DUKE KAHANAMOKU-TWENTIETH CENTURY HAWAIIAN MONARCH: THE VALUES AND CONTRIBUTIONS TO HAWAIIAN CULTURE FROM HAWAI’I'S SPORTING LEGEND

A Thesis in

Kinesiology

by

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On August 24, 2002, the United States Postal Service issued a commemorative stamp in honor of the man whom Robert Rider, Chairman of the Postal Service Board of Governors, called “a hero in every sense of the word.”1 The stamp honored Duke Kahanamoku, a man regarded with the reverence bestowed upon a legendary figure in his home State of Hawai`i, yet relatively unknown on the United States mainland. Bishop Museum archivist Desoto Brown described Kahanamoku as “the most famous Hawaiian person who has ever been, in terms of him being 100 percent ethnically Hawaiian.”2 Known as the “Hawaiian fish,” Kahanamoku is indisputably one of the greatest heroes that the Hawaiian Islands have ever produced.

Born in 1890 Duke Paoa Kahinu Makoe Hulikohoa Kahanamoku3 died in 1968. In his lifetime, Hawai`i moved from an independent monarchy to full statehood in the United States of America. During Kahanamoku’s era Hawaiian traditions, banned under the puritanical influence of nineteenth-century missionaries, were rediscovered and used as marketing tools to advertise a new Hawaiian culture. The concept of being Hawaiian moved from a standard of bloodlines to one of geographical citizenship. Kahanamoku was instrumental in all of these developments, whether by intention or by default. He

2 Ibid, p.6.
symbolized the new Hawai`i, and yet he was at the same time a vivid reminder of the old
dying breed of pureblooded Hawaiians.

Kahanamoku’s life reflects so much of the cultural changes occurring in Hawai`i that a
study of him reveals much of the cultural, racial, political and economic battles that have
served to create the Hawai`i, that many now embrace as a tropical paradise and
playground. This biography of Kahanamoku, focuses not only on the amazing
accomplishments of this great athlete, but also as an analysis of his life within the
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INTRODUCTION

Overview

On August 24, 2002, the United States Postal Service issued a commemorative stamp in honor of the man whom Robert Rider, Chairman of the Postal Service Board of Governors, called “a hero in every sense of the word.” The stamp honored Duke Kahanamoku, a man regarded with the reverence bestowed upon a legendary figure in his home State of Hawai`i, yet relatively unknown on the United States mainland. Bishop Museum archivist Desoto Brown described Kahanamoku as “the most famous Hawaiian person who has ever been, in terms of him being 100 percent ethnically Hawaiian.”

Known as the “Hawaiian fish,” Kahanamoku is indisputably one of the greatest heroes that the Hawaiian Islands have ever produced.

Two years before the stamp issue, *Sports Illustrated* named Kahanamoku the top athlete of the twentieth century from Hawai`i. He is often compared to King Kamehameha I. The significance of the contrast in these two figures is critical in understanding Kahanamoku. Kamehameha was the last effective monarch to rule over the islands before Euro-American civilization began its conquest. Kamehameha’s reign marked the beginning of the end of native Hawaiian sovereign rule. Conversely, Kahanamoku became a popular yet mythical king of a vanquished race who symbolized a

5 Ibid, p.6.
new Hawaiian identity. As a result, Duke Kahanamoku’s life represents more than great athletic achievements and heroic feats that allowed him to become a legendary figure in Hawai`i. Kahanamoku became the link between the old and the new images of Hawaiian culture. The swimmer and surfer was perfectly suited for that role.\(^7\)

Born in 1890 Duke Paoa Kahinu Makoe Hulikohoa Kahanamoku\(^8\) died in 1968. In his lifetime, Hawai`i moved from an independent monarchy to full statehood in the United States of America. During Kahanamoku’s era Hawaiian traditions, banned under the puritanical influence of nineteenth-century missionaries, were rediscovered and used as marketing tools to advertise a new Hawaiian culture. The concept of being Hawaiian moved from a standard of bloodlines to one of geographical citizenship. Kahanamoku was instrumental in all of these developments, whether by intention or by default. He symbolized the new Hawai`i, and yet he was at the same time a vivid reminder of the old dying breed of pureblooded Hawaiians.

Kahanamoku’s life reflects so much of the cultural changes occurring in Hawai`i that a study of him reveals much of the cultural, racial, political and economic battles that have served to create the Hawai`i, that many now embrace as a tropical paradise and playground. This biography of Kahanamoku, focuses not only on the amazing accomplishments of this great athlete, but also as an analysis of his life within the historical construct of a culture caught in the throes of change. To date no scholarly studies have explored Kahanamoku from this perspective.

Popular writers have produced two intriguing biographical works done on Kahanamoku’s life that provide wonderful glimpses into the experiences of this impressive man. Joseph Brennan’s *Duke: The Life Story of Hawai‘i’s Duke Kahanamoku* and *Memories of Duke: The Legend Comes to Life*, by Sandra Kimberly Hall and Greg Ambrose describe captivating moments of Kahanamoku’s life. However, both works fall short of placing his achievements within any context of the historical world that Kahanamoku inhabited. This biography investigates the impact of this impressive figure within his historical milieu. Kahanamoku surfaces as a pivotal figure in the development of Hawaiian culture as it exists today. His life experiences are critical to any explanation of the history of Hawaiian culture.

One sport scholar who has begun to analyze the complexities of Hawaiian sport and culture is Joel Franks. In two books he addresses sport in Hawai‘i within a sophisticated historical context. Franks studied Hawaiian athletes and made the claim that sport allows them to cross racial and ethnic borders and in the process assert their cultural citizenship. In this course of action, they are able to “claim both distinctiveness and American nationality—strongly and plainly.” Franks declared that Hawaiian athletes, following the lead of Duke Kahanamoku, have “created a sporting tradition that reflects and reinforces Hawaiian local culture - a culture of in-betweenness and


transcendence.” While Franks has done a wonderful job of showing how Hawaiian athletes’ utilized sport as an instrument for crossing cultural boundaries, his definitions of Hawaiian culture and local culture are only vaguely formulated. This is not surprising as it is a complex issue to for scholars to confront. To grasp the significance of Kahanamoku and the views of both local Hawaiian and mainland United States culture toward him, I offer a more complete analysis of this crucial issue.

It may seem odd that a *haole* (white person) would make any attempt to understand or explain changes in Hawaiian culture, especially one doing his doctoral work at Penn State University. There may be some who discount my research simply for that reason. There are those whose works I have cited in my research whom I know believe I have no right to even approach the subject matter due to my skin color and ethnic background. However, I believe that my perspective and understanding can add to a greater discourse in the struggle to understand the issues, struggles and uniqueness of Hawaiian culture. Hawaiian scholar Kanalu G. Terry Young makes a wonderful distinction of the outsiders view of Hawaiian culture by describing the *haole* views as outside the reef, or *Papa*, that protects the islands. Young explains that the key to understanding the real meaning of Hawaiian culture is not only to get beyond *Papa* and to the beach but to travel to the recesses of the *Awāwa* (valley). This imagery is extremely powerful and insightful and I understand the limitations of my background in being able to get past *Papa* and travel to those areas of “knowledge that possesses the

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most spiritual significance.”¹² I am sure that in my travels I have been shredded and scraped by the coral of the *Papa* in attempting to travel beyond it and onto the beach and into the *Awāwa*. I know that there is much more distance which I need to travel to truly understand Hawaiian culture. I accept that on certain issues I will never attain the same level of understanding as an `Ōiwi Maoli (native Hawaiian). I would argue, however, that at times a perspective from beyond the reef can be instructive and worthwhile.

Young also noted that “education is a bi-directional path.” My hope in studying Duke Kahanamoku is two-fold. One is to be able to establish a bridge of information to travel so that those in both mainland American and Hawaiian culture can explore and understand one another better. I also hope that through Kahanamoku scholars may discover that he was more than an athlete. Kahanamoku was something much grander. He was a man who symbolized Hawai`i for millions of people around the world.

In order to establish Kahanamoku’s significance in the development of Hawai`i in the twentieth century I will utilize the biographies by Hall and Ambrose, and by Brennan, as well as the cultural theories of Hawaiian society crafted by Franks as guides. However, primary sources will form the basis of my analysis. I have uncovered a great deal of media coverage of Kahanamoku. I will take the approach utilized by Michael Oriard in his studies of Muhammad Ali and of “King Football,” in attempting to understand Kahanamoku as a cultural text.¹³ My study will focus on media

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representations as evidenced in the Hawaiian and mainland press. The Honolulu Advertiser and Honolulu Star-Bulletin, newspapers run by the haole elite will be examined as well as an important Japanese paper that included an English section, the Hawaii Hochi. An investigation of these papers provided an interesting contrast in perspectives from a local Hawaiian vantage point. Mainland papers such as the New York Times, Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, Chicago Tribune, Los Angeles Times Spokesman-Review, Portland Oregonian and San Francisco Chronicle were utilized to understand mainland conceptions of Hawaii and of Kahanamoku.

In addition to the various newspapers, I examined magazines including Sports Illustrated, Time, Newsweek, Harper’s Weekly, Literary Digest and The Outlook. Along with the printed press, I was able to examine newsreels and movies that Kahanamoku performed in to understand the image of Kahanamoku promoted through the film and entertainment industry. Whereas western culture primarily regards written texts as valid and reliable, Hawaiian culture has a rich history of its legends, cultural values and customs embedded in music and meles, or chants. Informed by this tradition, music remains a powerful force in Hawaiian culture and I examined representations of local culture and its views of Kahanamoku through song, hula and other uniquely Hawaiian venues.

State Archives. The libraries at The University of Hawai‘i-Manoa and the Hawai‘i State Library were also wonderful resources.

On the mainland I was surprisingly able to uncover a number of very good sources. I accessed the archives at the University of Pennsylvania to search for information concerning Kahanamoku’s time in Philadelphia training under Penn coach George Kistler, as well as his interactions with physical educator and sculptor R.Tait McKenzie. I also as traveled to Yale University to examine archival accounts about Kahanamoku when he swam there in the early twentieth century as well as gaining information regarding his rival Lorrin Thurston. At the Pennsylvania State University I was able to access the Avery Brundage Papers in special collections as well as find a large amount of information to begin to build the foundation for my work.

**Method and Chapter Summaries**

For this biographical study of Kahanamoku I attempted to present his life from a chronological perspective. I was successful for the most part. However, in attempting to deal with issues that confronted the great swimmer I found it necessary to step back at times and explain the background or to skip ahead of where the next chapter may begin to demonstrate how some of these issues did not follow a strict chronological line. As a result a few chapters will deal with a very similar period of time. However, the issues I dealt with in those chapters are often very distinct. While some events in Kahanamoku’s life occurred at the same time, I found it easier to attempt to explain the circumstances of one issue first and then attack the other issue in a separate chapter. An example of this
can be found in chapters thirteen and fourteen. In chapter thirteen I attempt to discuss Kahanamoku’s business ventures during the 1940s and 1950s. In chapter fourteen, I cover the same chronological period but focus more on his political and civil service battles.

I also begin the book by covering an era that pre-dates Kahanamoku. To truly understand the world Kahanamoku inhabited I thought it necessary to begin with a history of the overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy in 1893 by the haole, or white, elites. This dramatic change in government occurred when Kahanamoku was three years old. The Kahanamoku family held royal, or Alii, bloodlines and the overthrow strongly altered Hawaiian politics and culture. This chapter briefly details the important aspects of late nineteenth-century American colonialism in Hawaii and the impact that it had on the origins of modern Hawai`i. The overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy also led to a redefinition of Hawaiianess, that I address in the second chapter. Hawaii is unique in its racial makeup. Hawaiian culture is assimilated in significant ways into American culture yet transcends that culture in developing a way of life neither western nor eastern. In fact, the concept of “localness” emerges as an interesting byproduct of the forces that alters views of what it means to be Hawaiian in the twentieth century.

With a clear understanding of the history and development of Hawaiian culture, the significance of Kahanamoku’s emergence upon the national and international stage in the 1912 Olympic Games becomes clearer. Chapter three highlights the forces that led to the adoption of Kahanamoku as the public face of Hawaii around the world after his early swimming feats in Olympic competition.
While the Olympics sparked Kahanamoku’s rising star, chapter four focuses on other venues that marketed Kahanamoku as an ideal image of the friendly and safe “native.” Kahanamoku introduced surfing in Australia, swam Red Cross fundraising exhibitions during World War I and starred in the 1915 Pan-Pacific exhibition in San Francisco. Each venue has been investigated for its role in promoting Kahanamoku’s growing fame and in the development of an image of modern Hawaii.

In contrast, chapter five focuses on the struggles of Kahanamoku to earn a living. Kahanamoku helped to promote his native land and the growing Hawaiian tourist industry. He was welcomed in the court of any nation’s royalty, yet in his homeland he could find only menial labor. In fact, during this period Kahanamoku almost died in obscurity, in a Washington, D.C., YMCA, a near casualty of the influenza epidemic of 1918. After he recovered Kahanamoku’s economic struggles led him to leave his homeland for California where he made a living playing bit parts in the movies and teaching swimming and surfing.

In 1920, Kahanamoku regained his international celebrity as the Olympics restarted at the conclusion of World War I. In chapter six, I examine the battle of two swimming giants in the 1920s “Tarzan” vs. “the Duke.” Duke Kahanamoku, the aging champion and minor movie star from Hawaii, met up with an up-and-coming swimming sensation. Johnny Weissmuller would challenge and surpass Kahanamoku as the elite swimmer in the world in this “golden age” of American sport and in the American cinema. However, Kahanamoku’s fame continued to grow in spite of Weissmuller’s large star appeal. Kahanamoku became “Mr. Hawai‘i” in the eyes of the public.
Chapter seven studies the subtle change in Kahanamoku’s persona from the great Olympian to a revered celebrity. Kahanamoku’s Olympic career ended at the 1932 Los Angeles Games when he competed as a member of the United States water polo team. At the same time, Honolulu officials bestowed on him the honor of serving as the official greeter for Hawai`i. In his capacity as greeter, he played host in welcoming celebrities to Hawai`i. Groucho Marx, Babe Ruth, Queen Elizabeth of England, and Charlie Chaplin were just a few of the hundreds of celebrities officially greeted and photographed with Hawai`i’s new ambassador, Duke Kahanamoku.

As Kahanamoku finished his athletic career and Hawaiian officials began to utilize his image and popularity to market Hawai`i, a crisis in race relations developed. Chapter eight examines the role of the Ala Moana rape case and the Massie-Fortescue murder trial in Honolulu in 1931-1932 in influencing Kahanamoku’s decision to run in 1934 for sheriff of Waikiki. Kahanamoku won that election and embarked on a very interesting political career. The world of politics was very different from the world of competitive sport or the movies, as Kahanamoku soon learned. Chapter nine focuses on the political scandals and struggles that Kahanamoku faced in his first administration. In chapter ten Hawai`i begins to look to a closer relationship with the United States and Kahanamoku experiences a period where he is established as a very popular idol of Hawaiian culture. Songs, hula dances and statues immortalizing the swimming champion provide additional evidence of his central role in the islands. Kahanamoku’s role as a peacemaker in Hawaii in the 1930s was also significant as
tensions continued to rise between American and Japanese interests before the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the outbreak of World War II.

In the 1940s, Kahanamoku’s life took a dramatic turn, that serves as the focus of chapter eleven. He married, Nadine Alexander, a haole girl from the mainland. Alexander had enormous influence on Kahanamoku. Within a month of the wedding Kahanamoku switched political parties, moving from the Democratic to the Republican Party. His new bride was a staunch Republican and led Kahanamoku to make the startling switch. In many ways, this change signified a major shift in Kahanamoku’s life. The year 1941 also witnessed the advent of World War II in Hawai`i and significant changes to Kahanamoku’s job responsibilities.

Kahanamoku’s associations in the 1940s and 1950s increasingly grew from elite business circles and centered on profit making schemes. He was determined to become an entrepreneur. Kahanamoku finally enjoyed some of the economic benefits of his fame that in the past had eluded him. Chapter twelve examines Kahanamoku’s move to cash in on “Hawaiiana.” In the post-World War II era mainland marketers discovered the allure of the tropical paradise of Hawai`i and began to sell images of the islands. Hula girls, flowered shirts, leis and palm trees became popular images in mainstream America. From deals to tie his name to a brand of aloha wear clothing to the opening of restaurants in Waikiki, Kahanamoku sought to use his notoriety to cash in on this new tourist image of Hawaii promoted from the mainland. Kahanamoku’s circles of influence revolved around the haole elite of Honolulu and they in turn welcomed him into their world of promoting Hawaii as tropical paradise.
The thirteenth chapter explores Kahanamoku’s attempts in political and marketing moves to help Hawai`i move toward statehood and closer relationships with the United States. Kahanamoku’s role as a proud American who happened to be Hawaiian played an important role in convincing both mainlanders and local Hawaiians of the benefits of Hawaiian statehood. Unfortunately the work that Kahanamoku performed in gaining statehood for his homeland ironically left him on the outside looking in as mainland values overran the Islands traditions and culture. Chapter fourteen evidences Kahanamoku’s retreat back to familiar territory at home. It also provides insight into the 1960s when his failing health turned him into a lovable popular icon and elder statesman.

