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Bob Fischer was the sparkplug in reviving outrigger canoeing

By Murry Engle
Star-Bulletin

Robert D. "Bob" Fischer "was a sweet, gentle, loving person who cared for people," said Anita Brightman, his companion.

"For instance, he once took in a young man who had Hodgkin's disease for a year," Brightman said.

Fischer, who was retired directory supervisor of the former Mutual Telephone Co., died Friday in a Eureka, Calif., convalescent hospital at age 80. He had Alzheimer's disease.

He was born in Warren, Ohio, and came with his family to the Big Island when he was 9. After graduation from high school, he lived on Maui and then Oahu, where he spent most of his life.

He exhibited his caring in other ways: as president of the Aliiolani and Kahala schools' PTAs, the Oahu District Hawaii Congress of PTA, the Hawaii Canoe Club, Hawaii Canoe Racing Association, Hawaii Surf Life Saving Association, the Quarterback Club and Kahala Community Club.

Fischer was responsible for reviving outrigger canoeing as a team sport here, Brightman said.

Through his efforts, Brightman said, more than 30 clubs take part in the regatta season every year.

"It's because of Bob Fischer that you will see the young and old, the girls and the boys — the truly faithful — bending their backs and stroking their paddles with energy and precision, calling 'Hup, hup, ho,' " Brightman said.

Fischer joined the Outrigger Canoe Club in 1935 and became a paddler, steersman, paddle coach and race starter.

Fischer and Tommy Kiakona were the first coaches to train women canoe paddlers.

He helped organize the first Walter MacFarlane Regatta at Waikiki Beach in 1943. It was the first competition between canoe clubs.

Having served on the Outrigger Canoe Club's board, various committees and dedicated himself to its athletic programs, Fischer was awarded its Winged "O" in 1982.

The 1988 Oahu Canoe Racing Association championships were dedicated to Fischer for his support of canoe racing.

He is survived by Anita Brightman; daughters Bonnie Cyr, Sherry Hunner and Patricia Adams; son Dr. Robert Fisher Jr., and stepdaughter Gail Asheim.

Memorial services will be at 9 a.m. next Tuesday on the beach at Outrigger Canoe Club. The ashes will be scattered at sea afterward.

Memorial contributions are suggested to the Outrigger Duke Kahanamoku Foundation.

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