

Downings plan to Get Wet! at Waikiki

By Jack Wyatt

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The "Get Wet!" logo used by the Kapahulu surf shop Downing Hawaii fits its wet-set owners to a saturated tee.

The last time the George Downing clan, which includes wife Gildea, daughter Kaiulu and sons, Keone and Kainoa, were out of the swim was at Christmas dinner last year.

"As a family the ocean has blessed us and kept us together," George Downing said reverently.

The Downings gathered today at their beloved Waikiki Beach, taking part in the 48th Walter J. Macfarlane Regatta, OHCRA's only outrigger canoe surf regatta of the season. Racing began this morning.

"We'll all be on the beach but will probably go our separate ways," Downing said with a sigh.

George Downing was scheduled to steer and paddle for Waikiki Surf Club, a club he helped start in 1946. Kaiulu, 34, Keone, 35, and Kainoa, 31 will compete for host Outrigger, a club they've been paddling for since childhood.

Mom Gildea, who use to paddle for both WSC and OCC, now heads the Downing support team.

"Look for me on the beach somewhere between the two clubs," she said, also with a sigh.

For George Downing, the Macfarlane Regatta is special.



By Dennis Oda, Star-Bulletin

The Brothers Downing — Kainoa, left, and Keone — figured to get plenty of time steering on the waves at Waikiki during today's Macfarlane Regatta.

"It was the regatta that started me canoe racing. The regatta was also one reason Waikiki Surf Club was formed," he said.

For Kaiulu, Keone and Kainoa the Macfarlane is also important. Five-time defending state champ Outrigger has yet to win a regatta in four tries this season and they'd like to turn things around beginning today.

"The Macfarlane is a surf regatta and they're always fun," Keone said. More than 1,000 paddlers representing 16 Oahu Hawaiian Canoe Racing Association clubs are expected. First held in 1943, the

Macfarlane Regatta is the oldest on-going canoe race in Hawaii.

While Kaiulu will probably paddle as a member of Outrigger's sophomore and senior women's crews, her brothers will likely team together in the blue-ribbon 2½-mile men's senior race.

"Two things are important at the Macfarlane — to win the club title and to finish first in the men's senior race," Keone said.

While Outrigger has dominated the club competition winning 12 of the past 15 events, rival Hui Nalu topped the men's senior race last year and could repeat today.