Chapter fifteen focuses on his death in 1968 which produced images of a great chief dying. At his funeral, the media and friends once again connected him to the ancient Ali`i, or high chiefs of Hawai`i’s past. Tradition has it that when an Ali`i died it always rained on the funeral. True to form, the tears shed that day were not only those of the people who loved him here on earth, but also from the heavens as the monarch who was the bridge between the old and new Hawai`i had his ashes scattered over the sea.\(^{14}\)

Even in death, the legend of Duke Kahanamoku grew. Chapter sixteen studies the power of media representations of Kahanamoku. Those representations began in the early years of his career and through which he tried to transcend racial and cultural barriers. Kahanamoku sought to use them to transcend cultural and racial barriers. An inscription of a plaque dedicated to Kahanamoku at Huntington Beach, California highlights these representations. The monument proclaims: “The image he created, the

\(^{14}\) Hall and Ambrose, Memories, 132.
principle of fair play and good sportsmanship he advocated should be preserved for all
time. Although mortal man has lost this rare human being, he will be remembered for his
long aloha.\textsuperscript{15}

This chapter also links Duke Kahanamoku the legend, to Duke Kahanamoku the
historical person. Kahanamoku represented a link to old Hawai‘i and its monarchy and
proud people as well as serving as the emerging image of modern Hawai‘i as depicted in
travelogues and television advertisements. There is no question that Kahanamoku is a
symbol of the old and new Hawai‘i. One wonders if there would be a different Hawaiian
image if Kahanamoku had enjoyed a collaboration with a C.L.R. James in his life to
promote Kahanamoku’s aspirations for his people — a role James played for the great
cricketer Sir Learie Constantine did.\textsuperscript{16} What might Kahanamoku have become if he had
an articulate comrade who could confront the colonial injustices served upon them as
Hawaiians through sport? Scholars will never know with certainty but making that
comparison underscores the different routes the two island communities of oppressed
colonial populations developed. Sport played a significant role in establishing both
Kahanamoku and Constantine as heroes to their people. Indeed, Kahanamoku may be the
greatest Hawaiian hero of all time. He also played a major part in the development of
modern Hawai‘i. As Hawai‘i developed it followed the path of its favorite son, Duke
Kahanamoku. Even today, Kahanamoku continues to be a highly regarded figure in
Hawaiian lore and represents the complexities of a changing culture for a proud people.

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid, 134.
\textsuperscript{16} C.L.R. James, Beyond a Boundary (Durham: Duke University Press, 1963).
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It is with great humility that I submit this work. I am fully aware of the great sacrifice and assistance that I have received in working on this project. First of all thanks goes primarily to God, who helped me to persevere in times of frustration, fear and doubt. Secondly, my advisor Mark Dyreson deserves ample credit for all of the hard work he put in helping me to think through the problems and issues I confronted in researching the topic of Hawaiian identity and the person of Duke Kahanamoku. He also patiently listened to me gripe about whatever was on my mind whether it had to do with something I heard on our lovely local sports talk radio station in State College or about something actually pertaining to my topic. His wife Jodella and their children (especially McLane and Braden who befriended my daughters Emma and Brenna), also welcomed me and my family into theirs and made the daunting process of graduate school while married with children not only bearable but also a great blessing for us. The entire Kinesiology department became a wonderful family for me as I pursued my work. In particular, Dr. R. Scott Kretchmar (or “Dr. K” to his students), Dr. Douglas Anderson and Dr. James Thompson who were so helpful in working with me through classes, as well as their willingness to read this document and sit on my committee. You are true saints. To Bob Ricketts, John Pfau, William Buckley, Ron Smith, John Lucas, and George Graham, thanks for the great conversations and opportunities to work with you. Regan Ross, Dori
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I also want to extend my deep aloha and mahalo to Larry and Katherine Kekaulike who so graciously allowed me work from their house in Papakolea and afford to do the research that I needed to do. Thank you as well for your wonderful insights into Hawaiian culture, without which as a haole, I could have never understood. You will never know how much your friendship means to me. My girls will never forget Uncle Larry. For all of my former players from Hawai`i and Kahu Curt Kekuna, thank you as well for introducing me to your wonderful culture. You always made me feel like one of your o`hana. Mahalo.
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Thank you Duke for your inspiration. May we understand the *aloha* spirit which you lived every day and honor your memory by treating others with *aloha*. This is dedicated to my loving wife and children who endured more than I did in this process. God bless you.

*Mahalo nui loa. Aloha ke akua*
Chapter 1
A Monarchy Destroyed

Duke Paoa Kahanamoku had a very normal upbringing for a young boy his age in Waikiki. He swam, surfed, fished, did odd jobs such as selling newspapers and went to school at Waikiki grammar school. For fun and extra money he and others would greet the boatloads of tourists coming to and from Honolulu Harbor. They would dive for coins tossed into the water by the visitors, perform acrobatic displays of diving from towers on boat days, and explore the crop of newcomers for potential students to teach surfing and canoeing lessons to on the beach. Kahanamoku’s family lived in a small house on the beach at Waikiki where the present day Hawaiian Hilton Village now stands. He would never graduate from High School due to the need to help his family earn enough money to live.¹

He loved his friends, his community and his family. He was an extremely humble man who by very nature loved to have fun and yet exhibited a relaxed enough demeanor that he would earn a reputation as someone who could fall asleep anywhere under any circumstances. Beachboy George Downing told of when Kahanamoku fell asleep one time while in a diving suit working on a job setting piers in the harbor. Apparently while waiting for the others up above the surface to finish their work Kahanamoku decided to

take a quick nap. When it came time for him to perform his duties he had fallen asleep on the bottom of the bay. Worried that something was wrong others dove down, only to find the young Hawaiian comfortably snoozing, unaware of the panic it had caused above the surface. It came as no surprise to those who knew him to hear years later that he had fallen asleep just prior to swimming his first Olympic competition in Stockholm in 1912.2

Despite his relaxed manner Kahanamoku was an extremely talented and warm individual who through hard work, athletic ability and a unique personality would capture the imagination of the rest of the world. He would become a leader for his people and unify them in ways reminiscent of Kamehameha the great. However, events which occurred before his birth would alter the direction of his life immediately, setting the stage for his emergence as a different type of monarch than his previous generations had experienced. He would become a symbolic rather than an actual ruler, even though his bloodlines and birth would indicate that he indeed was royalty.3

From the moment of contact with the Western world, Hawaiian culture changed forever. The American playground and paradise marketed through the travel and tourism industry of the twenty-first century has little in common with Hawaiian society prior to the 1776 arrival of Captain Cook in the islands. Missionaries, merchants and politicians have all had major roles in the destruction and alteration of traditional Hawaiian culture.

Athletes have also played a role in transforming Hawai`i. One athlete in particular, Duke Kahanamoku, provides a text for reading the clash of tradition and

2 Sandra Kimberly Hall and Greg Ambrose, Memories of Duke: The Legend Comes to Life (Honolulu: Bess, 1995), 98
3 Bunny Kahanamoku, “Ulu Genealogy,” Earl Pa Mai Tenn personal collection, Honolulu, Hi.
modernity in Hawaiian Culture. Anthropologist Clifford Geertz in his classic work, “Deep Play: Notes on a Balinese Cockfight” has challenged scholars to view human culture as “an assemblage of texts” for attempting to understand the larger social dynamic that envelopes them. Geertz extends the notion of a text “beyond written material and even beyond verbal.” While Geertz used a game (cockfighting) for a deeper understanding of culture, from a historical perspective, one can also study as a text a representative person from a society in order to understand how broader transformations take effect. In other words, scholars can utilize important individuals as “cultural texts.”

Sport Historian Michael Oriard has demonstrated the effectiveness of this method in his work on Muhammad Ali as has David Zang in his study of sport in the 1960s in American culture through multiple biographies. Oriard notes that while “no single interpretation is likely to be possible,” through media accounts of sportswriters it is clear that they understood first “that Ali was a ‘text’ that could be read in competing ways and, second, a record of the ways he was read.”

Zang examines sporting events and actors in the 1960s to examine their relationship to the turbulent decade that created them. He analyzed Ali as well as other figures such as Jack Scott, Rick Sanders and Bob Ward in order to illuminate how these athletes serve as crucial texts for historical interpretations of that turbulent decade. Zang contends that “sport’s entrenched position as standard-bearer for American values - as the glue that was holding the country together - made it an appealing target in a time of

general disenchantment.” Clearly, the study of sporting figures and events as “texts” allows greater insight into American culture.

In Hawai`i, one athlete stands above all others as a person whose life, read as a “cultural text,” reflects the transition of traditional Hawaiian culture. The evolution from a culture based upon Hawaiian values such as *Aloha* (deep love), *Mana* (authority, power, wisdom), *Laulima* (cooperativeness), and *Lokahi* (harmony, balance, unity) to a commercialization of Hawaiian culture exemplified by aloha wear, grass skirts, and the tourist trade is readily evident in the life of this Hawaiian hero.

Duke Paoa Kahinu Makoe Hulikohoa Kahanamoku was born in 1890 and died in 1968. In his lifetime Hawai`i moved from an independent monarchy to full statehood in the United States of America. During Kahanamoku’s era Hawaiian traditions, banned under the puritanical influence of nineteenth-century missionaries, were rediscovered and used as marketing tools to advertise a new Hawaiian culture. Kahanamoku symbolized the new Hawai`i, yet he was at the same time a vivid reminder of the old dying breed of pureblooded Hawaiians.

Kahanamoku’s life reflects so many of the cultural changes occurring in Hawai`i that a study of this remarkable athlete should reveal much of the cultural, racial, political and economic battles which have served to create the new Hawai`i, now recognized as the fiftieth state of the United States of America. From a royal kingdom to American statehood, surfing to aloha wear, Hawaiian values to capitalism, all of these areas


associated with Hawaiian culture, past and present, demonstrate the enormous footprint of Duke Kahanamoku.

Kahanamoku’s birth predates American political control of Hawai`i. He was tied by blood to the monarchy which American power destroyed. Kahanamoku was of Ali`i, or royal descent, although the debate regarding his bloodlines continues mostly due to attempts to understand Hawaiian generational structure through Western eyes.

Western societal views of kinship are strangely linear, especially considering their democratic ideals. While espousing the principles of broad sharing of power, Western societies are established in a hierarchical structure. In the United States, there is no question that the president holds higher esteem and power in comparison to a member of the Senate or the House of Representatives. While the organization of the American political paradigm establishes a broad governmental structure with checks and balances to overcome absolute political power in one area of the government, in practice the differing levels of power and where they rank are clearly understood. Constitutional scholar Michael Parenti argued that “the intent of the framers of the Constitution was to

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8 Many political theorists have noted the dichotomy of American political ideology and the realities of the system at work. Charles A. Beard’s, An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States (New York: MacMillan, 1913) has possibly created the most debate regarding the equity of the constitution for “the whole people.” Beard proposed that economic interests influenced much of the creation of this document which guides the American political system. Others who have continued the discussion include Robert A. Goldwin and William A. Schambra, eds. How Democratic Is The Constitution? (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise For Public Policy Research, 1980); Peter Augustine Lawler and Robert Martin Schaefer, eds., The American Experiment: Essays on the Theory and Practice of Liberty (Lanham, MD.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1994); George E. Marcus and Russell L. Hanson, eds., Reconsidering the Democratic Public (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993). In
contain democracy, rather than give it free rein, and dilute the democratic will, rather than mobilize it.”

Parenti described the American political system as a “dual political system.” This structure consists of the symbolic and the substantive political systems. The symbolic “centers around electoral and representative activities including party conflicts, voter turnout, political personalities,” and as Parenti notes is “highly visible, taught in schools, dissected by academicians, [and] gossiped about by newsmen.” The substantive he argues involves “multi-billion dollar contracts, tax write offs, protections, rebates, grants, . . . bending or ignoring the law on behalf of the powerful,” and is “seldom heard or accounted for.”

Power lies in property within these ideological frameworks and property rights determine the extent of ones participation in an American democratic model. This hierarchical orientation makes it difficult for Westerners to understand the communal flow of life which existed in Hawai‘i before contact with the West.

Hawaiians lived under a complex communal system of high chiefs or ali`i. While this system at first resembles a different version of a hierarchical system, Hawaiian values dictated the interactions between the aliʿi and the people. Hawaiian chiefs were to serve the people and their primary concern was for the benefit of those under their care. In essence it was an upside down hierarchy based upon servant leadership. The concept of property ownership did not exist in pre-contact Hawaiian society. Hawaiian scholar Kanalu G. Terry Young demonstrated the basic designation between the Ali`i Nui (high

chiefs) and the kaukau ali`i, lower ranked chiefs who served the Ali`i Nui. The kaukau ali`i performed a valuable service in Hawaiian society and held an important place of honor. They would perform ‘service tasks’ or hana lawelawe for the Ali`i Nui. They would “care for Ali`i Nui children, were land stewards, and went into battle as warriors.” Young notes that “typically, the chiefly server was an Ali`i Nui’s half blood sibling or cousin who contributed to the orderly management of Oiwi Maoli (Native Hawaiian) society by virtue of genealogical credentials.”

The Kahanamoku and Paoa clans from which Duke Paoa Kahanamoku descended were both kaukau ali`i.

The ali`i ruled over areas or islands under the mantle of aloha and mana. These two values led the ali`i in their governance of the people. Aloha has degenerated into a word translated mainly as a greeting similar to hello in the understanding of most Americans. However, the term aloha is very complex, a concept with many meanings. The most common are as a greeting, hello, and goodbye but, aloha also means pity, mercy, compassion. Used in this way it connotates feelings of deep love and affection. Mana is also an elaborate word which reflects an individual’s authority, wisdom, might and power, not only in a physical sense but in a spiritual sense as well. Mana and aloha were terms intricately connected to one another in traditional Hawaiian culture. As historian Helena Allen explains: “Aloha was a recognition of life in another. If there was life there was mana, goodness and wisdom, and if there was goodness and wisdom there was a god-quality.” Allen noted that “because of aloha, one gave without thought of

11 Kanalu G. Terry Young, Rethinking the Native Hawaiian Past (New York: Garland Press, 1998), xi.
This strong foundational ethic resembles closely the Christian value of agape or unconditional love which Jesus embodied for Christians. This may explain why after the failure of the kapu system in Hawaiian culture and with the advent of the missionaries into the islands in 1820 that the message of Christianity became so quickly embraced by Hawaiians. The aliʻi were judged by their mana, according to Allen the aliʻi’s responsibility was to provide for the people they oversaw.13 The aliʻi seemed to relate to the Christ figure espoused by the missionaries as a man who held similar values to their own and endorsed Christianity.

Many Western historians have incorrectly viewed this system as similar to the feudal system in medieval European societies where the royalty attained great wealth on the backs of the impoverished peasants working their land for them.14 Hawaiian historian and activist Haunani-Kay Trask has refuted this claim by demonstrating that, based upon an understanding of Hawaiian language, land in traditional Hawaiian culture was not a possession that one could acquire. The āina, meaning earth or land in Hawaiian was an innate element of one’s existence and a communal possession. Dr. William C. Rezentes III explained that the “figurative definition of `āina can be extended to mean ‘that which feeds or provides food.’” Rezentes further demonstrated that the `ai, or food, the product

of the `āina, can be said to have physical, psychological, and spiritual dimensions.”

No one could own the land, not the ali`i nor the common people.

Given this distinction, Allen asserts that “no one hesitated to ask of the ali`i if his need became acute. For an ali`i to have refused aid of any kind, would have been a breach in aloha, generosity in this sense, and the admittance that his mana, or power and spiritual wisdom, wasn’t great.” Hawaiian royalty understood the communal nature of the relationship with their people and practiced a style of servant leadership with them. After contact with the Western world the understanding of the meaning of aloha and mana would change but never completely die. Kahanamoku’s life represented in part an attempt to continue to live out a life of aloha and mana for his people. However, Hawaiian values were difficult to reconcile with an economically driven new world.

Another Hawaiian value that westerners failed to comprehend was hanai. It required the giving of the greatest gift possible, one’s own child. For the ali`i, this was aloha in its highest form, giving your own flesh and blood to a beloved friend. A by-product of the hanai relationship was that it elevated mana for the child as well as strengthened alliances between the high chiefs. Early Western missionaries in particular had a hard time understanding the hanai relationship. Westerners viewed the practice as

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16 Haunani-Kay Trask, From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai`i (Honolulu: University of Hawai`i Press, 1993), 116.
a strange form of adoption which in a Western linear way of thinking discredited the true bloodlines of royal families.  

This confused Western comprehension of Hawaiian bloodlines has failed to grasp the importance of the fact that Duke Paoa Kahanamoku was born into a family with royal lineage on both his father and mother’s sides. Within a western linear worldview, Kahanamoku’s lineage has been deemed insignificant since he had no direct linkage to the throne as a direct descendant of Kamehameha the Great, the sovereign who had united the islands into a kingdom through bloody conquests in the 1700s. However, in terms of Hawaiian cultural values it is significant that Kahanamoku retained the blood of the ali`i in his heritage, particularly as he became the symbol of Hawaiian royalty to people around the world as well as in Hawai`i.

Hawaiian genealogical studies are complex and confusing to western sensibilities, especially when the hanai children are included. Kahanamoku’s genealogical history is a fascinating story and yields some important rewards in understanding the depth of his ali`i roots. What is most significant to note is that ali`i blood ran strongly in Kahanamoku’s veins. The overthrow of the monarchy in 1893 fundamentally changed his family’s role in Hawaiian society.

Accounts of the birthplace of Kahanamoku vary. Where he was born is in fact a crucial detail in the story of who he became. Some reports have Kahanamoku born and

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18 For a wonderful description of this system and the resulting chaos upon the Hawaiian monarchy see Allen, The Betrayal of Liliuokalani, as well as Liliuokalani, Hawai`i’s Story: By Hawai`i’s Queen (Honolulu: Mutual, 1990).
raised in Waikiki. Others have reported that he was born at Haleakalā in Maui.

Neither of these statements are accurate. The Kahanamoku and Paoa families moved to Kalia in Waikiki in 1893 in the midst of the overthrow. They settled on land that was awarded them in the Great Mahele of 1847 - - a decision by King Kamehameha III which permitted land to be purchased by private persons and divided land claimed by ali`i.

Historian Lawrence Fuchs argued that “no single event so drastically changed the social system of Hawaii as the Great Mahele. The Paoa’s had been given responsibility of the property from Ka`ahumanu in 1820 and in the Great Mahele were given ownership of the land based upon this fact. Duke Paoa grew up in Waikiki surrounded by his family on their property, land which is the current home of the Hawaiian Hilton Village. But Kahanamoku, the eldest son of Julia Pa`akonia Lonokahikina Paoa and Duke Halapu Kahanamoku was not born at this site. Instead, he entered the world at Hale`ākala in Honolulu.

