



The Waikiki Surf Club practices at Ala Moana Beach.—Star-Bulletin photo by Dean Sensui.



Above, Moku Frosieth with Waikiki Surf Club paddlers.—Star-Bulletin photo by Dean Sensui.

Below, club paddler Wally Frosieth, center, with coach Jake Kaio, left, and paddlers Darrel DeMello, David Kalani and Edward Apa.—Star-Bulletin photo by John Titchen.

Right, Frosieth, the driving spirit behind the club, in 1953. He was one of the founders of the club and in 1952 was named Waikiki Beach Man of the Year.



Strokes of Tradition

By Lois Taylor, Star-Bulletin Writer

IT was 5 p.m. at Ala Moana Beach, and a light, chill rain was falling. Moku Frosieth patted the skinny rump of her 7-year-old granddaughter, Kahi DeMello, and said, "Now go out and try hard, but come on if you get cold." Kahi is the youngest paddler of the Waikiki Surf Club, started by her grandfather, Wally Frosieth, and held together by the Frosieth family.

Moku and Wally Frosieth have always put the paddlers ahead of the club, participating ahead of winning. This would account for Waikiki Surf Club's spotty win record when compared to the Outrigger Canoe Club or Hui Nalu, but also for the strong sense of family, of ohana, among the club's 150 members.

"I know all of the paddlers," Moku said. "I have seen some of them start as small children, grow up, get married and bring their own children down to start paddling. It's a good, clean, healthy sport for kids. Our main goal all the years we've been on the beach has been to keep kids out of trouble, especially now when there are so many things that kids can get into."

We try to teach them the sportsmanship features of paddling and we try to keep the Hawaiian traditions of the outrigger canoes. It's like the culture of Hawaii. It's all here around us, but we never tried hard at it.

"Now we're getting canoe racing competition from California and Tahiti, and they're beating us. They come here to win and they are, because they're trying harder than we are. Like everything in life, canoeing is getting much more competitive."

Back in 1946 when Wally Frosieth, George Downing, John Lind and several other surfers started the Waikiki Surf Club, it was for their own sport as much as for canoe paddling. Although voyaging canoes have been used by the Hawaiians and their ancestors from Indonesia through the South Pacific for more than 4,000 years, canoe racing as a sport is relatively new.

There were occasional regattas here at the turn of the century, but organized racing began with the formation of the Outrigger Canoe Club in 1908. By 1920 there were several teams and in 1933 eight canoe clubs joined for the first competition. On July 4, 1943, the Outrigger Canoe Club held the first Walter T. MacFarlane Regatta, which 49 years later is Oahu's oldest and most prestigious annual canoe race.

MOKU Rosehill grew up on Maui where she learned to surf. She didn't become a paddler until Wally Frosieth taught her. "Wally was born in Los Angeles," she said. "His mother was in the chorus at the old Hawaii Theater, and he moved here with her when he was 5. He loved the water from the beginning. He learned to surf at Kahaala Beach."

Later he used to surf with a bunch of guys at Waikiki. We met at the beach in the old days, they always took the girls out tandem, two on the same surfboard. I had gone out with a family friend, Wally was surfing with another girl, and the two guys arranged to change partners. That's how it all started."

The Frosieths were married in 1948 and in the senior women's crew of Waikiki Surf Club. "Then we started our family, four girls and a boy, so I quit paddling."

Later I decided to try it again, but I started the wrong way. Wally and I were at a state championship race in Hilo and one of the women got sick. They threw me into the boat and boy, I thought I die. Training is the whole thing, and that's what we stress."

The Waikiki Surf Club paddlers practice weekly during the season at the east end of Ala Moana Park. When they aren't in the water, they're doing aerobic exercises on the grass across the road or hanging out at the closest thing to a clubhouse Waikiki Surf has, the van that belongs to Leola Frosieth DeMello and her husband Darrel.

Darrel is the present men's coach and paddles in the Molokai-Oahu race with the senior men's team. Leola's one of the few Frosieths who never took to the sport, but she keeps the club's records. Annual membership dues are \$30 for adults and \$25 for juniors, and the only requisite for membership is interest in participating in the sport.

Leola's sister Luana was the club's head coach last year, but gave it up this season in order to paddle. The other two daughters, Malia and Tina, have temporarily retired to raise their families, and the Frosieths son Teena, a life-guard at Sandy Beach, paddles when he has time.

Waikiki Surf Club is one of the early members of the Hawaii Canoe Racing Association, one of the two deep-water canoe racing groups in the state. The other is Hui Wa'a and the difference is that HCRA races koa canoes and Hui Wa'a races the much less expensive fiberglass canoes. Many of the younger clubs have found it impossible to afford a koa canoe, and until they can, race the cheaper model.

MALIA Waikiki Surf Club's koa canoe, is celebrating her 50th anniversary this year. She's the oldest and the most treasured koa canoe in the club. She was made in Kailua, Kona.

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