe Club.

Now Perry's top canoe builder, carpenter Takeo Teruya, is repairing the 40-foot Leilani, owned by the Outrigger Canoe Club and badly smashed in the last Molokai Canoe Race. Teruya has been at it three weeks.

He's patched holes in the hull, reinforced the bottom and built a new bow to replace the old one.

To Perry, who supervises the work, canoe building is as much a science as it was an art to the old Hawaiians. "I work from measurements as much as possible," he explained.

To the old Hawaiians, who depended upon the eye for measurements, the length and the lines of the canoe were pretty much dictated by the log from which it was cut. Not so with Perry.

The 39-foot Hokulele was built from a 37-foot log. His carpenters extended the bow by projecting ribs from the hull and filling in with strips of koa. The fabricated bow is held together with Elmer's Waterproof Glue and is as strong as the rest of the hull.

After a lifetime of repairing and building koa canoes, Perry has firm ideas about how a vessel's lines affect its performance in the water.

"The first thing you decide is the running line of a new canoe," he explained. "That's a straight line along the center on the bottom of the canoe. You have to decide where the line should begin to taper up in front and where it should begin to taper in the back.

"The longer the running line, the harder the canoe is to turn and the better it performs on a straight-away. The shorter the running line, the easier it is to turn a canoe and the harder it is to paddle in a straight line."

Perry said the next decision concerns the depth of the canoe.

"The depth of a canoe determines how much splash you will get into the hull," he said. "However, if you make the gunwales too high, the



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paddlers can't reach the water."

Another consideration is the length of the vessel.

"In a racing canoe there are six paddlers, so the length of the canoe determines the seat spacing," he said. "The seats must be far

A Bob Krauss SPECIAL

enough apart so the paddlers don't hit each other.

"Also, a long canoe has a nice glide but it's death on turns. It pulls away at the start but gets behind on the turns. The shortest length for a racing canoe should be about 38 feet; the longest length, about 40 feet."

The ama, or float at the

end of the outriggers, is another important factor.

"To canoe paddlers, the ama is like a football to sandlot players," said Perry. "Not long ago in Kona a paddler said he wanted a certain seat. The others said, no, you can't sit there. He said, 'All right, I'll take my ama and go home.' That ended the race."

Perry's specially designed amas for racing canoes are made of liwiliwi wood, very heavy when cut but light as balsa when dried.

"You can hardly make an ama like that for less than \$450 to \$500," he said. "First you have to go up in the mountains and find the right branch, then cut it, then haul it down, then kiln dry it (usually it's a rush order).

"After that you cut it, hollow it out and glue the pieces together. Then you fiberglass it. If you don't, the wood is so soft it will soak up water like a sponge. That's what goes into making the little stick on the end of the outriggers."

For making koa canoes, Perry's workers use three basic tools, all electric. One is a shaving head with three blades, the second is an electric planer and the third is a heavy duty sander.

In one respect, Perry observes an old Hawaiian canoe building practice. He uses no metal in his canoes.

"You put in a metal screw and it causes a cancer in the wood," he explained. "In a few years there's a dark spot caused by dry rot around every screw. That's why I use only glue and wooden dowels."

Jury Says Lots Worth \$508,000

A Circuit Court jury has awarded \$508,000 to the owners of three pieces of property condemned by the Honolulu Redevelopment Agency (HRA) for the Kukui redevelopment project.

The award was made to 12 members of the family of the late Ko Suy Hing Wong.

The award was made after a trial before Judge Allen R. Hawkins which began Dec. 8.

Two of the lots are located near Beretania and River Sts., and one is on Kaumanu-wai Lane.

Philip Won, HRA apprais-

er, valued the three lots at \$439,000. Y. T. Lum, appraiser for the owners of the property, valued the lots at \$581,000. The family asked \$630,000.

Attorney J. Garner Anthony represented the land owners. Attorneys Harry Tanaka and Yoshio Shigezawa represented the HRA.

GOP Begins Mapping Legislation

Republican legislators and representatives of the State GOP organization met yesterday in Iolani Palace to begin work on legislation to be presented at the session which opens Feb. 15.

Sen. Fred Rohlifing and Rep. Frank Judd are co-chairmen of the group, which is called the Joint Republican Action Committee for the 1967 Legislative Program.

Six sub-committees were established to look into these areas: governmental structure and procedure; public protection and welfare; travel industry, economic development and transportation; education; fiscal and taxation; and land.

TODAY'S THOUGHT

Many a Christmas tree will be surrounded by rich gifts to boys and girls. Busy parents will try to express their love for their children with candy, dolls, toy guns, electric trains and fire engines. But let them



Rev. Osumi

remember that true gifts are not these things—but themselves. Let them give companionship to their sons and daughters.

Rev. Paul S. Osumi, Nuanu Congregational Church.