_Hale`ākala, “the pink house,” was the home of Princess Bernice Pauahi Bishop’s parents which she inherited from them. The Princess was a direct descendant in the Kamehameha lineage. She established the vision and financial backing for the Kamehameha schools, a private educational institution for children of Hawaiian_
Those who have erroneously placed Kahanamoku’s birthplace as Haleakalā on Maui have misread the Hawaiian language, as Haleakalā means “The House of the Sun.” Some of the mix up may have come from Kahanamoku’s biographer, Joseph L. Brennan, reporting that Kahanamoku was “from babyhood, loved by his family at Haleakalā.” Kahanamoku stated that he was born in Honolulu at Hale‘ākala, which after Princess Bernice Pauahi’s death in 1884 had been turned into the Arlington Hotel by her husband Charles Reed Bishop. The “pink house” was located adjacent to Iolani Palace and was a part of the palace grounds until it eventually was sold to developers and a Bank of Hawai‘i building rose on that site.

Kahanamoku’s birthplace validates his ali`i genealogy. That he was born on the Pauahi estate confirms his Kahanamoku lineage, and his Paoa heritage was obvious from his mother. The importance of Kahanamoku’s paternal lineage as well as his birthplace is revealed in his father’s understanding of the family history. As the elder Duke Kahanamoku explained,

My father Kahanamoku, my mother Kahoea. I was born at Aikupita between Fort and Bishop street on King Street at Mrs. Bishop homestead. The latter is daughter of Paki and Konia in the year 1869 July 21st. When I came to this world Mrs. Bernice Pauahi Bishop and Mrs. Paakaialaulaul Bush were both present. Mrs. Bishop took hold of me and at the same

23 Bernice Pauahi Bishop was one of the most influential Hawaiians of the late nineteenth century and her legacy continues today with the continued growth of the Kamehameha schools onto all of the Hawaiian islands and the development of the Bishop museum to uphold and honor Hawaiian heritage and history.
24 Earl Maikahikinapāmaikalā Tenn, “Personal Letter to Dan Nakaso, Advertiser Staff Writer, regarding Article ‘Duke’s Home for Sale’,” 27 August 2000, p. 1. Earl Maikahikinapāmaikalā Tenn personal Collection, viewed in May 2003. Mr. Tenn is a Kaha hula, and expert on Hawaiian language as well as the personal assistant to Mrs. Nadine Kahanamoku for 23 years after Duke Kahanamoku’s death. Copy of the letter now in author’s personal collection.
time a salute to the Hawaiian flag from the British Battleship in which the (Prince Albert) Duke of Edinburgh arrived. The Lord Charles Beresford was also on arrival making his 2\textsuperscript{nd} stop to the islands he first came in 1865 and stole the emblem at U.S. Consulate - - corner Union and Beretania and taken the ship and returned later. And after I was washed by Mrs. Bishop she gave me the name “The Duke of Edinburgh.” The Duke heard and was glad and came to house and I was presented to him and tooke [sic] me in his arms. And that is how I got this name. My grand people are also related to Mrs. Bishop’s people. (I was a stranger and The Duke was the same.)”

At the time of Duke Paoa Kahanamoku’s birth in 1890, Hawaiian culture was rapidly changing. Kahanamoku was born into the old monarchial system on an ali‘i estate surrounded by those who had traditionally ruled the islands and were still trying to uphold the values of aloha and mana for their diminishing people. Their system was about to be shattered. In 1887 King David Kalakaua foresaw the changes occurring and wrote in the introduction of his The Legends and Myths of Hawaii that “it is but too apparent that the natives are steadily decreasing in numbers and gradually losing their hold upon the fair land of their fathers.” Kalakaua noted that “within a century” the Hawaiian people had “dwindled from four hundred thousand healthy and happy children of nature, without care and without want, to a little more than a tenth of that number of landless, hopeless victims to the greed and vices of civilization.” Kalakaua lamented that his people were “slowly sinking under the restraints and burdens of their surroundings, and will in time succumb to social and political conditions foreign to their natures and poisonous to their blood.” The monarch realized that “year by year their footprints will grow more dim along the sands of their reef-sheltered shores, and fainter and fainter will

\footnote{Duke Halapu Kahanamoku, \textit{Kahanamoku Family Book}, Duke Halapu Kahanamoku Collection, p. 316, Hawai‘i State Archives, Honolulu Hawai‘i.}
come their simple songs from the shadows of the palms, until finally their voices will be heard no more for ever.” In a sad statement he continued on acknowledging that, “then, if not before-and no human effort can shape it otherwise - the Hawaiian Islands, with the echoes of their songs and the sweets of their green fields, will pass into the political, as they are now firmly within the commercial, system of the great American Republic.”

King Kalakaua’s prognostication for the future of Hawai‘i would prove quite accurate. His sister Queen Liliuokalani, who was also the hanai sister of Princess Bernice Pauahi, was overthrown in 1893. As with most historical events, the overthrow of the monarchy reads differently depending upon from which political, ethnic, and social background the historian writing the account emerges. The traditional American version of the event is that patriotic revolutionaries rescued the islands from a notorious monarchy which collapsed beginning with the extinction of the Kamehameha bloodlines. The monarchy then fell into the hands of pretenders to the throne who were elected and appointed until finally, after the death of King Kalakaua who was strongly disliked by the people, an opportunity arose during the reign of Liliuokalani to abolish the monarchial system forever.

A. Grove Day and Ralph S. Kuykendall, the foremost American historians of Hawai‘i in the twentieth century, would endorse this narrative as they nickname the King “Kalakaua Rex” and claim that the “lure of American Ideals” was too powerful for the Hawaiians to resist. They argue the overthrow created a beneficial situation for all

Day’s assertion is that capitalistic progress could lead nowhere but to the civilization of the natives through a process of Americanization. This progress inevitably culminated in the January 1893 removal of Queen Liliuokalani as monarch. The queen was removed from Iolani Palace and the ruling power overthrown by armed revolutionists led by Sanford Ballard Dole and Lorrin A. Thurston and backed by the United States military. Dole became the president of the provisional government and sought territorial status from the United States for the islands. According to Day, progress inevitably and inexorably triumphed several years later when the United States under the leadership of President McKinley annexed Hawai`i.\(^{31}\)

In Day’s rendition of Hawaiian history, this was clearly a win-win situation for all concerned. A fragile Hawaiian government would be free from gunboat diplomacy used by nations such as Britain, the United States, France, Russia, and Japan. In addition, the United States would be able to establish a strong military port in the Pacific. Economically, this arrangement would allow all to benefit from the sugar crops grown on Hawai`i. Following Day’s logic, it was only a matter of time until the true benefits of statehood would befall this island paradise. With annexation, the true Americanization of the islands could take place, and a more prosperous and civilized Hawai`i could evolve.\(^{32}\)

While Day and Kuykendall provide a manifest destiny inspired view of the overthrow, many dissenting voices understand the overthrow as an aggressive act on a friendly sovereign nation by the United States. Haunani Kay Trask, a Hawaiian author

\(^{31}\) Ibid  
\(^{32}\) Ibid, 91-95
and activist, reflects this different view in her work. As she recounts the abuses, including the imprisoning of the queen of a friendly nation by the U.S. “missionary gang” led by Sanford Dole and others, she casts light upon the process of colonialism that powerful nations employed to destroy existing native cultures so that assimilation to the dominant culture can occur. Trask reveals how the Hawaiian language was banned in 1900. She chronicles genocide and land grabs, familiar themes from the history of the American West, which she asserts were replicated in Hawai`i and throughout the Pacific.33

Western historian Patricia Nelson Limerick demonstrated that in contrast to the subject of slavery, which “was the domain of serious historians and the occasion for sober national reflection,” conquest such as Trask notes occurred in Hawai`i became “the domain of mass entertainment and the occasion for lighthearted entertainment.” Limerick argued that “an element of regret for ‘what we did to the Indians” had entered the picture but the dominant feature of conquest remained ‘adventure.’” As proof, she noted that “children happily played ‘cowboys and Indians’ but stopped short of ‘masters and slaves.’”34 Limerick also establishes the acceptance of conquest within the American ideals of progress which were simply stated by John Adams “power always follows property.”35

These competing narratives of the overthrow are essential to understanding Kahanamoku and to appreciating that a radical shift in native Hawaiian power occurred.

33 Trask, From A Native Daughter, 142, 48.
during his lifetime. Hawai‘i at the time of his birth was a sovereign nation. Recalling the details of the loss of political autonomy helps to illuminate how the overthrow dramatically altered his world. While historians such as Day and Kuykendall are correct in their assertion that the Hawaiian monarchy had been under pressure by gunboat diplomacy from the many nations that competed to control Hawaii, it is also important to note that the rising *haole* (foreigner or white) elite placed their own designs upon the situation. In the end, the so-called revolutionaries were not native Hawaiians who were tired of oppression by an uncaring monarchy, but influential business leaders who had emigrated from the United States and who solicited the help of a United States vessel in Honolulu’s port to gain the military muscle needed to overcome the tiny military force of the Hawaiian kingdom. These entrepreneurs were locals who were concerned about their capital investments and believed that economic profits were best served through arranging the annexation of Hawai‘i to the United States. As author, newspaperman, and long time resident of Hawai‘i Theon Wright recounted, “the descendants of the missionaries were now the great landowners, controlling nearly all the business in the Islands; introducing modern agriculture, new political systems, and to some extent, replacing the old Hawaiian caste system of royalty and subjects with their own more

36 Mary Kawena Pukui and Samuel H. Elbert with Ester T. Mookini and Yu Mapuana Nishizawa, *New Pocket Hawaiian Dictionary* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1992), 21. The term *haole* is one that is loaded with invective. It is not a term of endearment for white people. It is a way in which European whiteness is ethnically denoted in Hawai‘i, and is not clear where the word originated. As Thomas Maretzki and John F. McDermott, Jr. point out, “‘she is a haole’ may be a purely factual statement in some cases. In others it may be quite critical or disparaging, and should there be any initial doubt, the adjectives ‘damn’ or ‘dumb’ will leave none.” Thomas W. Maretzki and John F. McDermott, Jr., “The Caucasians,” in *Peoples and Cultures of Hawaii: A Psychocultural Profile* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 1980), 42.
civilized caste system.”

The image of King Kalakaua as a detested monarch is also a misrepresentation. Business leaders and annexationists disliked him because he pushed for renewed autonomy for the native Hawaiian people. In fact, his nickname amongst the native Hawaiians was the “Merry Monarch,” and he was highly regarded as a king for the people. However, Kalakaua’s free spending ways brought upon him the wrath of the business community. In 1887 he was forced by the *haole* dominated legislature to fire his cabinet and sign a new constitution ominously referred to as the “Bayonet Constitution.” This new constitution limited the king’s powers by allowing the legislature to overrule his veto, forced him to have legislative approval to dismiss his cabinet, and allowed nobles to be elected by the voters of large land holdings. In addition, the right to vote was also extended to all of American or European birth or to any who swore an oath to uphold the new constitution, with the exclusion of “Orientals.” The Bayonet Constitution heralded the beginning of the end of the Hawaiian monarchy.

When she succeeded Kalakaua, Liliuokalani attempted to rescind this new constitution and return to one favoring a strong monarchy. In her new constitution she proposed changes that restricted voting rights to native born Hawaiians or naturalized citizens, restricted the terms of justices to the Supreme Court to six years rather than life, and allowed the queen to appoint nobles to life terms instead of through elections by foreigners for a number of years. She also proposed that cabinet members serve “during the Queen’s pleasure,” and subjected them to impeachment or legislative removal. Upon

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learning of the queen’s new proposed constitution, the *haole* elite, led by Lorrin A. Thurston, formed the “Committee of Safety,” also known as the “Committee of Thirteen” and declared the queen to be engaged in treason by the tenets of the Bayonet Constitution and thus in revolt against her own people. The usurpers then moved to “form and declare a Provisional Government with view to annexation to the United States.” Liliuokalani agreed to discuss matters and rescind her new constitution, but the Committee of Safety had already sprung into action and never considered the queen’s reply. Thurston and the committee sent a message to U.S. Minister John L. Stevens stating that “the queen with the aid of armed force and accompanied by threats of violence and bloodshed from those with whom she was acting, attempted to proclaim a new constitution.” Claiming that they could not protect themselves from the queen’s armed forces without aid, the committee told Stevens they planned to “pray for the protection of the United States forces.” With the help of Stevens, the revolutionary *haole* group surrounded the palace with troops from the U.S.S. *Boston* and removed the queen from power and the palace.

The provisional government leaders, previously prepared for the uprising, immediately sent emissaries to Washington, D.C., to negotiate annexation with the United States. A treaty of annexation was quickly drawn up, signed and delivered to the U.S. Senate by Republican President Benjamin Harrison on February 14, 1893.

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39 Ibid, 287.
However, the Senate failed to act upon it due to the lame duck status of the president. They waited for the new administration to take office. Democratic President Grover Cleveland decided that rather than annex Hawai`i immediately more questions needed to be addressed. With public opposition to annexation growing, he sent a special commissioner, the Honorable James H. Blount, to Honolulu to investigate the circumstances. Blount’s report surprisingly charged that the overthrow was the result of a conspiracy between Minister Stevens and the revolutionaries and that the throne should be restored to Liliuokalani. 43 President Cleveland spoke to the Senate proclaiming the overthrow to be an illegal act of aggression on a sovereign and friendly nation. He then sent a new Minister, Albert F. Willis to Honolulu to replace Stevens and to restore the monarchy. However, Willis seemed ill disposed to push Cleveland’s desires and presented the Provisional Government with the opportunity to accept or reject the decision. President Dole of the Provisional Government responded by stating that they would not recognize Liliuokalani as the constitutional leader of the kingdom. Dole refused to hand over power. 44

During this stalemate, the U.S. Congress held their own investigation in Washington, D.C., calling the revolutionaries to testify against the queen. In all, thirty-six people testified against the queen either in person or by affidavit while the only person to testify for the monarch was James Blount. Congress decided that President Harrison had recognized the Provisional Government as the official government by his sending of the treaty to the Senate in his last days of office and that they would not

44 Liliuokalani, Hawai‘i’s Story, 250-251.
review that decision. In doing so they neglected the protestations of the queen and her ministers in Washington regarding the people’s wishes presented at the same time as the revolutionaries representatives.\textsuperscript{45} Apparently, this decision by Congress was made in late February 1894, but never relayed to the Queen.\textsuperscript{46}

When Liliuokalani abdicated her throne in January of 1893 she did so under protest to the United States government. She advised her people to remain calm and allow justice to take its course. She fully believed that the United States would do the right thing and uphold the rights of the monarchy.\textsuperscript{47}

In all of her dealings with the U.S. officials Queen Liliuokalani had been asked to continue calling on her people to remain peaceful. Many historians who defend the overthrow note that the native Hawaiian people must have supported the actions of the haole business leaders by insisting that if they had opposed it they would have held a counterrevolution. Such analyses misrepresent the situation. The lack of a popular Hawaiian uprising owed more to the queen’s skill and her misplaced faith in U. S. authorities rather than popular support for the haole coup. By the time it became clear that the U.S. would not intervene militarily to restore the throne, the Provisional Government was firmly entrenched in power and the damage had been wrought. The U.S. Congress as well as the Provisional Government leaders wisely realized that with Cleveland in office there would be no chance of annexation. As a result, Congress postponed any action. The Provisional Government created a new constitution and

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid, 255-257.
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid.
declared Sanford Dole the first President of the Republic of Hawai‘i, effective, fittingly
effective, on July 4, 1894.\textsuperscript{48}

The establishment of the Republic of Hawai‘i did not end the battle for the
monarchy. Historians Day and Kuykendall, whose progressive view of the overthrow
give very little attention to the details and herald the growth of Hawai‘i toward
annexation and territorial status within the U.S., represent only one side of the story. As
Blount’s two thousand-page document estimated, only 10% of the people of Hawai‘i,
native and white, supported the overthrow of the monarchy.\textsuperscript{49} It was only a matter of
time until violence erupted. When it finally became clear that no help would be
forthcoming from the U.S. government in upholding the declaration to reinstate the
queen, supporters of Liliuokalani began to plan an uprising. They secreted away rifles.
On January 6, 1895, police, after hearing reports of a secret meeting, investigated a
residence near Diamond Head and confronted members of the nascent rebellion with
gunfire. Combat raged through the city. The rebels were chased into the hills. Their
futile attempt to take back the islands quickly failed. The Republic of Hawai‘i had time
to entrench itself and had been tipped off to the rebellion. The Republic’s forces quickly
put it down and instituted martial law. Approximately two hundred royalist supporters of
the revolution were arrested, including Robert W. Wilcox, the ringleader of the revolt,
and Queen Liliuokalani. The queen, who had not participated in the uprising, was
charged with having knowledge of the plot to take back the government and failing to
inform the leaders of the Republic, an act of treason from their perspective. Dole and

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid.
Thurston had Liliuokalani placed in a room in Iolani Palace which had been converted into a cell for her. Duke Kahanamoku was only three years old when his queen was placed in a makeshift prison across the street from where he was born.

The Republic’s leaders then drew up papers for Queen Liliuokalani to sign to abdicate her throne. They informed her that she could either sign them or see her supporters executed for treason. Feeling that her people’s blood would be on her hands, the Queen agreed to sign the papers to spare their lives. Liliuokalani explained that “for myself, I would have chosen death rather than to have signed it; but it was represented to me that by signing this paper all the persons who had been arrested, all my people now in trouble by reason of their love and loyalty towards me would be immediately released.” The Queen’s anguish over the decision is further revealed when without any legal counsel or even friendly advice she realized the Republican leaders intended “the stream of blood ready to flow unless it was stayed by my pen.”

