



AT THE CORE — Puanani Carvalho (left) and president Lynne Mack are two core members of the all-female Kawaikini Canoe Club.

Kawaikini wahine row with flow

Paddlers' 'struggle' is to find 'absolute high'

By **JOHN CROUSE**
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(Editor's Note: This is the fourth in a nine-part series).

WAILUA — The Kawaikini Canoe Club is the only all-female club on the island.

It was not always that way.

In the early 1980s, the club was a family affair.

"That's what first attracted me," core member Puanani Carvalho said. "When I first walked down to the Wailua River, I could see these were very loving people. It was a large family with many paddlers. Everyone got involved and supported each other."

According to longtime Kawaikini coach Attwood Makanani, the group of paddlers Carvalho had been introduced to evolved from the first canoe brought to the Wailua River in 1973, the Hokulani. The canoe was named after Stanford Hokulani Achi of the Kaaui Canoe Club.

Grandma Smith have been the main supporters of the club through the years," said Carvalho.

"They've supplied canoes and supported cultural initiatives," said Makanani.

According to Carvalho, many of the changes the club has undergone over the years are a reflection of the desires of its membership at any given time.

"Like tends to attract like," added current club president Lynne Mack.

Just as with all the clubs on Kaaui, the Kawaikini Canoe Club attempts to balance the competitive with the historical and spiritual side.

"We have about five members who have been around for quite a while and 12 others who have been with the club for two or three years," Mack said. "Our newer members tend to be more involved in the competitive side of it whereas the old timers play a more supportive role."

Later, the canoe would be one of two borrowed from Achi to form the Koloa Canoe Club.

"Bra Cummings, Boogie Kalama and their friends got involved and formed the Wailua Canoe Club," Makanani said.

The next club to form at Wailua was the Kaumauli'i Canoe Club, according to Kane Turalde who is now with the Kilohana Canoe Club on the isle's Westside.

The Kaumauli'i club, named for Kaaui's last king, was organized around the efforts of brothers Avery and Jimmy Youn along with Turalde around 1977.

About the same period, another club, the Kamokila Canoe Club, formed under the leadership of Billy Fernandez.

The three clubs — Wailua, Kaumauli'i and Kamokila — lasted about three years before breaking up.

Shortly afterward, Miles McCullen, Danny Piliilau and Turalde got together and organized the Kawaikini Canoe Club.

According to Makanani, the name refers to the highest point from which many waters gather and come together.

Kawaikini began with two canoes loaned by Grandma Smith of Smith's Motorboat Service, Inc. The canoes were the Onipa'a and the Kaumauli'i. Makanani and Carvalho both attribute much of the success of the Kawaikini club to the support of the Smith family.

"Freckles, Mokihana and

Today, Kawaikini's all-wahine membership also balances the needs of family with the commitment to the sport.

"In the past, I was one of the fringe paddlers," Carvalho said. "If the competitive paddlers needed another solid commitment for a race, I would go for it. The family would suffer though. Today I balance my paddling with the family better."

As a whole, Kawaikini club members are very supportive of the different needs the members bring with them. "We are encouraged by our coach to get what each of us needs from it," Mack said.

The coach is veteran paddler Puna Dawson, a recent addition to Kawaikini. Dawson has quickly become an important asset to the group's desire for homogeneity.

"She teaches us technical skills and is a good spiritual example," said Mack. "It's a good balance and makes the experience that much more enjoyable."

According to Mack, every individual has specific responsibilities to the whole.

"The person in the back is the steersman, the boss," Mack said. "The steersman sets direction and cues the number one position (the stroker) to pick up or slow the stroke tempo. The number two paddler, behind the stroker, calls 'hut' on the eighth stroke which cues the paddlers to switch. When the stroke is completed, the paddlers say 'ho'

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and switch."

According to Mack, it's the middle paddlers who produce power by following the pace set by the stroker.

Communication is ongoing in the canoe. According to Carvalho, much of the important communication is done without words.

"There is a lot to pay attention to that doesn't require any verbalization," Carvalho said. "Becoming one in purpose in a canoe takes a quieting to the rhythm. It is a very rhythmic activity. It takes all six paddlers working together to hit it just right."

According to Carvalho, paddlers

have to feel out the changing conditions and try to stay on a path of least resistance.

"Differences disappear when a team becomes one in rhythm," she said. "Each paddler has to know where they are at and where everyone else is. It's the responsibility of those that find it to bring those who are struggling to them."

"There is beauty in the struggle itself," Carvalho said. "You work hard to 'arrive' and when you succeed, the struggle ceases, and there is something else there to take its place. To know we can get there, that's what keeps us coming back. It's an absolute high."