

# Duke Kahanamoku Is Dead

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Negro or an Indian, and several times he was refused service in Mainland restaurants because of his color.

Duke continued to break swimming records on the Mainland and was selected for the Olympic tryouts in Philadelphia, where he was coached by George Kistler of the University of Pennsylvania. He was selected to represent the United States that year in the Stockholm Olympics.

He swept those events. He set a new world's record of 63 2-5 seconds for the 100-meter event and was a member of the American team which won the 800-meter relay.

In addition to receiving his medals, Duke was invited to the Royal Box where he was congratulated by King Gustav, who introduced him to other members of the Swedish royal family.

## Earning No Money

While his swimming feats brought fame, they earned Duke no money. While he was in Europe a committee of prominent Hawaii citizens — including Prince Jonah Kūhiō Kalanianoʻe, delegate to Congress — began a campaign to raise money to enable him to buy a home.

But Duke didn't return to the Islands at once after his Olympic triumphs. Instead, he made a nine-month barnstorming tour of Europe and the Mainland.

On July 22, 1912 — in Hamburg, Germany — Duke swam the 100-meter freestyle in 1 minute, 1-5 seconds. This broke the world's record he had set in Sweden of 1 minute, 2-5 seconds.

Duke finally came home on Oct. 1, 1912, aboard the Matson liner Wilhelmina. He turned down lucrative offers to turn professional, deciding to retain his amateur standing.

He worked for two years as a water meter reader, in the drafting department of the Territorial government, on surveying jobs and as a beachboy, taking tourists on outrigger canoe rides and teaching them to swim and surf.

Then he went barnstorming again, on the Mainland and in the South Pacific. He drew raves from Australian sports writers for his prowess, but it was in Sydney in 1915 that he lost his first major event.

He was beaten by inches in the 440-yard race by an Australian named Adrian, and he wrote apologetically to his father in Honolulu: "Papa, Adrian won the race by six inches. I should have won. Really. I didn't try hard enough."

But he swept most of the other events he entered in Australia and in New Zealand during that tour.

## Taught Aussies To Surf

Duke loved the strong Australian surf, but the art of surfing had never caught on Down Under. In Sydney, Duke made an 8-foot, 9-inch surfboard out of sugar pine in February, 1915, and demonstrated surfing to the Aussies. Today, surfing is a favorite Australian sport.

More years of swimming exhibitions followed, on the Mainland and in Hawaii, and Duke continued to break records. When there were no swimming events, he went back to being a beachboy.

He soon found himself the most popular beachboy at Waikiki, with thousands of tourists posing with him while their pictures were taken.

But there was little money in being a beachboy, and Duke worked at various public jobs until World War I. Then he toured the Mainland in swimming tours to raise money for the Red Cross.

He almost died of influenza in the Mainland epidemic of World War I, but his amazing strength pulled him through. He was en route home on the steamer Shinyo Maru when the war ended.

In 1920, then an "aging" athlete nearing 30, Duke triumphed in the Olympic Games at Antwerp, Belgium. Here he bettered his world's record for the 100-meter freestyle by 2/5 of a second, swimming it in 1 minute.

He also was a member of the American relay team which set a new Olympic 800-meter record of 10 minutes, 4 and 4/10 seconds at Antwerp.

In 1922 Duke launched a career as a movie actor, appearing in pictures with Wallace Beery, Ronald Colman, George Bancroft and other stars of that era.

His early movies included "The Wanderer," "Lord Jim," "Golden Journey," "Pony Express" and "The House Without a Key"—the latter an early Charlie Chan movie set in Hawaii. He took the roles of Polynesians, American Indians and Hindus.

In 1924, at 34, Duke entered the Paris Olympics, but age was beginning to slow him. He was beaten in the Indianapolis pre-Olympics by Johnny Weissmuller—later to become Hollywood's "Tarzan"—who set a new record of 59 and 2/5 seconds. Duke was second; his brother Sam was third.

In the Paris events, Weissmuller broke his Indianapolis record, swimming the 100 meters in 59 seconds. Again Duke was second and Sam was third.

## Heroic Rescue Feat

Duke returned to California and the movies, and in 1925 made headlines all over the world when he rescued eight persons from drowning after their fishing boat went on the rocks off Corona del Mar.