Doing what she believed was right for her subjects; Liliuokalani signed the abdication papers on January 24, 1895, hoping that she had spared her people. As it turned out, the Republic’s leaders did not release her supporters. In fact, they condemned them to death. However, word came from the United States that executions “of captive rebels would militate against annexation.” With an eye to that ultimate goal the leaders

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51 Liliuokalani, *Hawaii’s Story*, 274.
did not carry out the death sentences.\textsuperscript{52} They did send a message to the rebels that, as Day exclaimed, “revolution was no longer a game.”\textsuperscript{53}

Liliuokalani, convicted of misprision\textsuperscript{[sic]} of treason, was sentenced to five years of hard labor. She remained incarcerated at Iolani Palace for eight more months. She never spent any time at hard labor as was threatened. Liliuokalani was subsequently paroled and released, but the monarchy had passed away. Waiting for Cleveland to leave office, the Republic’s leaders bided their time until a U.S. President predisposed to annexation took over. Cleveland’s successor, William McKinley promptly led the annexation process shortly after his inauguration. Hawai`i became an official territory of the United States on April 30, 1900.\textsuperscript{54}

These events not only affected systems of political power, they had a direct influence on the everyday lives of those living in Hawai`i. For native Hawaiians the loss of the monarchy meant a radical shift in economic power and social status as well as a loss of values which they had revered for years. The new modern capitalistic structure sponsored by the Republic definitively altered the position in society of the old ali`i. Their status and positions in the culture were no longer determined by the mana they showed their people. Instead they would be judged on the new Western models of achievement and productivity. Serving others and providing for the people’s needs brought little honor in the new system. The values of capitalism determined success and prestige based mainly on one’s economic possessions. Historian Helena Allen

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid, 278.
\textsuperscript{53} Day, \textit{Hawaii}, 154.
\textsuperscript{54} Kuykendall and Day, \textit{Hawai`i: A History}, 190.
commented that Liliuokalani was “out of step with her times that were influenced by acquisition.” Allen noted that “she was following the innate beliefs of the Hawaiians that had always held relationships of greater importance than ownership.”

The reality is that not only was Liliuokalani out of step but so were the majority of native Hawaiians. When the overthrow occurred they were ill-prepared to respond to the vast cultural alterations that the haole leaders brought to their homelands. Capitalist beliefs were in many ways drastically opposed to Hawaiian values and as a result confusion reigned in the lives of many of the young Hawaiians growing up in this era. Throwing aside the values of one’s familial and cultural traditions to adopt foreign ideals is always a difficult proposition.

Such was the complex world into which Duke Paoa Kahanamoku was born. The changes in Hawaiian sovereignty would alter his family’s lives drastically. He would have to learn how to adapt to the new regime. He would have to make his way in a new culture while the old culture lingered, ghost-like, all around him. What the world would soon see was the emergence of a man who would help to form and alter the cultural representations of Hawai`i in his own unique ways, attempting to uphold the aloha and mana traditions of his people while at the same time emerging as a symbol of a new, modern Hawai`i. He would struggle throughout his life to bridge the chasm between new and old, to combine modernity and tradition.

CHAPTER 2
HAWAIIAN OR LOCAL? NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN A CULTURAL IDENTITY

In the early twentieth century Hawaiian traditions, banned under the puritanical influence of nineteenth-century missionaries, were rediscovered and used as marketing tools to sell a new Hawaiian culture. The concept of being Hawaiian evolved from a standard of bloodlines to one of geographical citizenship. Whether by intention or accident, Duke Kahanamoku was instrumental in all of these developments. He became a symbol of the image of the new modern Hawai‘i. At the same time he was a vivid reminder of the old, dying breed of pureblooded Hawaiians.

By the time that Kahanamoku burst upon the world scene in 1911, shattering American and world records in the one hundred and fifty yard freestyle swimming races at an Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) sanctioned meet in Honolulu Harbor,1 sport had become a tool of nationalism used by countries around the world to demonstrate modern manliness and vigor. Sport historians Mark Dyreson, S. W. Pope and Allen Guttmann have illustrated how progressive leaders utilized sport as a way to show the strength of American democratic ideals and the superiority of the American people.2 Historian Eric

2 Mark Dyreson, Making the American Team: Sport, Culture and the Olympic Experience (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998); S.W. Pope, Patriotic Games: Sporting Traditions in the American Imagination, 1876-1926 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Allen Guttmann, The Olympics: A
Hobsbawm argued that before World War I sport had “been established with the objective of integrating the national components of multinational states.” International competitions “symbolized the unity of such states, as friendly rivalry among their nations reinforced the sense that all belonged together by the institutionalization of regular contests that provided a safety valve for group tensions,” Hobsbawm rationalized. Mass media (press, radio and cinema) and sport emerged as the two “new means” of expressing nationalism in the post World War I era, according to Hobsbawm. He maintained, “the imagined community of millions seems more real as the team.”

Hobsbawm echoed the ideas of historian Benedict Anderson’s notion of groups of people rallying around differing organizations to build an imagined community. In urban New York City, where the population exceeds nine million people, the idea of becoming a community which identifies with one another is generally anathema. However, through sports teams such as major league baseball’s New York Yankees or the New York Football Giants, New Yorkers who have no other connection to one another bond together in community surrounding the success and failures of their communal teams. These teams represent the city of New York, and people from all races, ages, genders and religious backgrounds find an expression of common identity in following these teams. New Yorkers had experienced this sense of local pride through sporting teams as far back as 1888 when the

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4 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991). Anderson’s focus is upon the broader community of building nationalisms of which Hawai`i develops as a changing state, whereas Hobsbawm translates the ideal into smaller communities as well.
New York Times noted that “as a matter of fact, that feeling is enlisted on the part of a considerable fraction of the population in the varying fortunes of the so-called ‘New-Yorks.’”

In the same way that sport teams such as the Yankees represent communities and bring them together in a common cause, sport heroes can have a galvanizing effect. Hawai’i rallied around Duke Kahanamoku. His victories brought a sense of community pride and cohesion for its residents. Realizing that this amazing athlete had become the incarnational representation of their homeland, Hawaiians identified themselves with the feats of their Olympic champion. Kahanamoku became a key figure for an imagined Hawaiian community exhibited both of Hobsbawm’s “new means” for nationalism as his career spanned both sides of World War I and he excelled in both the world of sport and the cinema. He lived amidst intriguing tensions. In many ways he held loyalty to two nations, the United States, which had overthrown his own people and annexed his country as an official U.S. territory, and his homeland of Hawai’i. The imagined communities which he became symbols of had incredible complexities within them due to racial, ethnic and national controversies. However, in the midst of all that complexity, the imagined community of Hawai’i did become more real in the name and face of Duke Kahanamoku.

Few scholars have studied Kahanamoku in this light. To date there have been two very intriguing biographical works on Kahanamoku that provide wonderful glimpses into

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his life. Joseph Brennan’s *Duke: The Life Story of Hawai‘i’s Duke Kahanamoku* and Sandra Kimberly Hall and Greg Ambrose’s *Memories of Duke: the Legend Comes to Life*, present captivating snapshots of Kahanamoku’s career. However, neither work attempts to place his achievements within the deeper context of the historical world in which Kahanamoku lived. The impact of this impressive figure must be studied within the historical milieu of his time and he must be understood as a pivotal figure in the development of Hawaiian culture as it exists today.

Conversely, while Brennan, Hall and Ambrose situate Kahanamoku at least lightly within his time and historical place, historians of Hawai‘i have left his contributions completely out of their analysis of political, social and cultural changes in the islands. Perhaps the all too typical bias of historians toward sport as merely a recreational pastime, and something which people play at rather than study as a serious form of cultural expression, relegates Kahanamoku to invisibility in traditional histories of Hawai‘i. While the rest of the world considered Kahanamoku as “Mr. Hawai‘i,” the most visible expression of Hawaiian identity in the twentieth century due to his sporting accomplishments, historians have failed to understand this great athlete and his centrality

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to the development and change in Hawaiian culture. That Kahanamoku receives absolutely no mention in any historical work of Hawaiian history denies not only the legacy of this great athlete but also the important cultural power of sport in society. Fortunately, sport history has begun to develop as an important discipline and the achievements of those in the world of sport upon their culture are being noted.

Sport scholar Joel Franks studied Hawaiian athletes and claimed that sport allows them to cross racial and ethnic borders and in the process assert their cultural citizenship. Through sport, Franks argues Hawaiians are able to “claim both distinctiveness and American nationality—strongly and plainly.” Franks declared that Hawaiian athletes, following the lead of Duke Kahanamoku, have “created a sporting tradition that reflects and reinforces Hawaiian local culture — a culture of in-betweeness and transcendence.”

While Franks has done a wonderful job of showing how Hawaiian athletes’ utilized sport as an instrument for crossing cultural boundaries, the idea of a contrast between Hawaiian culture and local culture is one that Franks espouses but does not clearly delineate. In his works Franks uses a common viewpoint for understanding the development of local culture as it developed in the Hawaiian territory. Local culture becomes, as Franks states,

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10 Examples of this type of historical scholarship demonstrating sport and sports figures in fluence on culture include, Jules Tygiel, Baseball’s Great Experiment: Jackie Robinson and His Legacy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983); Randy Roberts, “But They Can’t Beat Us”:Oscar Robertson And The Crispus Attucks Tigers (Champaign: Indiana Historical Society, 1999); and Mark Dyreson, Making The American Team: Sport, Culture and the Olympic Experience (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998).


13 Ibid. Franks notes that baseball teams regularly traveled throughout the mainland United States promoted as Hawaiians when in reality most if not all of the players were of Japanese or Chinese descent.
“a response to the construction and maintenance of a class hierarchy, racially and ethnically diverse Hawai`ians forged,” which “constituted a loose expression of class in Hawai`i— a class of the have-nots and have-less.”

This emphasis upon the development of local culture focuses the intermixing of various groups, especially on plantations in Hawai`i. Many point to the development of “pidgin English” on those plantations as an example of the development of this local culture amongst Chinese, Japanese, Portuguese, Korean and Hispanic ethnic groups. This local culture developed its own language system. From this viewpoint, the development of this local culture focuses upon the mixing of the poorer ethnic groups in opposition to the more wealthy haoles. In other words, local culture was non-white, since those were the have-nots and the have-less people to whom Franks refers. However, it must be understood that the kama`aina haoles (native-born whites) also considered themselves local and used the media to alter the status of who truly was a “Hawaiian.” In understanding the significance of Duke Kahanamoku and the mainland American cultures view of him, this is a crucial distinction to consider.

Bishop Museum archivist Desoto Brown illustrated the essence of this struggle when he commented that he considers Kahanamoku, “the most famous Hawaiian person who has ever been, in terms of him being 100 percent ethnically Hawaiian.” Brown’s identification of Kahanamoku’s ethnicity reflects the conflicts regarding the great

14 Ibid, 191.
swimmer as well as the culture and sport of Hawai`i. What is a Hawaiian? What role does sport play in Hawaiian cultural identity? The answers to these questions emerge from an understanding of Kahanamoku and his era.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as Duke Kahanamoku grew up, native Hawaiian culture was supplanted by a local Hawaiian culture. This new “local” culture was not a predominately white culture even though political power resided in their hands. It took on a unique quality, which continues to this day. Local Hawaiian culture is not represented by a pure assimilation of a dominant culture but rather a synthesis of multiple cultures including haole (white), Hawaiian, Filipino, Portuguese, Japanese, Chinese and many others. In this manner, Hawaiian local identity represents a Gramscian style of cultural hegemony. The haole elite held most of the political power yet that did not make them all-powerful, and the other ethnic groups were never completely powerless. The various groups constantly negotiate and renegotiate the parameters of “local culture.” Hawaiian identity relied upon a style of cultural adaptation and assimilation that played itself out not only politically and economically but also in sporting venues.

The question of Hawiianess remains a complex puzzle. It has meant different things to different people in different periods and changes constantly. However, some generalities will help in establishing boundaries to make sense of these complexities. Duke Kahanamoku was born in 1890, just three years before American haole capitalists

in Honolulu marched upon Iolani Palace and overthrew the Hawaiian monarchy while imprisoning Queen Liliuokalani, at a time when definitions of Hawaianness were undergoing rapid change. In an earlier epoch, Hawaianness was easier to define. Prior to the arrival of Captain Cook in 1778 in the islands, which he referred to as the “Sandwich Islands” in honor of his patron the fourth Earl of Sandwich, being a Hawaiian was exclusively an ethnic categorization.\(^{19}\)

With the arrival in the 1820s of Christian missionaries from New England, this distinction continued relatively unquestioned. However, when the missionaries realized the capital gains to be made in the islands which were being hotly pursued by merchants from Great Britain, the United States, France and Russia, some began to alter their perceptions of the Lord’s will for their life. The Reverend Amos Starr Cooke, who joined the missionaries as a teacher in 1851, explained his particular calling by noting that, “the foreigners are creeping in among the natives, getting their largest and best lands, water privileges, building lots, etcetera. The Lord seems to be allowing such things to take place.” Cooke conceded, “this is trying, but we cannot help it.” After battling the influence for years Cooke believed that “the Lord is showing us His thoughts are not our thoughts, neither are His ways our ways.” Therefore, since “Honolulu has never looked so green and pleasant” Cooke proposed to purchase some of the prime lots since the Lord was obviously allowing it.\(^{20}\) Failing to beat the capitalists, Cooke decided to join them.

Many of the missionaries’ children elected to stay in the islands. Having seen the business exploits of Cooke and others like him, they understood the financial rewards that were possible in Hawai`i and established large commercial plantations. Many also decide to intermarry with Hawaiian royalty. Hawaiian historian Lawrence Fuchs noted that “as many as thirty of the early white residents married Hawaiian women of chiefly rank.”

For these missionary descendants, Hawai`i became home. In the mainland press, as well as in the local media, which they controlled, they began to claim the mantle of being Hawaiian.

This blurring of distinctions proved effective for these white leaders during the overthrow. They utilized it to claim that they were leading a Hawaiian revolution, and not engaged in a foreign imperialistic deposing of a sovereign nation. That is not to say that these _Kama`aina haoles_, or native-born white people, did not use race as a dividing factor. Rather, they continued to use the term Hawaiian to denote those of lower social status in purely racial terms when it proved beneficial to do so. However, in at least partially altering the definition of who was Hawaiian from that of a solely ethnic nature to one of geographical location, the cultural identity of “localness” developed. Thus, the whites were able to become “local Hawaiians” without taking on the negative racial distinction that was attached to being a native Hawaiian. In doing so, they established their own standards of Hawaiianness.

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Evidence of the new definition of Hawaianness filled the local media. The *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* ran a daily feature in 1911 and 1912 entitled “Who’s Who In Hawai`i.” Invariably, these brief biographical glimpses were of whites, thus establishing proper Hawaiian norms while excluding native Hawaiians. Another article establishing normative standards for Hawai`i entitled, “Some Typical Honolulu Residences,” appeared in the *Sunday Advertiser* on July 2, 1912. The houses shown are the mansions of the elite haoles ’ and are anything but typical of Hawaiian residences, yet the view being established is that these are essentially Hawaiian homes. In fact, at the same time that these local representations of Hawaiian homes were being advocated other members of the media were busy designating typical “native” homes with pictures of grass shacks with scantily clothed yet friendly natives in front of them.

What it meant to be Hawaiian changed rapidly during the era in which Kahanamoku grew up in the islands. As he became an island hero, the perception of Hawaiannness continued to expand. Cultural identity is an area which is constantly being refined and redefined. For Kahanamoku, it was a case of becoming “civilized” and yet not really being perceived as white. He epitomized the ideal of a safe exotic from whom a tourist could learn surfing. Joel Franks described Kahanamoku as “a representative of the ‘noble savage’ stereotype so commonly applied to the ‘good Indian’ in North America. Franks noted that Kahanamoku was regarded as “a child of nature, alien to the sophisticated ways of white folks but happily willing to serve them— to show them how

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to find food in the wilderness or a nice restaurant in Waikiki,” or Franks might have added, how to ride a surfboard upon the waves.  27 Many factors contributed to this new conception of Hawaiian identity, including racial intermarriage and assimilation into a developing culture far more distinct from those which fed it. As a result, it became standard practice to consider one who had grown up in Hawai`i as Hawaiian. Historian Ralph S. Kuykendall illustrated this twentieth-century trend in his 1948 description of the early provisional government elections. In his portrayal of the delegates, he noted that, “fifteen were Hawaiian born and five were native Hawaiians.”  28 Through Hawai`i’s annexation to the United States in 1898 and the long push for statehood, which finally occurred in 1959, haole residents of Hawai`i considered themselves Hawaiian in the same way that people living in California considered themselves Californians.

This time period provided a muddying of the understanding of Hawaiian identity in the islands and yet the perception of mainlanders regarding Hawaiians status in light of their relationship to the United States provided no more clarity. On the mainland in 1910 Harper’s Weekly, a popular American source for national news, commented on how the “Hawaiians asked in their legislature, almost unanimously, to have their land laws changed.” R.B. Kidd of Harper’s demonstrated how the native Hawaiians were, “completely . . . reconciled to annexation.” What Kidd did not understand was the radical change in definition of Hawaiian which had occurred. In fact, the Hawaiian legislature was made up of the Kama`aina haole elite and did not represent native

27 Franks, Hawaiian Sports, 196.
Hawaiians as a whole. The federal government of the United States also assisted in the blurring of distinction in its census report of 1910. In the report, as displayed by the Honolulu newspapers, no category of native Hawaiian was denoted. Instead, a category listed as “native born, all nationalities” showed that 98,157 of the 192,109 residents of the territory fell under this grouping. While the census designated totals for Japanese and Chinese individuals, it was clear that the new breed of Hawaiians had become those who were native born and therefore citizens of Hawai`i.

While this change of designation concerning Hawaiian identity altered conceptions of who did and did not belong under the classification of Hawaiian, for Duke Kahanamoku it was a moot point. There could be no truer Hawaiian in every sense of the term. Born of royal lineage and a full-blooded Hawaiian, he gained U.S. citizenship when he was ten, along with other ethnic Hawaiians who won that status through the Organic Act of 1900, two years after Hawai`i became a U.S. territory. Kahanamoku himself seemed to understand the duality of the term Hawaiian, and its cousin “local,” and accepted both aspects. Whether he was with his siblings or the Kealoha’s, all full-blooded Hawaiians, or with George Cunha and Buster Crabbe who were hapa-haole (half white) ethnically and raised in Hawai`i, he considered them all part of his Hawaiian `ohana, or family. He welcomed them as teammates and even toured with a group advertised as a Hawaiian team during World War I - - an effort by the Red Cross to raise money for the war effort. This team, made up of Kahanamoku, Stubby Kruger, Clair Tait

and Clarence Lane, claimed only one member with pure Hawaiian blood, Kahanamoku. Yet, as the only native Hawaiian, Kahanamoku did not balk at traveling with this group of other “Hawaiians.”

