



The Outdoors

Jack Wyatt

HCRA's Lady President

What's a nice lady like Lei Faria doing with a sharp ax, a lumberjack's saw and a ticket to the Big Island? In search of a tall koa tree is what.

Obtaining a valuable koa log in which to build a racing canoe ranks high among the many priorities of Hawaiian Canoe Racing Association's first woman president. And with her woodsman-like determination and energy, she just might get one soon.

"You just can't buy a koa canoe for any price," said Faria, who manages the downtown Phone Mart office of the Hawaiian Telephone Company.

"I heard that some Big Island ranchers are about to harvest some koa trees and I hope that the HCRA can obtain one. We have the talent to design and build a fine racing canoe—one that could be of benefit to all Hawaii."

In heading the HCRA, Faria has a giant task ahead. Not only does she have to keep HCRA's 24-member clubs and their 2,000-plus paddlers satisfied, but she has to keep her husband, Chris, who is a past HCRA president and a current board member, happy.

"It's not uncommon to disagree with Chris on some points," said Faria, "we've disagreed on certain watersports issues for years. But before I took on the job of HCRA president, we held a meeting. And I said to Chris, you take care of the Quarterback Club (Chris is president) and I'll head the canoe association. But in all seriousness, with Chris' canoe racing experience, his help this year will be invaluable."

In Faria's 12 or more years in canoe racing, she has found it tremendously rewarding. "Sure it's hard work, but watching young paddlers and adults progress makes it all worthwhile. Canoe racing is for people of all ages."

HCRA's 15-regatta schedule kicks off with the Director's Invitational, off Waikiki, on April 23, and finishes with the popular Molokai-to-Oahu race, on Oct. 15.

Faria's rise to HCRA's presidency was no women's lib movement or fluke. It came as a reward for her years of hard work and dedication. "I used to sit on the beach and watch my children paddle for the Kailua-Hawaiian Civic Club's team. Then one day an HCRA official asked if I would give them a hand in running the regatta. And I've been at it ever since."

Faria claims that she is not going to change things for the sake of changing. "At our first board meeting I presented a list of things that I would like to get done during my reign. It ran from obtaining that koa log to computerization of our treasury. I guess this was the first time that an incoming president had ever put his goals down on paper. The board of directors were receptive and I think that we'll get along fine."

The Association's by-laws pretty much spell out Faria's primary goals, that is to encourage, maintain and perpetuate authentic canoe racing and preservation of Hawaiian koa canoes. But to do this efficiently costs money.

"The HCRA spends approximately \$2,000 per regatta, with trophies taking up almost one-half of that," Faria explained. "Most of our money comes from paddler registration and from entry fees, but with our mounting expenses, we have to be very careful with our spending. I plan to implement fund raising and bring in sponsors. That should help considerably."

But like most sports organizations, the HCRA is not without problems. According to one official, it's important to keep unity among the member clubs. And with that in mind, the HCRA must strive to keep all the Hawaiian koa racing canoes as equal as possible. "We want canoe racing to be a test of the paddler's skill and not the canoe's design," he said.

HCRA Race Schedule

HCRA's Race Schedule: Director's Invitational, off Waikiki, April 23; Honolulu Harbor Regatta, May 13-14; Honolulu Police Race, Waikiki-to-Rabbit Island, May 21; King Kam Regatta, Kailua Beach, June 11; Leeward Kai Regatta, Nanakuli Beach, June 18; Waimanalo Regatta, June 25; McFarlane Race, Waikiki, July 4; John D. Kaupiko Regatta, Waikiki, July 16; Oahu Championship, Keeki Lagoon, July 23; State Championship, location undecided, July 29; All-State Regatta, location undecided, Aug. 5-6; Dad Center Race, Hawaii Kai, Aug. 13; Duke Kahanamoku Race, Lanikai-to-Waikiki, Aug. 20; Hei Hei I'kaika, Kaneohe-to-Kahana Bay-to-Kailua, Sept. 16-17; Molokai-to-Oahu, Oct. 15.