Duke made three trips through the pounding surf with his surfboard, plucking victims from the water and taking them ashore. Five persons drowned; four were rescued by others.

Police Chief J. A. Porter of Newport Beach, Calif., said of Duke's heroism:

"Kahanamoku's performance was the most superhuman rescue act and the finest display of surfboard riding that has ever been seen in the world."

For his heroism, the people of Hawaii presented Duke with a gold medal and the Los Angeles Athletic Club gave him a gold watch.

Duke hoped to make an Olympics comeback in 1928, but another influenza attack kept him out of the meets. Homesick for Hawaii, he abandoned Hollywood in 1929 and returned to Honolulu.

Jobs were hard to find. The one-time Olympic champion and hero took the best he could get—as a janitor at City Hall.

In 1932, grayed and 41 years old, Duke again tried for the Olympics, but he failed to qualify in the individual Cincinnati trials. "No alibi," he told sportswriters. "It's just that the legs are gone."

But he earned a place on the Olympic U.S. water polo team—the fourth Olympic team he'd been on in a span of 20 years, an unprecedented feat.

## Becomes Honolulu Sheriff

Back in Hawaii, Duke operated a service station until 1935 when he was elected Sheriff of Honolulu. The job was all but honorary and little police work was involved, but it was a form of recognition to a man who had brought glory and fame to Hawaii.

He held the office until 1961, when the job was abolished. During his years as sheriff he married (1940) the former Nadine Alexander, made more movies and appeared on several nationwide television shows.

One of these was the popular "This is Your Life," where he was reunited with three of the eight fishermen he had saved from the wrecked fishing boat off California in 1925.

In 1961, he was appointed to the \$12,000-a-year post of official City greeter.

Duke almost became a candidate for U.S. Congress in 1961 at the suggestion of Sen. Hiram L. Fong. Fong renewed the proposal in 1964. And in June of that year, Duke announced (in New York) that he intended to be a Congressional candidate on the Republican ticket. But when he came home in July, he said he had decided not to run.

Prodded again in 1966, he said he was willing to run for lieutenant governor if Mayor Neal S. Blaisdell would be a GOP candidate for governor. Duke formally announced his candidacy in May.

On June 2, his close friend, Mrs. Kinau Wilder, turned

over her holdings in Duke Kahanamoku Enterprises—including the Waikiki nightclub named for him—to Duke and to her son, Kimo Wilder McVay. Mrs. Wilder said she couldn't bear to see Duke dependent upon politics for a livelihood.

Tearfully (the tears were in gratitude) Duke called off his campaign.

Duke weathered many an illness during his later years. He had a heart attack in 1955 and a serious attack of gastric ulcers in 1962. He suffered a cerebral blood clot and underwent surgery. Then, in 1965, he had a prostate operation.

His ulcers again put him in the hospital last February, and he had about half of his stomach removed.

Duke's accomplishments as a swimmer earned him a multitude of awards, of which one of the greatest was his selection last June as one of the 26 all-time champions of sports. He was honored at the Sportsmen's World Awards banquet along with other surviving greats.

A year earlier, he had been named to the first Surfing Hall of Fame. Duke had been guest of honor at the United States Surfing championships at Huntington Beach, Calif., for several years.

Duke was guest of honor at the second annual Surfer Poll Awards Banquet in Capistrano, Calif., in April, 1965.

He was honored at a "Sports Champions of the Century" dinner on July 6, 1964, at the New York World's Fair. He helped launch "Hawaii Day" at the Fair that year.

The Waikiki Yacht Club holds an invitational regatta each year in his honor. His name also is perpetuated in Hawaii's annual Duke Kahanamoku World Surfing Championships.

## Isles' Leaders Express Grief

A saddened community yesterday heard the news that Duke Kahanamoku, the best-known Hawaiian, had died.

Hawaiian flags on public buildings throughout the State were lowered to half-staff, and tributes to Duke's memory were made by civic and State leaders.

Gov. John A. Burns said:

"All Hawaii today grieves the passing of Duke Paoa Kahanamoku; his loss leaves a void in our community and in our culture that cannot be filled.

"More than any other person in our modern history, Duke embodied all that is fine and ennobling in the Hawaiian culture.

"He reflected great credit and honor on our Polynesian people. His athletic accomplishments set standards of the highest order; he gave unselfishly of himself for many years as a public servant; his career was rich in a wide variety of experiences.