While Kahanamoku seemed to accept these divergent definitions of Hawaiian status, there was a third view that further confused the picture of Hawaiianess. This view is one of Hawaiianess seen through the eyes of nationalism, and it is unclear whether Kahanamoku ever completely came to terms with it. Only nineteen years before he competed as a member of the United States Olympic team in Stockholm, Sweden, imperialistic U.S. businessmen backed by United States Marines stationed upon a state-of-the-art warship docked in Honolulu harbor had conquered Kahanamoku’s homeland.

In the aftermath of the coup d’etat, President Grover Cleveland of the United States declared this an illegal “act of war” against a friendly and sovereign nation and ordered the monarchy restored. He did not have the backing of the U.S. Congress however, and they would not provide him the necessary military power to enforce this dictum. Thus, a new Provisional Government controlled by the usurpers drew up their own constitution and “declared themselves no longer American citizens with any allegiance to the U.S. president.” With Cleveland in office, there was no chance for annexation and so the Provisional Government created the Republic of Hawai`i, with

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36 Linnéa, *Princess Ka`iulani*, 146.
Sanford B. Dole as the acting president. With the establishment of this new “nation,” the Kama`aina haoles could rationally define themselves as true Hawaiians, and the keepers of civilized Hawai`i. Native Hawaiians became, as Hawaiian activist and historian Haunani-Kay Trask described it, “orphaned in our own land.”37 One of those orphans, Kahanamoku, rose to national prominence as a member of Olympic teams representing the nation which had permitted the conquest of his old homeland.

With Kahanamoku’s native people excluded from voting upon annexation to the United States, the haole elite voted in 1898 overwhelmingly for official territorial ownership of the islands by the U.S. government. With all the changes in governmental structure occurring in the islands the national media, as well as mainland United States residents, were unclear as to the proper definition of Hawaiian nationalism. Should Hawai`i have sovereignty similar to Native Americans on United States reservations or should they be given rights similar to that of statehood? Were the people in Hawai`i American citizens or Hawaiian nationals?38

These questions remained as Kahanamoku in 1912 rose to fame. Kahanamoku had been an official United States citizen for twelve years but in media reports of his feats there are numerous references to Kahanamoku’s homeland or nation as if he still represented a Hawaiian nation rather than the United States. The Pittsburgh Press reflected this line of thinking when they referred to Kahanamoku as “the Hawaiian

37 Haunani-Kay Trask, From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai`i (Honolulu: University of Hawai`i Press, 1993), 16.
swimmer, who has been causing quite a stir in aquatic circles since his arrival in America. Since Hawai`i became an official territory of the United States in 1898, in reality Kahanamoku, an American citizen since the Organic act of 1900, had never left the U.S. during his voyage to Pittsburgh for the Amateur Athletic Union (A.A.U.) meet held there in 1912.

Even after winning Olympic gold for the U.S. team in the 1912 Stockholm Games, Kahanamoku was most often referred to as “the Hawaiian champion swimmer” or the “Honolulu champion” rather than the American gold medalist. While many other Olympic athletes of his time received recognition in relation to their hometowns, states or regional localities, they also gained identity as American champions. Charlie Paddock the great American sprint champion is a great example of this phenomenon. The New York Times in 1920 described Paddock as the “Californian” but also gave him the title of “United States champion.” The best that Kahanamoku ever received was a mention as a “representative of the American team.”

41 “Territorial Government of Hawaii-1900,” The Federal and State Constitutions, Colonial Charters and Other Organic Laws of the States, Territories, and Colonies Now or Heretofore Forming The United States Of America, Vol. II (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1909), 881. This act stated “that all persons who were citizens of the Republic of Hawaii on August twelfth, eighteen hundred and ninety-eight, are hereby declared to be citizens of the United States and citizens of the Territory of Hawaii.” Since Kahanamoku although eight years old at the time was a citizen of the Republic he therefore automatically became a citizen of the United States through this act of the Fifty-Sixth Congress, First Session.
existed as to Hawai‘i’s place in the U.S. and as a result, how Hawaiians fit into the national culture. Kahanamoku, through sport, began to make inroads to alleviate the uncertainty.

The progress moved slowly, however. While legally an American citizen, Kahanamoku continued to be viewed through the media as an exotic native from a foreign land. His victories in the 1912 Olympic Games made Kahanamoku the king of swimming. However, another teammate on that Olympic team who also came from a native background became the king of the 1912 Games. The king of Sweden hailed the great Native American Jim Thorpe as the world’s greatest athlete. Kahanamoku recounted a conversation he and Thorpe had while traveling to Sweden on the U.S.S. Finland, ‘Jimmy, I’ve seen you run, jump, throw things and carry the ball. You do everything, so why don’t you swim too?’ Thorpe showing the respect he had for the champion swimmer grinned at Kahanamoku and replied, ‘Duke, I saved that for you to take care of. I saved that for you.’

Thorpe and Kahanamoku had much in common. Both were great all around athletes. Thorpe’s accomplishments are legendary to most Americans but few recall that Kahanamoku was more than a great Olympic swimmer. Kahanamoku also played on the U.S. Olympic water polo team in two Olympic games, was regarded as the father of modern surfing, the best rower in the islands, won a Trans-Pacific yacht race, played football, basketball, ran track and was on the Kamehameha School’s 1908 championship

soccer team. Kahanamoku even played football for a season for the Healani eleven in the Hawai‘i Senior League, as a tackle. The American public accepted both Thorpe and Kahanamoku in part because they were both representatives of defeated nations. As such, they were relics of a bygone period and posed little threat to the white dominant culture. In 1915, this image of defeated “noble savages” was solidified in public perception with the statue by James Earle Fraser called “The End of the Trail” at the 1915 Panama Pacific Exposition in San Francisco. A noted expert on the San Francisco Fair, Burton Benedict, described this famous work, voted best sculpture of the exhibition. Benedict explained that the work of art depicted “an exhausted Indian on an exhausted horse, both with drooping heads. The Indian’s spear is pointed downwards.” Benedict claimed that the statue became “seized on as a symbol of a dying race.”

This image of safe, vanquished natives had led to their use as objects of attraction in entertainment, art and sport. In fact Kahanamoku himself figured prominently in the Hawai‘i exhibit at the 1915 San Francisco exposition both as a featured athlete in the swimming events held during the fair and as a dancer in hula shows. As sport historian Joel Franks pointed out, Kahanamoku rose to prominence when “popular and elite cultures in the U.S. and Europe expressed fascination with the native, the primitive.” In the same way that whites flocked to see Geronimo and the native athletes displayed at the

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47 Brennan, Duke, 103, 105, 97.
51 Franks, Hawaiian Sports, 195.
“Savage Olympics” during the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis in 1904, there was an aura of wonder surrounding this Polynesian athlete. Americans viewed native Hawaiians as a defeated race. The realities of disease brought in by white foreigners had caused their numbers to drop to the point that most Americans assumed that extinction of the race was inevitable, and considering many interpretations of Darwin’s evolutionary ideals, proper. *The American Review of Reviews*, in response to J. Liddell Kelly’s report on the Territory of Hawai`i, asserted in 1911 that “Hawaiians are evidently doomed. In 1778 they numbered 350,000: to-day they aggregate less than 30,000.”

Regarding native Hawaiians as novelties due to their rapid decrease in population was commonplace as Kahanamoku won the world over through swimming. Hawaiian ethnic conflicts were altered by a new demography. In fact, numerous newspaper and magazine articles of the day depicted the Japanese as the true ethnic threat in the Hawaiian Islands. The Japanese immigrants had come to Hawai`i to work in the sugar cane fields and were far and away the largest ethnic group in the islands. While Japanese immigrants could not become citizens, their children could. Fear of the “yellow peril” became intense among the white elites.

This threat was so strong that some members of the territorial government even proposed to place Hawai`i under the “control of a government commission, partly military,” which would allow “plenty of Chinese Laborers to be introduced under a contract system to work at low wages for three to five years and then sent home again.”

52 Dyreson, *Making the American Team*, 81-83.
For capitalist leaders this seemed an answer to provide low cost labor to plantation owners while preventing the immigrants from residing in the islands long enough to gain citizenship. The *haole* elite had realized that the Japanese workers’ children, who were now U.S. citizens and could therefore vote, had no inclination to work for the meager wages and terrible living conditions their parents had endured. As a result, white supremacy was being challenged and the ruling elite believed “a democracy impossible in a territory so largely Oriental.”

The threat of an “oriental” takeover of the islands notwithstanding, white Americans lamented neither the passing of the Hawaiian race nor acknowledged their own involvement in its demise. *The Outlook*, a popular magazine of the time, even proposed that “The decline of the native Hawaiians can hardly be attributed to immigration, for their decrease began before many foreigners arrived in their islands.” This view, which held that the native Hawaiians were inherently a weaker race more readily built for the “stone ages,” contributed to a romanticized view of Kahanamoku as a great swimmer from a vanishing people. It also provided a sense of urgency and curiosity for spectators to come and see the nearly extinct Hawaiians’ swim. The headlines leading up to competitions illustrated the power of the Hawaiians’ presence as a marketing tool for promotion. Yet, when newspapers reported meet results the next day, the Hawaiian achievements were often neglected.

When Kahanamoku participated on the mainland for the first time this ideal was clearly visible. At the AAU meet in Pittsburgh in February of 1912, Kahanamoku and his fellow Hawaiian swimmer Vincent “Zen” Genoves traveled to Pittsburgh by train after arriving in San Francisco aboard a boat from Honolulu. Kahanamoku’s first trip to the mainland generated great interest in seeing this native swimmer. *The Pittsburgh Press* hailed the approach of the Hawaiians for days. On the day of their arrival on the mainland, a headline read “Hawaiian Swimmer Enters Title Race,” referring to Genoves rather than Kahanamoku. Days later, the same paper announced that “Hawaiian Stars in Big Race Here.” The *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* ran a headline that read, “Hawaiian Swimmers Here from Honolulu: Surf Riders from Sandwich Islands to Compete in Aquatic Meet.” Still another article highlighting the upcoming race reported that Genoves and Kahanamoku were “dark skinned native Kanakas, and swim the crawl stroke of the Pacific Islanders.” Kanaka is a Hawaiian word meaning man yet the paper interpreted as most mainlanders did at the time, as a full-blooded native Hawaiian. With this understanding in mind, the news report intentionally misrepresented Genoves’ ethnicity since he was only part Hawaiian and not a true “Kanaka,” in the sense that most mainlanders understood. Regardless, the newspapers marketed the Hawaiians as primitive natives from a far off tropical land in order to draw spectators to the meet.

59 “Hawaiian Swimmers Here from Honolulu: Surf Riders From Sandwich Islands To Compete In Aquatic Meet,” *The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, 21 February 1912, p. 11.
61 Pukui and Elbert Hawaiian Dictionary, 51. According to Pukui and Elbert, Kanaka simply means human being or man, although they do acknowledge a use of the word as being Hawaiian.
Much was also made of the fact that they had never swum in a pool before. The press predicted the “modern” pool would create problems for the Hawaiians in the turns, thereby showing their lack of “civilization” as athletes.62

In spite of all of the intense interest in these Hawaiian swimmers in pre-meet publicity, after winning two of the events the press remarkably relegated Kahanamoku’s achievements to merely two sentences in the post-meet report while Genoves received no mention at all. The headline reporting results read “New York Swimmers Win Feature Event.” In fact, Kahanamoku garnered more attention when he failed in this meet than when he was successful. In the first race he swam, which was two days before his 100-yard victory, Kahanamoku led in the 400-yard swim, not a strong event for him, when he suddenly developed cramps due to the cold water temperatures and had to be “dragged out of the pool almost unconscious.” In the article detailing this race, the Hawaiians did garner the sub-headline. It read, “Hawaiians in the Rear: Kahanamoku Collapses in the Water, While Teammate Finishes Fifth.”63

Sport historian Michael Oriard noted similar trends of media reporting in football surrounding the coverage of the Carlisle Indian School as well as the Haskell Institute. For both of these enormously successful native American football teams “playing both as gentlemen and as children made them ‘noble savages’ in a long tradition rooted more in the projected desires of whites than in any truth about Indian manners and beliefs,” asserted Oriard. This idea of “playing Indian” for the fans helped to sell tickets and

63 “McGillivray is Winner of Big Swimming Race,” The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, 23 February 1912, p. 9.
promote white images of Manifest Destiny. Kahanamoku and Genoves experienced similar treatment to that of the Carlisle and Haskell football players. Rather than being lauded for their athletic abilities, they were marketed for their unique background and disparaged for their lack of proper civility. The fact that Kahanamoku had never swam in a tank filled with cold water seemed to be evidence of the lack of sophistication inherent in these natives athletes from the South Pacific.

In his biography of Kahanamoku, sports journalist Joseph Brennan referred to the papers after Kahanamoku’s wins in Pittsburgh as “featuring the young Hawaiian in pictures and prose,” and Pennsylvanians as “going berserk” over this “native.” In actuality, the newspapers in Pittsburgh, while intensely covering the meet, reported very little in respect to Kahanamoku’s victories and those in cross-state Philadelphia reported absolutely nothing about the races. There were neither prose nor pictures of the meet, much less of the Hawaiians. The only notation in the days after the competition was a sentence in an article that demonstrated more scorn than praise for Kahanamoku.

*Pittsburgh Press* columnist and sports editor Ralph Davis wrote it. Davis contended, “Kahanamoku, the Hawaiian, has discovered that there’s all the difference in the world between surf riding and a 75-foot tank.” Davis implied that Kahanamoku was introduced to real athletic competition in Pittsburgh and had been found wanting, even though he had won two events!

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As Kahanamoku emerged into the national limelight due to his swimming prowess, this type of media exposure proved the norm rather than the exception. A study of various mainland newspapers demonstrated the trend that Kahanamoku drew headlines most often to publicize meets he would attend or for his failures. This pattern continued until the end of his Red Cross campaign during World War I to raise money for the war effort, when Kahanamoku began to earn more headlines for his aquatic wins. His success in raising money for the war effort and the sense of patriotism that it engendered among the dominant white culture possibly helped elevate his standing in American national culture. Whatever the corresponding reason, Kahanamoku became less of a novelty and curiosity and collected greater accolades in the media. He still usually made only the sub-headlines, however. For an athlete of his magnitude Kahanamoku never gained the notoriety in the mainland press that was due someone who set American and world records with regularity.67

At the same time, however, Kahanamoku became the living representation of a people from a territory of the United States that most Americans would never see. His athletic prowess in representing the United States in the Olympic Games garnered the respect of many people while increasing the curiosity about this remote paradise. Therefore, to see Kahanamoku was to appreciate what the islands were about in the minds of many in mainland culture. He was a role model who Hawai‘i embraced as the

67 For example, a cursory look at the New York Times headlines of articles representing Kahanamoku shows a great shift in headline focus. Of 28 victories in races reported by the paper during the years 1912-1920, only two of those were headlines in which Kahanamoku was mentioned by name. Conversely, of nine losses he incurred during that time five of those were headline grabbers with Kahanamoku mentioned. Of his 28 victories, 18 of them gained no mention in the headline or a sub headline even when they were record setting races. In the two Olympic Games reported on during this time Kahanamoku never received a headline in the New York Times for his feats.
visible expression of their culture and heritage. Fortunately, for the haole elite, Kahanamoku was a humble, gracious, and engaging personality. He embodied the non-threatening image of a native Hawaiian as represented in media accounts and became a useful marketing tool for the territory.

For Kahanamoku, the old Hawaiian values of aloha (deep love and affection), mana (authority, power and wisdom) and lokele (harmony and unity) still guided his actions. He swam to represent Hawaiians and bring glory to Hawai`i. His purpose was to express the ideals of aloha to the world and to use his mana to represent his people. Kahanamoku never spoke openly of any negative feelings he may have had toward haole leaders who had usurped the title of Hawaiian from his people. He expressed respect and love for those whom he knew understood the ways of Hawai`i while in true Hawaiian fashion ignored those who did not.

Native Hawaiians have a unique way of dealing with conflict. They ignore those who create the breach and treat them as if they do not exist. For mainland Americans this trait is hard to understand. When conflict occurs for mainland Americans they typically announce their displeasure and very publicly express their version of the breach while demanding the proper recourse or penance required. In native Hawaiian culture, a different dynamic is at work. The ideal is that one understands the wrong one perpetrated and hold yourself responsible to right it. If there is no acknowledgement, then the Hawaiian way is to move on but without a relationship existing anymore. There are few

angry words. It is rather an acknowledgement that for the wronged person and their acquaintances the perpetrator no longer exists. They are in essence a non-person, with no rights to be heard or recognized. The world moves on away and without them.  

Kahanamoku dealt with conflict and wrongs in this very Hawaiian manner. The pattern can be seen in the people he did not interact with rather than by those with whom he had conflicts. An example of this is his non-relationship with Lorrin P. Thurston, the son of Lorrin H. Thurston one of the leaders of the overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy. Kahanamoku and Thurston both grew up in Hawai`i, yet under very different circumstances. Thurston as the son of a prominent businessman and community leader would go to Punahou school and be expected to matriculate to the mainland to gain an Ivy League education. Standards of propriety and belonging to the “right” organizations would be the experiences of Thurston’s upbringing. In essence Thurston’s development mirrored that of any boy of his stature growing up in Boston or New York. Kahanamoku, on the other hand, would never graduate from high school and his social clique consisted of his friends at the beach. These boys would do such undignified stunts as dive for coins in the harbor tossed to them by tourists. Not coincidentally, many of these visitors were friends of the Thurston’s.

Kahanamoku and his friends were also instrumental in the revival of traditional Hawaiian activities such as surfing and the hula, often as tools to promote Hawaiian culture to tourists who wanted to experience the extravagances of the islands. However,

\[69\] Ibid.
for Kahanamoku these traditions connected him to his past, to his o'hana (family) and his "aina (land) and held greater meaning for him than they did for Thurston.\(^{70}\)

The younger Thurston left Honolulu to in 1922 to attend Yale University. While there, he became captain of the Eli swim team and led them to a national swimming championship. In 1926 Thurston began a regular tradition of bringing Yale swimming teams to Honolulu to compete in summer time races.\(^{71}\) With common ground as swimmers and Hawaiian residents, it seems that a natural relationship between Kahanamoku and Thurston would emerge, and yet there is no evidence of that at all. No mentions, no photos, no records of their ever having been together is evident.\(^{72}\) Considering that Hawai`i was and continues to feel like a small world of its own, and that Kahanamoku had pictures taken with literally thousands of people, this omission is strange.

It could be that Kahanamoku continued to harbor strong feelings against the Thurston family for their role in the overthrow of the monarchy. It could also be that he resented the kama`aina haoles treatment of his people. Despite growing up in Honolulu, Thurston had little respect for native culture. Thurston seemed to inherit his father’s prejudices. In explaining why he was an annexationist in 1895, the elder Thurston


\(^{71}\) “Yale Swimming Team to Compete Here: Local Alumni Send Wire to New Haven Inviting Kiphuth and His Squad,” Honolulu Advertiser, 21 January 1926, pg 17.

\(^{72}\) In examining Duke Kahanamoku’s and Lorrin P. Thurston’s personal photos, and papers at both the Bishop Museum and the Hawai`i State Archives in Honolulu as well as the archives at Yale University pertaining to the swimming team, Lorrin P. Thurston and the visits of Kahanamoku to Yale I found no mention of any relationship between the two. Their paths crossed continuously throughout their lives both on the mainland and in Hawai`i and almost anyone Kahanamoku met seemed to show up somewhere in his papers or photos except Thurston.
expressed his belief that if Hawai`i were a “community of Anglo-Saxons” his views on annexation would be different. He surmised that “under those circumstances the community, however small, could be depended upon to work along constitutional lines.” In essence, Thurston trusted only white leaders to look out for the best interests of the territory; native ways conflicted with true growth and development of proper civilization.73

The younger Thurston demonstrated his feelings regarding native Hawaiian practices and values while at Yale during an intramural meet to kick off his senior season. Thurston, a senior member of the swimming team, who “from his movements one knows he was not educated in the U.S.,” performed a native “HulaHula” dance ending with “the fall of Hokapoka from the high board” mocking Hawaiian culture.74 This type of behavior and disrespect would have raised the ire of Kahanamoku and other native Hawaiians. While there is no evidence demonstrating that Kahanamoku learned of Thurston’s displays, there were many close connections between the swimming program at Yale and Kahanamoku. He regularly visited there to swim in meets and there are numerous articles in the Yale archives regarding Kahanamoku and his career. The Yale News even mentions that Kahanamoku, along with “Dad” Center, Kahanamoku’s first coach, and close friend, met the Yale team on their steamer upon arrival in Honolulu.

for a series of meets on July 27, 1921.\textsuperscript{75} He had personal relationships with coaches and administrators at the Ivy League institution. It would be hard to believe that word about Thurston’s disrespectful displays would not have gotten back to Kahanamoku. In addition, Thurston would continue to disparage native Hawaiian practices after his Yale days as the editor and owner of the \textit{Honolulu Advertiser}.

Commenting in an oral history late in his life about the ridiculousness of ancient Hawaiian traditions and beliefs Thurston recounted a time in Kona when he had dinner with Alice Brown, a friend of his and the custodian of “Hulihee palace.” He noted that it was a beautiful summer evening and Brown asked if he “would have the courage to go over to the point there - - Kamehameha’s old place?” Native Hawaiians considered the property sacred ground and respected it by not visiting it at night or partaking of improper activities there. Thurston displaying his disregard for Hawaiian traditions answered Brown, “Courage? Why, what do you mean? . . . Let’s go over there and find out what they [native Hawaiians] were afraid of.” Thurston recalled that he and Brown “scrambled across the stone wall, through cactus and lantana, and finally landed on this beach out here and smoked a couple of cigarettes and went home.” He boasted that “nobody molested us or anything,” thereby dispelling any silly superstitions and legends held by native Hawaiians as ridiculous. In the same interview Thurston also categorized “old Hawaiians” as alcoholics with “loose morals” who needed white superiors to train

\textsuperscript{75} R. J.H. Kiphuth, “The Swimming Team’s Transcontinental-Hawaiian Trip, \textit{Yale News}, 29 September 1921, p. 3.
and guide them in proper behavior.76 For both Thurstons, native Hawaiians needed to understand their place of subjugation to white Hawaiians.77

In contrast, for Kahanamoku the issue was not native Hawaiian or local Hawaiian, it was how much respect one gave to Hawaiian ways and traditions. He wanted others, including anyone who visited the islands, to understand the *aloha* spirit of Hawai`i. Kahanamoku reminisced that he could not recall when he started greeting visitors. “I’ve been meeting people as long as I can remember,” he told a reporter in 1965. He explained that “the *malihinis* (newcomers) didn’t know what the *aloha* spirit was so I tried to show them. I know the beauty of these islands and I wanted them to know it too.”78

Hawaiian values and ethnicity defined Kahanamoku in many ways. As both a local boy and a native Hawaiian who established himself as a world-class athlete, he carried those values with him wherever he traveled. He stood out physically as his dark-skinned six foot two inch frame carried his muscular 210 pound body with the gracefulness of a deer yet clearly exhibited the enormous power laden in his muscles. Kahanamoku’s personality however, exuded warmth, humility and compassion. A physically imposing figure who held a welcoming aura, as Kahanamoku burst upon the Olympic stage and was crowned a champion, he exhibited not only the progress of the civilization process that American proponents of assimilation hoped could achieve in the “native” people. He also brought to the world his simple beliefs of *aloha, mana, lokahi*

77 Ibid, 15.
and his hope to honor his `ohana through his athletic prowess. The beauty of the islands were reflected around the world in the representation of Duke Kahanamoku. A man who rarely trumpeted his own accomplishments he established his mana through his athletic exploits and the Olympic Games became center stage for this display. If there had been any doubt as to what a true Hawaiian looked like before 1912, Kahanamoku destroyed that doubt by giving people around the world a living picture of Hawai`i and its culture. Kahanamoku would be the frame of reference for understanding this polyglot society for decades to come.
CHAPTER 3

THE RISE OF A DUKE: A NEW MONARCH EMERGES, NOT FROM THE ASHES BUT FROM THE SEA

On the 12th of August in 1911 Duke Paoa Kahanamoku burst upon the consciousness of the athletic world. On that memorable day in the Alakea Slip at Honolulu Harbor, Kahanamoku not only won the 50, 100 and 220 yard, events leading his Hui Nalu team to victory in the first ever Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) swimming event in Hawai`i, he shattered records in the process. In swimming the 50-yard race in 24 1/5 seconds he broke the world record for the event by 1 3/5 seconds. But even more amazingly in the 100-yard race he destroyed the world record by 4 3/5 seconds in swimming the distance in 55 2/5 seconds.\(^1\) National AAU officials refused to accept the records. They refused to believe that an unknown swimmer from Hawai`i could beat established records by nearly five seconds. They reasoned that the record claims were “impossible” since “records nowadays are broken by fractions of seconds, not full seconds.”\(^2\) Regardless of the national governing body’s decision, a new hero had arisen in Hawai`i and shown promise to challenge the best swimmers that the world could offer. Crowned as the king of Hawaiian “watermen,” Kahanamoku carried upon his broad shoulders the hopes of the territory struggling to find its identity in a period of political and social change.

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\(^1\) “Swimming Meet,” The Hawaiian Star, 14 August 1911, p. 8.
\(^2\) “Kahanamoku Appointed Supervisor,” Honolulu Advertiser, 20 November 1930, p. 3.
In the minds and hearts of Hawaiians of all ethnic backgrounds, Kahanamoku became their “Duke.” He represented the idyllic image of the islands, virile, handsome, and gifted; yet at the same time he retained a humble and caring sense for others. Kahanamoku exhibited all of the qualities which were required from a leader in traditional Hawaiian culture. His magnificent performances in Honolulu Harbor signaled the brilliant beginning of a rich and long career of a man who symbolizes Hawaiian identity.

While Kahanamoku achieved early hero status at home in Hawai‘i, in comparison to other sport heroes of the era the mainland American press rarely acknowledged the brilliance of his swimming. The relative isolation of Hawai‘i could explain some of this lack of coverage. Yet news from Honolulu made its way through San Francisco on a daily basis regarding many other issues of public concern. Given the steadily growing appetite for sport in the United States it is hard to imagine that the feats of Kahanamoku’s failed to cross the desks of news reporters and editors. Kahanamoku set standards for longevity in Olympic competition as a member of Olympic teams in four different Olympic Games spanning twenty years. He won three gold, two silver and one bronze medals. These facts are even more amazing considering that he began his Olympic career at the age of twenty-two, and he did not get the opportunity to compete in 1916 because the Games, scheduled for Berlin that year, were cancelled due to World War I. He also did not compete in the 1928 Games due to illness during Olympic qualifying. His bid for the 1932 Los Angeles Games swimming team at the ripe age of forty-two fell
just short as he finished one place out of qualifying in the trials. He still made the 1932 water polo team as an alternate, earning a bronze medal.³

In the United States during the 1910s and 1920s track and field athletes attracted the lion’s share of media attention at the Olympic Games. The focus on track and field hampered the ability of Kahanamoku to claim his rightful place in the mainland’s pantheon of sports store. Track and field’s grip on attention was so great that in its reporting of the 1920 Olympic Games in Antwerp the New York Times ran front-page stories on the Games until the track events were finished. After that date, they no longer ran any front-page reports on the Games and most of the Olympic articles found themselves buried deep in the sports pages. Unfortunately for Kahanamoku, the majority of the swimming events fell on dates after the track and field portion of the competition concluded and the public consciousness of the Olympics had waned. The lack of attention directed towards Kahanamoku was in part due to swimming’s status as a minor pastime in American sporting culture, especially compared to Olympic track and field.⁴ Other Olympic stars also eclipsed Kahanamoku’s fame. Jim Thorpe, Paavo Nurmi, and Charlie Paddock all stole some of the thunder from Kahanamoku’s legend. Thorpe dominated press coverage and became the story of the 1912 Games in Stockholm. Thorpe won the pentathlon and the decathlon, becoming heralded as “the greatest athlete


⁴ It is abundantly clear that track and field was the focus of the American Public and Press in the Olympic Games. In both previews and wrap-ups of the Games, the focus of attention is solely on Track and Field. Examples of this are: B. Moss, “America’s Olympic Argonauts, Harper’s Weekly 56 (6 July 1912): 11-12; Walter Camp, “The Olympic Games Of 1912,” Colliers 49 (6 July 1912): 22-26.
of the age.”

Nurmi and Paddock in later games would draw the attention of the media away from Kahanamoku for their feats in track and field. Johnny Weissmuller, a fellow swimmer who finally conquered Kahanamoku as the Olympic swimming champion in 1924, also stole the spotlight from Kahanamoku as he surpassed the elder swimmer.

Still, Kahanamoku managed to create a lasting memory in people’s minds as a Hawaiian swimming champion.

While Kahanamoku did not garner headlines or enjoy the status that Thorpe or Paddock earned, it would be incorrect to classify the swimmer as anything less than a celebrity. The American media and the American Olympic Committee (AOC) officials utilized his abilities, as well as those of Thorpe, to prove that American superiority did not rest solely in the leftover bloodlines of Europeans. Kahanamoku and Thorpe became living proof of the superiority of the melting pot in American culture.

The overarching plot line of the 1912 Stockholm Games was the ascension of the Americans to an unchallenged seat on the world’s sporting throne at the expense of the British. The English team fared very poorly at these Games. These two nations had been feuding for years through sport and the Americans were anxious to prove that they were a unique people, far superior to the English. The ideal of a new American breed of people with their own unique games saw their impetus in the invention of an American myth for the origins of baseball and the development of American football as opposed to English

7 Mark Dyreson, Making the American Team: Sport, Culture and the Olympic Experience (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 117-120, 158, 160
soccer. American Olympic leaders eagerly anticipated opportunities to prove American superiority and uniqueness due to the melting pot ethnic makeup of their athletic squads.

At the 1912 Stockholm Games, the American team exhibited a considerable degree of racial diversity. Current Literature, a popular upper-class periodical of the day, commented upon the heterogeneity of the American team when it mentioned that “among our contestants there is a Carlisle Indian (Jim Thorpe), the ‘best all-round athlete in America,’ and a Hopi Indian from Arizona (Lewis Tewanima), a crack Marathon racer.” Current Literature also focused on “‘Duke’ Kahanamoku, the Hawaiian, who swam 220 yards in the ‘tryout’ in New York in two minutes and forty seconds, the next best man taking six seconds longer.” In addition, the essay highlighted Howard Drew, “the negro boy, who broke the world’s record a few days ago for the 100 meters race.” The magazine concluded, “Never before in the forces of our invading teams has the make-up of the athletic army been so truly national.” In this instance, when it benefited the purposes of the American nationalistic aims, Kahanamoku gained full acceptance into American citizenship. Literary Digest pointed out that along with “a vast population recruited from the best ‘red blood’” of European nations, the American team added to this potion the “inclusion of Indians, Hawaiians, and one Anglo-Russian” to create American supremacy.

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9 Dyreson, Making the American Team, 157-158.
For American sporting leaders this mixed racial character lent support to the idea that the United States had developed sport champions who were separated from the old English bloodlines of the past. Thorpe, Kahanamoku, and Drew were important members of the team. Their successes proved American uniqueness from European, and expressly British, standards. An article in *The Independent* articulated this point by declaring, “The United States owes its supremacy over all other nations to the fact that it is a union of all races. The men in whom we take pride have not only English, Scotch, Welsh and Irish blood in their veins, but Italian, Hawaiian, Indian and other blood as well.”

The addition of Kahanamoku to the United States Olympic team in 1912 bolstered the American media’s assertions as the Hawaiian athlete dominated the swimming events. Kahanamoku won the premiere swimming race, the 100-meter freestyle, in Stockholm. In winning the gold medal Kahanamoku shattered the world record for the event and asserted himself as the king of Olympic swimmers. Kahanamoku along with Perry McGillivray, Henry Hebner, Kenneth Huszaghalso, also won the silver medal in the 800 meter relay event. Otto Wahle, an advisory member for the U.S. swimming team, noted that Kahanamoku “made the best sprinters of the world look like novices.”

The British responded by stating that they had not done too badly against the “American empire.” The British accused the Americans of searching through their colonies to find top athletes. “It has American Indians among its runners, and for its

champion swimmer a Hawaiian chief, born and bred among a people who live in the
surf,” charged the *Evening Standard* of London. The British editorial surmised that “if we [The British Empire] were to draw on all our racial resources, we too might produce a South Sea Islander who could swim better than any European or an Indian runner who might win the marathon race.” 15 Obviously, European critics had noticed the success of Kahanamoku and his participation aroused some controversy.

In the U.S., the enormously popular fictional Irish-American comedic character, created by Finley Peter Dunne, “Mr. Dooley,” chided the British for their accusations. Mr. Dooley smirked that “Annyhow th’ English are not goin’ to be vanquished, mind ye. They’re a stubborn race. A comity iv four Lords has been apointed to gather in atheletes fr’m ivery corner iv th’ arth wherever th’ flag iv England floats. Hinceforth ‘twill not be nicisery f’r anny Englishman to do anything at these compitisions but dhrink his cup iv tea an’ cry ‘n, ‘Well run Sir,’ as his fellow Briton. Arrabegoolijah Khan iv Afganystan, buts the tape.” 16

In this manner, it became apparent that the American media and leaders had intentionally utilized athletes such as Thorpe and Kahanamoku to prove American multiracial superiority. In the twenty-first century it is hard to imagine that the critical racial debate of this time was not drawn solely with color lines but focused on nationality, primarily on American versus English supremacy. In an article entitled “Race Questions at the Olympics” in *The Independent*, the questions asked concerned the differences in

the British and the American nature. The article made no mention of what many would consider “race issues” in contemporary times. Skin color had little part in the discussion. At the same time Current Literature wondered “Why the Native American Does So Badly at the Olympic Games?” Once again, this is not a discussion of Jim Thorpe, or any other indigenous native; rather it dealt with the native born American irrespective of ethnicity. Race, in these debates, was a symbol of nationalism and power. Moreover, to determine that racial power, people of color became instruments to prove United States dominance to the rest of the world. Ironically, these same athletes lifted to prominence in worldwide competitions, struggled in the throes of second-class citizenship in their American homeland.

In spite of the fact that the American media heralded him as a symbol of racial equality, Kahanamoku regularly struggled against racial prejudice. He was a proud man yet he had a humble nature and warmly embraced all people. Growing up in Honolulu, racial tensions were always present, but Kahanamoku had his ‘ohana (family) and the ocean to comfort him. Native Hawaiians felt discrimination in the islands, yet they realized that elite whites regarded many other ethnic groups such as the Japanese and

Chinese as inferior to the native population. Investigative journalist Ray Stannard Baker explained that “the natives and part-natives are the only elements of the diverse population of Hawaii who are at all accepted in white society.”

One reason for a limited acceptance of native Hawaiians by white elites may be explained by the fact that many of them had family members who were of Hawaiian descent. In the 1800s it became clear to white settlers that the easiest road to political power rested in intermarriage into ali`i families. Thus, the Bishops, Castles, Wilcoxs, and other important haole families increased their power in the islands through matrimonial mergers. Hence, the children of these families were of mixed lineage and the acceptance of Hawaiian ethnics was greater than white tolerance for other Pacific Islander or Asian groups.

However, this limited acceptance by white society had its firm boundaries. The elite haoles struggled with their own sense of proper ethnic relations. The print media, dominated by haole leaders constantly delivered mixed messages. One day they would herald their polyglot heritage and assert that the “striving for the same goal in friendly rivalry” that was evidenced in the Olympic Games was the same phenomenon that “one might see almost any afternoon here in Honolulu at a baseball game.” A Pacific Commercial Advertiser editor emphasized that the various national strains of people in Honolulu can “be found playing together with never a thought to his mate’s parentage, religion or birth, and caring only that he play the best there is in him for the good of the

game and the honor of real sport.”