"Duke was the friend of royalty and countless numbers of other people from all walks of life.

"He was recognized throughout the world as the symbol of Hawaii and of the aloha spirit that is the hallmark of our society.

"His humility and the dignity which characterized his life shall remain an inspiration for all our citizens.

"We shall miss Duke as we miss few others whose friendship we were privileged to enjoy. His passing is a great personal loss to me. To Nadine and Duke's family I extend heartfelt condolences and sympathy."

Mayor Neal S. Blaisdell said:

"A great patriarch of the Hawaiian people, an honored public figure and a beloved personal friend of all of the thousands of people, great and small, who knew him died today.

"Duke Kahanamoku was an indomitable man. The courage through which his athletic prowess carried him to international fame was second only to the quiet fortitude with which he bore the recurring illnesses of later life.

"And through all of his life his simple dignity, his gentle strength, his kindly good will to man made him a living symbol of all that we admire in the Hawaiian spirit.

"He was a true Hawaiian warrior. He was a man for all time, and all Hawaii mourns."

State Senate President John J. Hulten said:

"I am saddened at the passing of Duke Kahanamoku. He was a living symbol of the Hawaiian people and he exemplified the spirit of aloha we are all so proud of and which we are trying to keep and to foster.

"I believe this spirit will live on as a monument to him. He has been so closely allied to this spirit which is one of the great contributions of the Hawaiian people to the whole world."

Chief Justice William S. Richardson said:

"Modern athletes could do well to aspire to achieve his stature as both an athlete and citizen of Hawaii. We have all benefited from his presence, and mourn his passing. My deepest sympathy to Nadine and the Kahanamoku family."

Msgr. Charles A. Kukumano, pastor of Our Lady of Peace Roman Catholic Cathedral and president of

the Duke Kahanamoku Foundation, said:

"Duke Kahanamoku was an excellent example of his race: healthy, robust, good-tempered and amiable. He was a man of nature who loved the Islands and loved the sea.

"Several years ago a small group of his friends formed the Duke Kahanamoku Foundation to award scholarships in his honor.

"The foundation has therefore been sponsoring a local non-Hawaiian girl who is studying police science, a vocation befitting Duke's long years as sheriff of Honolulu.

"Duke will be remembered as a symbol of manly graciousness and healthy sportsmanship."

The Rt. Rev. E. Lani Hanchett, suffragan bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Honolulu and the first Episcopal priest of Hawaiian ancestry, said:

"I praise and thank God for Duke Kahanamoku and all that he has meant to Hawaii Nei. His life has surely exemplified the spirit of aloha.

"It can be said of him that no greater Hawaiian man has ever lived on God's earth."

Joe Brennan, author of "Duke of Hawaii," Duke's biographer, said:

"He obviously and definitely was the most loved man in Hawaii—his irreplaceable any way you take it. We're all bleeding for him, every one of us."

Harry A. T. Conchee, tennis star and a retired clerk who used to work in the same building with Kahanamoku when Duke was a draftsman for the Territory, said:

"The common people of Hawaii loved Mr. Kahanamoku like a brother. No matter how famous he got, he always remembered his old friends and treated them same as always. No one can take his place.

Mrs. E. Fullard-Leo, longtime official of the Amateur Athletic Union of Hawaii, who was manager of the Hawaii swimming team in the 1924 Olympic Games in Paris, said:

"I heard the news and I was shocked. I knew the whole family—his father, mother and all his brothers—and the news of Duke's death came as a great shock.

"I took Duke and two of his brothers, Sam and David, to Paris in 1924. That was the year Duke lost his 100-yard freestyle title to Johnny Weissmuller, but he was great even in defeat.

"Duke was an active competitor in three Olympics and was in a fourth as a member of the water polo team. He always took care of himself and didn't allow himself to get out of shape. He was a great champion, humble and appreciative, and he never made trouble for anyone. He abided by the rules of sportsmanship and competition."

Kimo McVay, president of Duke Kahanamoku's, said:

"He was an inspiration to me. I felt very privileged just to have him call me a friend.

"He was my hero all my life, and he was the motivation for my mother, myself and Don Ho to continue against great odds to try and prove that kanaka entertainment was what the visitors really wanted.

"He was a loveable, straight man, without aphony bone in his body."