While this idyllic version of Hawai`i society looked appealing, Hawaiian newspapers also published blatantly racist editorials. An article in the *Sunday Advertiser* extolled the virtues of a “white Australia.” The newspaper made the case that Australia could become “a Canada without its inhospitable weather and mixed population; another United States without its negro problem; another South America without its diverse political interests and its wildly mongrel peoples.” The *Sunday Advertiser* argued that “The dream is more than possible if Australia keeps itself white” and this distinction is one that is “rare enough to be worth preserving.” Clearly, there was tension amidst the ideals of the Honolulu elite. On the one hand, they longed for white racial purity. At the same time, they championed the polyglot structure which was reality in the islands.

Kahanamoku experienced this schizophrenia first hand as a young man. He found that he was not welcome in every circle of Hawaiian society. He competed for a beach club called the *Healanis* in a paddling race as an unattached member when they needed him for victory, but when he later applied for full membership, his ethnicity led the club to reject him. Deeply offended, Kahanamoku started his own club called the *Hui Nalu*, which had no ethnic or class barriers. There were full-blooded Hawaiians and *haoles*, beach boys and Congressional delegates, such as Jonah Kuhio Kalanianaole, who were all members of *Hui Nalu*. In an autograph book of Kahanamoku’s at the Bishop

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Museum Archives is a beautiful page of calligraphy and a drawing which explains the “why of the *Hui Nalu.*” It contains the three names of the original members, “Duke P. Kahanamoku #2, William A. “Knute” Cottrell #3, Kenneth S. Winter #1” at the top of the page. The document notes that the *Hui Nalu* was “Founded by the Three of us at Waikiki Beach July-1908-.” It then follows with a section entitled “Fellowship – (The why of the Hui Nalu) by J.J.Y. Riley,” which testifies:

> When a man ain’t got a cent and he’s feeling kinda blue. And the clouds hang dark and dreary and won’t let the sunshine through. It’s a great thing, O my brethren, for a fellow just to lay his hand upon your shoulder in a friendly sort of way. It makes a man feel queerish, it makes the teardrops start. An’ you sort o’ feel a flutter in the region of your heart; you can’t look up and meet his eyes; you don’t know what to say. When his hand is on your shoulder in a friendly sort of way. O, the worlds a curious compound with its honey and its gall. With its cares and bitter crosses, but a good world after all. And a good God must have made it - - Leastwise that is what I say. Then a hand is on your shoulder in a friendly sort of way.

> In Friendship-Fidelity-Fealty to you old gal, and “Meke ke Aloha pau ole,” Knute

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The *Hui Nalu* represented for Kahanamoku the kind of brotherhood and friendship that Kahanamoku believed should exist in athletic and social endeavors.

When troubles came and times were hard that those around you would put their hand on your shoulder and support you regardless of your ethnicity, race or social standing.

Kahanamoku’s response to racism was to form friendships with those who lived under

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26 “Hui Nalu Page” Found in Duke Kahanamoku’s Autograph book, Box 8, Duke Kahanamoku Collection MS Group 254, hereafter referred to as DKC, Bishop Museum Archives, Honolulu, Hawaii, hereafter BMA.
the virtues of *aloha* and when he could to walk away from those who rejected him due to color barriers.

Growing up in the complex racial culture of Hawai‘i did not prepare Kahanamoku for what he would experience on the mainland on his first trip there for the 1912 AAU meet. Kahanamoku’s complexion was darker than that of many African-Americans. As he traveled through the mainland, he related to his biographer the strange ways people would look at him as he entered stores and restaurants. “Friendliness was scarce,” he revealed. He remembered that on a trip to Pittsburgh to compete in an Olympic qualifying meet, one restaurant even refused to serve him due to his skin color.27

The mainland media regularly commented upon his skin color and ethnicity at the beginning of his career. Some mainland papers linked Kahanamoku to “negro” athletes. *The Detroit Free Press* ran a headline on its Olympic coverage of the 1912 Stockholm Games which read, “Two Dark-Skinned Athletes With American Team.” The photo underneath the headline showed Howard Drew, the African-American sprinter, and Duke Kahanamoku both decked out in their Olympic team travel uniforms.28

Many mainland newspapers described Kahanamoku as “ebony skinned,” “the brown brother,” and a “typical Hawaiian.”29 In referring to him as a “typical Hawaiian,” the media drew upon stereotypes many people held concerning Hawaiians. Not all of the stereotyping was positive. Popular writers of the early twentieth century depicted

Hawaiians as a dying race and claimed they were lacking in “moral fiber.” In addition, Hawaiians were thought to have “never been a really good worker[s],” who still “cling to their old beliefs” with tenacity, and who worshipped goddesses such as Madame Pele, whom Overland Monthly writer Eliot Kays Stone equated with “his Satanic Majesty.”

Popular author Mark Twain depicted Hawai‘i as a land where one could “come down the mountain a piece and board with a godly, breech-clouted native, and eat poi and dirt and give thanks, to whom all thanks belong, for those privileges and never house-keep any more.” Referred to as “lotus-eaters,” the Hawaiian reputation for being laid back translated into being “spendthrifts of golden hours, to whom the striking of the clock, as time ticks on, is no more than the tinkling of bells stirred by the breeze.” In light of these assumed traits, many Americans felt that these islands should be, as the American empire-builder Theodore Roosevelt argued, “developed along traditional American lines.” These child-like natives only salvation would be through the civilizing acts of Americans who were “men with brain and brawn to come to her shores, to make their homes there, to ‘take up the white man’s burden.’” With stereotypes such as these filling the minds of Americans, the experiences that Kahanamoku had on the mainland were not surprising.

Regardless of his treatment, Kahanamoku represented Hawai‘i with a graceful,
easygoing manner. For those who questioned what Hawaiians were truly like, once they had encountered the “Duke” they were convinced that the islanders had to be the most wonderful people on earth. Unsure about his true name, early accounts of Kahanamoku in mainland newspapers tended to parenthesize his given name, Duke, due to the controversy surrounding his heritage.  

People often wondered whether he was a duke by birthright in Hawai`i, since there were rumors that he was a descendent from the royal lineage of Kamehameha. Olympic teammate and gold medalist Aileen Riggins recalled that “of course, his name intrigued us. He wasn’t really a duke, but I think the Duke of Edinburgh, or someone, had visited the islands when he was an infant and his family thought that was a nice name.” Actually, Kahanamoku was named Duke after his father. The elder Kahanamoku was born during the Duke of Edinburgh’s visit to the islands in 1869.

In 1917, the New York Times sought to clarify the origins of the swimmer’s first name. “There are a half a dozen important events in Hawaii’s history which are still referred to by old-time Hawaiians as unusual incidents and one of these was the English peer’s visit,” the New York reporter revealed. “During his sojourn in the Hawaiian capital a son was born to a high chief, whose family was named Kahanamoku. The son was named Duke in honor of the visiting peer, who was sponsor at the christening. The son of the first Duke Kahanamoku is the present Duke,” the New York newspaper

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Late in 1912, when reporters had gotten to know Kahanamoku and learned about his heritage, the parenthetical approach ceased. In later years, some reporters referred to him as “The Duke” using the term as a nickname or term of endearment, a common sportswriting technique of the period.39 These terms of endearment were not surprising to those who knew Kahanamoku well and believed he embodied the *aloha* spirit of the islands. In many ways his complexity mirrors that of the word *aloha*, a term with many meanings. The most common are as a greeting, hello, and goodbye and yet *aloha* also means pity, mercy, compassion and connotations of deep love and affection.40 The intricacy of this simple, common Hawaiian word remarkably reflects the depth of a simple Hawaiian athlete whose personality served as a living example of *aloha*. In fact, *aloha* became Kahanamoku’s life value. Later in his career he had a quotation printed on the back of all of his business cards later in life. The quotation read:

“*Aloha*’ MEANS ‘Love’

In Hawaii we greet friends, loved ones or strangers with ALOHA which means with love. ALOHA is the key word to the universal spirit of real hospitality which made Hawaii renowned as the world’s center of understanding and fellowship. Try meeting or leaving your brother nobles with ALOHA, you’ll be surprised by their reactions of Aloha of Love. I believe it, and it is my creed.

Aloha TO YOU, Duke  

During the 1912 Olympics, Kahanamoku immediately became a favorite of the people in Stockholm thanks to the *aloha* spirit he embodied. The *New York Times*

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41Duke Kahanamoku, “Aloha is Love,” Found on the back of Aloha Temple Masons Business Card. DKC, Box 1, File16, Hawaii State Archives, Honolulu, Hawaii, hereafter referred to as HSA.
reported that the Hawaiian, who “has become one of the most popular characters at the
Olympics had a distinguished assembly to witness his predestined and easy triumph.”
King Gustav V of Sweden and most of the royal family, including the Queen who was in
deep mourning for her father, the late King of Denmark, crowded the “triumph box” to
see Kahanamoku swim in the final heat of the 100-meter race. The paper also noted that
the Crown Princess appeared “to be intensely interested.”42 The king took special notice
of Kahanamoku and had shown up the day before to watch the Hawaiian swim during
practice. King Gustav asked to “see the famous swimmer in action so Kahanamoku gave
an exhibition of his skill receiving the personal thanks and congratulations of the King.”43
After Kahanamoku’s victory in the 100-meter heat, the king rose and beckoned the
swimmer into the royal box where the Swedish monarch “clasped his hand and
congratulated him heartily, declaring it was a pleasure to meet the man who had lowered
the pride of the world’s best swimmers.” The king then introduced Kahanamoku to the
rest of the royal family and dignitaries in the box.44

Later in the Games, after winning the 100-meter freestyle final, King Gustav V
personally awarded Kahanamoku his medal and bestowed the traditional olive wreath
upon the swimmer’s head signifying victory and the connection to the ancient Greek
Olympic Games. Decades later, Kahanamoku recalled this moment in an interview with
*Hawaii Star-Bulletin* reporter Fran Reidelberger. Fondly handling a framed wreath on
his wall, Kahanamoku confessed to the writer, “I was just a big dumb kid when King

Gustav gave me this. I didn’t even know what it was really and almost threw it away.”

Kahanamoku proudly exclaimed that “now it is my most prized trophy.”

This was not the only time that Kahanamoku won the adoration of royalty. Throughout his life, Kahanamoku entertained royals. At the 1920 Antwerp Games, King Albert of Belgium made a point of seeing the great Hawaiian swim and personally presented Kahanamoku with a gold medal. After the ceremony, the Belgian monarch also allowed the Olympic champion swimmer to come into the royal box to take a picture.

Kahanamoku did not only meet with royalty on his visits to the Olympic Games, they also sought him out in his homeland as well. English Crown Prince Edward, the Prince of Wales, arrived in the Hawaiian Islands in 1920 for the Hawaiian Missionary Centennial. The British royal wanted to meet the world-renowned Kahanamoku. Prince Edward asked Kahanamoku to teach him to surf. Duke heartily agreed. Kahanamoku’s coach, George “Dad” Center, made the arrangements. Kahanamoku and the heir to the throne of England spent the day surfing, first in an outrigger canoe and then on surfboards. Kahanamoku later told Center, “Dad, I never felt so comfortable with a man. We have a big aloha for each other.” Center replied, “Why not? You’re both right guys.” The Prince enjoyed his visit so much that he made another unplanned stop later in


the year to surf with the Olympic champion.\textsuperscript{47}

Kahanamoku was comfortable around royalty, but he also gained the adoration of the masses. In Stockholm at the 1912 Games, “the vast throng of more than ten thousand people cheered and yelled and gave him an ovation that he will remember as long as he lives,” noted the \textit{Pacific Commercial Advertiser} after one of his preliminary heats.\textsuperscript{48} At the 1920 Antwerp Olympics, the \textit{New York Times} reported that as Kahanamoku practiced, “a large crowd” came out to see him perform.\textsuperscript{49} For Kahanamoku this was nothing new. Since his astounding victory in Stockholm, flocks of tourists had come to Waikiki to watch him surf, swim and to get pictures with him. Amazingly, he was always cordial and welcoming. From tourists and fans to the beach boys and royals, the people flocked to the Waikiki legend.\textsuperscript{50}

Passive observers were not the only ones attracted to Kahanamoku. Fellow athletes also enjoyed being around this ukulele playing Hawaiian and he developed many friendships through his international competitions. Kahanamoku’s welcoming nature scored points among his teammates. Aileen Riggin, the gold medalist in springboard diving at the 1920 Olympic Games, remembers that on the boat to Antwerp “the Hawaiians would entertain us.” Kahanamoku was the leader of the eleven Hawaiians on the trip and she remembers him as “a magnificent looking man, he had a marvelous build, and he was just as nice as he looked. They played at night, they all brought their ukuleles


\textsuperscript{48} “Swedish Royalty,” p.1.


and guitars and they all had beautiful voices.”

Charlie Paddock, the great American Olympic sprinter of the 1920s, remembered “the Duke” in his autobiography. In recalling his visit to the islands in 1922, when Kahanamoku came out to greet his boat in a tiny launch, Paddock revealed, “The same strength that marked Kamehameha belongs to Kahanamoku. No other Hawaiian possesses so much sheer power. He can launch an outrigger alone; he can ride the waves on his great board, and he can out swim all his countrymen.” Coming from Paddock, the ceaseless self-promoter, this was indeed high praise. The warmth that Kahanamoku generated with his teammates also extended to his relationships with his competitors as well.

His graciousness with those competitors extended even into the pool itself. Due, in part, to a community spirit inherent in his native Hawaiian culture, Kahanamoku found it “painful to embarrass an opponent” by beating them by extraordinary distances. A preliminary heat at the Stockholm Games demonstrated this trait of Kahanamoku’s. In this race, he jumped out to a commanding lead and “half way down the tank turned to survey the rest of the field. His nearest rival was ten feet behind. Kahanamoku slowed down after that and seemed to swim leisurely.” Kahanamoku still won the race easily but all the swimmers were “so close to one another that none of them had reason to be ashamed of the performance.” As Kahanamoku exited the pool to a great ovation, “men of various nationalities” were “slapping him on the back and shaking hands.” One of the men he beat in this race, Cecil Healy, would become a good friend of Kahanamoku’s.

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53 Brennan, Duke, 5.
54 “Briton Outraces American Runners,” p. 3.
and would be instrumental in inviting him to Australia in 1914-1915. On that famous trip, Kahanamoku would demonstrate surfing to Australia and make such an impression that the Australians erected a statue and named a beach after him.\textsuperscript{55}

Healy revealed the respect he had for his Kahanamoku during a pivotal event in the 1912 Games. Due to a mix-up concerning starting times for the 100-meter semifinal, Kahanamoku and the other Americans were sleeping aboard the \textit{U.S.S. Finland} at the time of the race. This was the second time Kahanamoku had been late to a race in these Games. The first time Michael “Turk” McDermott, one of Kahanamoku’s teammates, ran back to the ship and alerted Kahanamoku that his race was about to start. They sprinted to the swimming arena and Duke arrived and asked the starter to hold the race long enough to put on his bathing suit. The officials assented after scolding the young Hawaiian. Kahanamoku then won his heat easily.\textsuperscript{56}

Days after the mix up of the semifinal start time, the Americans protested and asked for the race to re-swum. Healy, the Australian swimmer, who had won the semifinal and would have been the favorite to win the gold medal with the Americans out of the picture, stood up for Kahanamoku. He refused to race in the final if the Americans could not swim. The officials decided that the Americans would swim in an independent heat and the winner would qualify for the finals. Kahanamoku won that heat and the subsequent final, thanks in no small part to Cecil Healy and the respect he held for

\textsuperscript{56} Brennan, \textit{Duke}, 52.
Kahanamoku.\textsuperscript{57}

Not only did Kahanamoku gain the adoration of teammates, foes, royalty and the masses as an athlete, his reputation began to develop peculiar depth. In his book, Paddock alluded to a prophecy uttered by Kamehameha which stated that “Some day my people will lose their freedom; some day they will have been so stricken that only a handful shall remain. In that time will come a man, strong like myself, who can launch an outrigger, throw a spear and ride the surf as I. The fame of that man shall go throughout the world, and the name of my people will not be forgotten.”\textsuperscript{58} In Paddock’s mind the person of Duke Paoa Kahanamoku fulfilled this prophesy. The image of Kahanamoku as the second coming of Kamehameha is not unique to Paddock. Many others saw the similarities and utilizing the notion of royal blood running throughout his veins, Kahanamoku became an unofficial King of Hawai`i.

As a result, Kahanamoku was revered by many as a member of the \textit{Ali`i}, or chiefs, and assumed the role as the representative for Hawai`i around the world and at home. As a result, he became a bridge between the past and the present. Kahanamoku contained in his veins the remnants of the old ali`i blood and yet was a modern man in every sense. In essence, he was the perfect representation of a figurehead King. Kahanamoku became a monarch who held no political or economic power, but had worldwide renown for his athletic achievements. In this way with the aid of the media, Kahanamoku accepted the role offered to him through sport to represent Hawai`i as a modern state.

\textsuperscript{57} Hall and Ambrose, \textit{Memories}, 6.
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid, 139.
CHAPTER 4

KAHANAMOKU AS A MARKETING TOOL: HAWAIIAN AND AMERICAN IDOL

Sport historian Daniel A. Nathan argues that successful athletes in the early twentieth century “often personified specific values and represented particular ethnic, racial and religious constituencies.” As a result, these athletes had enormous cultural meaning. Duke Paoa Kahanamoku emerged as one of those special athletes who transcended the world of sport and, as Nathan suggested, “served as powerful symbols of success, daring and rugged individualism.” Hawaiian haole leaders realized the power of Kahanamoku’s cultural impact early on and made efforts to utilize it while at the same time carefully keeping the young athlete from holding any recognizable position of political influence which would threaten their status hold on power in the islands.¹

Kahanamoku’s entrance upon the worldwide stage of the Olympic Games became a godsend as a tool for Hawaiian leaders. His newfound fame allowed him opportunities to promote Hawai‘i. He traveled to Australia in 1914 with a small touring group to promote Hawai‘i. After he returned to his homeland from Australia, he quickly left again to represent the territory at the 1915 Panama Pacific exposition in San Francisco, not only

as a swimmer in the athletic events but also decked out in traditional dress.\textsuperscript{2}

Kahanamoku spoke Hawaiian, loved the hula and became the father of modern surfing, all of which were activities banned at one time or another through \textit{haole} influence.\textsuperscript{3}

Surfing and the hula were both making their comebacks in Hawaiian culture when Kahanamoku grew up. Hula had been viewed by missionaries as an improper dancing form which encouraged illicit sexual activity. The missionaries banished the hula. Surfing also came under the scrutiny of the missionaries who saw it as an unwholesome act of play which failed to bring one closer to God or to the modern work ethic. In 1882, Honolulu writer Nathaniel B. Emerson lamented that surfing had “felt the touch of civilization and today it is hard to find a surf board outside of our museums.” Emerson noted that surfing, which had been practiced by both sexes, “was found to be discountenanced by the new morality.”\textsuperscript{4} In the late 1880s King David Kalakaua attempted to restore some of the traditional Hawaiian games and pastimes. To that end when writing down many of the oral legends of Hawaiian history into a book in 1888 he included a chapter entitled “Kalea, The Surf-Rider of Maui,” to illustrate the importance of the sport in Hawaiian culture.\textsuperscript{5} An interest in native Hawaiian traditions by natives accounted for some of the interest but the allure of tourism in the early twentieth century, which the \textit{haole} elites realized could turn profitable, also contributed to an easing of

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\item Haunani-Kay Trask, \textit{From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai’i} (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1993), 16.
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restrictions on the practices.6

Alexander Hume Ford, early Hawai`i promoter and publisher, realized the potential of reviving Hawaiian traditions. He founded the Outrigger Canoe Club in 1908 in order “to give an added and permanent attraction to Hawaii and make Waikiki always the Home of the Surfer.”7 Ford loved surfing. He and George Freeth began to introduce the sport to tourists. Freeth, whose mother was a Hawaiian native and whose father was an Irish sailor moved to California and introduced surfing at Redondo Beach in the spring of 1907. Surfing historian Nat Young explained that railroad baron Henry Huntington had brought Freeth over to the mainland “to demonstrate surfboard riding as a publicity stunt to promote the opening of the Redondo-Los Angeles railroad,” which Huntington owned. Freeth chose to stay in California rather than return to Hawai`i. He became the first lifeguard at Huntington Beach.8 Ironically, Kahanamoku is regarded as the “Father of Surfing” and is recognized as such in the very town in which Freeth became a noted surfer and lifeguard. At the Huntington Beach Surfing Walk of Fame, Kahanamoku was the first elected inductee in 1994, with no vote needed to certify his status as the inventor of modern surfing. Although Freeth has not been elected into the Surfing Hall of Fame, even though he actually introduced surfing to California, Freeth paved the way for Kahanamoku’s success.9 Freeth moved to California before Kahanamoku and also won a

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9 Artist Unknown, Duke Kahanamoku, Engraving on Tile, 1994, Sidewalk Surfing Hall of Fame, Corner of Main Street and the Pacific Coast Highway (PCH), Huntington Beach, California. Under Duke Kahanamoku’s name is the title “Father of Surfing,” which probably applies more accurately to Freeth.
Carnegie medal for bravery as well as a Congressional Medal of Honor in a rescue that. Young reports that “in December, 1908 Freeth made three trips through mountainous surf to rescue seven Japanese fisherman.”10 Rescues like these ironically denied Freeth the opportunity to compete in the 1912 Stockholm Olympic Games because as a lifeguard he was considered a “professional.” Freeth, regardless of his own personal restrictions to join the Olympic movement, arranged for Kahanamoku and Vincent Genoves to come to the mainland and compete to attempt to earn a spot on the American Olympic team.11

Freeth’s counterpart in the re-establishment of Hawaiian surfing remained in the islands and continued to promote the sport. Ford had arrived in the islands in 1906 just weeks before Jack London made his infamous trip to Hawai‘i. In the Islands London wrote “A Royal Sport,” highlighting the art of surfing through the feats of George Freeth. A travel writer by trade, Ford met and befriended London. Ford arranged for London to learn to surf with Freeth. Through his discussions with London, Ford realized the great potential of surfing in the paradise of the Pacific and in 1908 leased property to establish the Outrigger Canoe Club. To get the club off the ground Ford asked Freeth to loosely organize the boys on the beach. Instead of the hau tree, where the boys met regularly, a club house was erected and tourists began to be charged for surf lessons, food and drink, board rentals and other sundry items. London published “A Royal Sport” when he returned to the mainland in the fall of 1907, creating a market for Ford’s endeavor. In London’s tale, millions of Americans read for the first time of the wonders of Hawai‘i

10 Young, The History of Surfing, 43.
and this new “royal sport.” The surf craze soon drew, tourists from around the world. Pictures and artwork capturing the thrill of surfing exploded in the media driving the popularity of the sport. Surfing graced the covers of magazines such as *Sunset, Mid-Pacific Magazine, and Outing.*

London’s article made Freeth famous. Henry Huntington heard about this marvel who could ride the waves of the ocean. The rail baron sent representatives to Hawai`i to entice the young man to come to California to promote Huntington’s new community at Redondo Beach. Freeth accepted and performed twice daily shows at Huntington’s hotel. Advertised as an epic of “biblical proportions,” tourists were encouraged to take the train out to the hotel and watch the twenty-three year-old Hawaiian “walk on water.” Freeth, the king of the beach at Waikiki, spread surfing throughout California. Figure 4-1

With the absence of Freeth, his fellow surfer and conduit into Hawaiian surf culture Ford developed new relationships with the locals that Freeth had rounded up. With the establishment of the Outrigger Canoe Club Ford

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13 “Girl Surfing With Red Dress,” *Sunset Magazine* 14 (July 1911), front cover; “Surfing Keiki,” *Mid-Pacific Magazine* 2 (September, 1912), front cover; Charles Sarka, “Tahitian Surf-Riding,” *Outing* 23 (January 1908), front cover. These are just a few examples of magazines which highlighted surfing on its covers.

utilized the expertise and exotic nature of these local boys to promote the club to tourists. Ford’s love for surfing and friendship with Freeth had allowed him an entry point with local surfers. Through those connections came his admiration for a youngster who would replace Freeth as the king of the beach at Waikiki, Duke Paoa Kahanamoku.

Alexander Hume Ford surfed and hung out with these young surfers and began to understand the allure of Hawai‘i and the potential commercial prospects for selling Hawaiian lifestyles. Ford also founded *The Mid-Pacific Magazine* in January 1911 devoting the journal to promoting Hawai‘i and its culture to a curious world. In the very first issue of this magazine, a young man named Duke Paoa wrote an article entitled “Riding the Surfboard.” It is unclear why Ford did not use Kahanamoku’s last name but Duke Paoa is clearly Kahanamoku. It may have been due to the fact that Kahanamoku was commonly referred to as Paoa, his mother’s last name, by his friends and family, and that Ford simply felt no need to use his father’s last name as well. While extolling the sport of surfing in this article Paoa stated that in Hawai‘i “bronze skinned men and women vie today with the white man for honors in aquatic sports once exclusively Hawaiian, but in which the white man now rivals the native.” Kahanamoku seemed to be promoting the idea that white men have proven their superiority in athletic endeavors by now challenging the native at their indigenous water sports such as surfing. In the same way Jack London had also made Ford and Freeth equals at the art of surf-riding in *The Cruise Of The Snark*. London made it clear that Freeth was merely assisting Ford in

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15 Ben Finney and James B. Houston, *Surfing: A History of the Ancient Hawaiian Sport*, (San Francisco: Pomegranate, 1996), 62. Finney and Houston claim the name of the Magazine as *The Pride of the Pacific*, but pictures of the cover of another magazine published by Ford and established on the same date show the title to be *The Mid-Pacific Magazine*. It is possible that Ford established two separate magazines on the same day but unlikely.
helping London to learn how to master the waves. In fact, London notes how after two
days of surf riding he had conquered the larger waves in the blue water.  

While Kahanamoku wrote well, especially considering that he had dropped out of
high school to help his family, it is possible that Ford ghost wrote the article and simply
used his name to give the impression of a native perspective. This seems highly probable
due to the tone of the article and its acknowledgement of the white man mastering even
the native sports. To have a native authority writing an article on the mastery of his own
sport would lend greater credence to the idea that if white men put their minds to
anything that they would succeed. Regardless, the article illustrates how white capitalists
used Kahanamoku even before he had gained access to the worldwide stage through
swimming as a representative of Hawai`i and its culture. This article was published
almost a year before Kahanamoku would dazzle the swimming world with world record
times in Honolulu Harbor and became a world renown figure. He had already dazzled
Ford with his surfing ability and the promoter of the Islands realized that the bronze
skinned Kahanamoku would be a perfect marketing tool to sell surfing and Hawai`i
around the world. 

Kahanamoku came along at the perfect time for haole leaders such as Ford. As
Kahanamoku gained worldwide acclaim through his surfing and swimming exploits, he
symbolized Hawai`i and the romantic allure of these islands. Hawaiian officials were
more than willing to have him help promote their interests. When Kahanamoku
represented Hawai`i at the 1912 Olympics, W.T. Rapono of the Oahu Baseball league

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wrote a letter to the *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*. Rapono stated, “what will be good for Duke Kahanamoku will be good promotion work for *Hawaii-nei,*” our beloved Hawai‘i.”\(^\text{18}\) In another article in the *Advertiser*, Walter G. Smits reported that tasks of the Hawai‘i promotion committee for the upcoming Panama-Pacific Exposition in San Francisco included sending out massive amounts of literature, preparing and “helping out various bands of Hawaiian singers and Duke Kahanamoku.”\(^\text{19}\)

As soon as he won Olympic gold Kahanamoku became a modern symbol for promoting the rising territory of Hawai‘i. The Hawai‘i print media’s response to Kahanamoku’s success was much different from the mainland press, as one would expect. In Honolulu, headlines tracked his every move and highlighted his record setting races. The two major haole newspapers, The *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* and the *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, established the “Kahanamoku fund” to raise money to build a house for their Olympic champion upon his return from Stockholm and the Islands embraced him as their representative to the world.\(^\text{20}\) Poems, editorials and front-page pictures were all part of the wave of tribute showered upon Kahanamoku. One cartoon pictured Kahanamoku as Olympic champion wearing an olive wreath with representatives of other nations adoring him as he towered over them. Included in the adoring horde was “Uncle Sam, exclaiming to all, ‘My adopted son, you bet!’”\(^\text{21}\)

Figure 4-2


Kahanamoku was not the first notable Hawaiian athlete to make their mark through athletic exploits and win the adoration of fans and journalists. While Kahanamoku followed the path of George Freeth in the development of surfing culture, he also followed other Hawaiian athletes footsteps in winning world championships. Ikua Purdy, a Hawaiian paniolo (cowboy) shocked the rodeo world by winning the world roping championship in 1908 in Cheyenne, Wyoming. A fellow Hawaiian, Archie Ka`au`a also placed third in the same championships that year. The two islanders were
heralded in song and legend including the “Hawaiian Rough Riders,” whose closing lines are “Famous are Ikua and Ka’au’a, spirited lassoers. Here come the cowboys, the glory of my home.” While Purdy and Ka’au’a became Hawaiian heroes they came from cowboy country in Waimea on the Big Island, far removed from the tourist center of Honolulu. Ikua Purdy had a similar ali`i heritage to Kahanamoku in that he was the great-grandson of John Palmer Parker, founder of Parker Ranch, and Kipikane, granddaughter of Kamehameha the Great. 22

Purdy however, loved ranching and had no desire to be a representative of the Hawaiian people. Purdy and Ka’au’a traveled to Wyoming with Jack Low and Parker Ranch owner Eban “Rawhide Ben” Parker Low, who paid their passage and coincidentally took sixth place in the competition. While successful in the arena, the Hawaiians experienced the same kind of racial resistance that Kahanamoku experienced. Reporting on the Frontier Days event the Cheyenne Daily Leader commented that the “brown kanakas … invaded the heart of American cow country and taught the white ropers a lesson in how to handle steers.” While novel and newsworthy, the newspaper made sure that its readers knew that it was an unwelcome turn of events. “Here was something new - - the idea of a Hawaiian cowboy defeating a real cowboy at the cowboy's own particular game.” The Hawaiian paniolos performance “took the breath

from the American cowboys, and [they] are demanding that the whites who are to rope
today let slip no opportunity to beat the time of the Honolulu experts.”

Interestingly, the same pattern of media reporting that Kahanamoku experienced
on the mainland existed for Ikua Purdy as well. Reporting the final results the headline
read, “Wyoming Loses Both
Championship Titles.” Purdy, as often
was the case with Kahanamoku, did get the
sub-headline, “Ikua Purdy Of Hawaii New
Steer Roping Champion.” Strikingly, in
the media reporting, Purdy and the other
paniolos from Hawaii were not considered
American cowboys once again signifying
the foreign element of the Hawaiians, in
the same manner that Kahanamoku would
experience.

Purdy went home to Hawai`i and became the foreman of the Ulupalakua Ranch
on Maui. Even though he preceded Kahanamoku’s success, Purdy did not possess the
intangibles that would lend themselves to being someone who could lead Hawai`i into the
modern commercial and technological world that existed on the horizon. Purdy was a
man of the aina, or land, and belonged to the older way of life of the rancher.
Kahanamoku was a man of the sea whose visions of the horizon were unbounded and

someone who interacted daily with tourists in Honolulu and Waikiki. As such, those whose dreams for Hawaii included increased marketing of the island paradise saw in Kahanamoku an untapped source of media attention and a living exhibit of *aloha*.

While the *haole* elite vision had its foundations in increased revenues for their own pockets, Kahanamoku had a slightly different agenda. Whereas he realized the need to make money to survive in the new capitalistic system which had overtaken Hawai`i, Kahanamoku still lived within the world of the older Hawai`i in which *aloha* and *mana* were the supreme values. In Kahanamoku’s worldview, his promotion of Hawai`i would help the people of Hawai`i, his people. Thus by providing for them more opportunity and greater notoriety he was giving to them and upholding his *mana*. The overthrow of the monarchy had denied Kahanamoku the ascribed status of an ali`i. However through his achievements in sport and the recognition and respect that it could bring to his people Kahanamoku was able to fulfill his family and cultural traditions of his status as a descendent of the ali`i.

Kahanamoku realized this demonstration of *mana* through representing his people through what he perceived as his god given athletic gifts.\(^{25}\) When Hawai`i called, he came to its aid. Kahanamoku saw his role as an ambassador for the people of Hawai`i and after his Olympic success he became the incarnational representation of the islands. Ironically, this great figure of Hawaiian strength came home to Honolulu to a hero’s welcome, but no opportunities for gainful employment. While lauded as “Hawai`i’s own,” Duke Kahanamoku struggled after his return to make enough money to live, even

though the people of Hawai‘i had raised money to buy him a house in Waikiki that he shared with his family.\textsuperscript{26} In the new commercial age of American consumerism, providing \textit{mana} was not enough, Kahanamoku would have to pay his own way. With no high school diploma nor professional experience, he did not present an attractive package to potential employers.

Kahanamoku failed to graduate from high school due to issues similar to many in his day. He had attended the Kamehameha schools, which at the time were far different in purpose than they are in today’s Hawai‘i. Kamehameha schools now hold an international reputation as a premiere college preparatory school, boasting 100\% of its graduates matriculating to two or four-year colleges and universities.\textsuperscript{27} In Kahanamoku’s era, the Kamehameha schools served primarily as a vocational institute to prepare native Hawaiian students to enter the job market. As the eldest son of the family, when times got tough as they periodically did for the Kahanamokus, the junior Duke had to leave school to get a job to help support the family. Later, when economic pressures eased, Kahanamoku re-enrolled at McKinley High School, a public school in Honolulu. After already serving in the work force, Kahanamoku lacked the motivation to complete his degree. He left school again.\textsuperscript{28} The lack of a degree did not leave Kahanamoku uneducated. He wrote well, read and could perform skillfully at any position he encountered. Still, the lack of a degree gave potential employers a reason to not hire the

\textsuperscript{26}J.F. Soper, “Meeting of the Duke Kahanamoku Fund Committee,” 14 March 1913, Special Collections, Hawaiian Rare Folio Room, University of Hawai‘i, Manoa: Hamilton Library, Honolulu, Hawai"

\textsuperscript{27}“Facts about Kamehameha Schools,” on Kamehameha Schools Website, \textup{http://www.ksbe.edu/about/facts.php}, accessed online on 25 November 2004.

\textsuperscript{28}Personal Interview with Earl Maikahininapaikalā Tenn, conducted on 6 May 2004 in Honolulu, Hawai‘i on the grounds of Iolani Palace.
Hawaiian hero.\textsuperscript{29} Frustrated with the lack of opportunities in his homeland, Kahanamoku received an invitation, which would afford relief for the champion while providing another opportunity to do what he did best, represent his people and share aloha.

Kahanamoku had earned an international reputation at the Stockholm Games. People were genuinely intrigued by this amazing swimmer. As early as 1913, visiting dignitaries, athletes and celebrities would seek out the Olympic champion to meet him and observe his swimming prowess. The Pacific Commercial Advertiser disclosed that the Australian national cricket team, “en route to the mainland and then to England where there they are to play the crack American and British cricket teams,” asked to see Kahanamoku demonstrate his swimming skills while in Hawai`i at the Moana hotel.\textsuperscript{30}

The interest by the Australian cricketers was only the beginning of Kahanamoku’s influence upon the land down under. Cecil Healy, the Australian Olympic swimmer who had stood up for Kahanamoku at the Stockholm Olympic Games when he had been disqualified from the 100-meter final for missing his semi-final heat, wrote to Kahanamoku inviting him to tour Australia and to take part in their national championships. Healy and the New South Wales Athletic Association helped to coordinate the event. They paid for Kahanamoku, George Cunha, who would also swim in the events and exhibitions, and Francis Evans, the Hawaiian team manager, to tour Australia and New Zealand. Evans organized the swimming party from Hawai`i and gave a detailed account to the Hui Nalu club upon their return in 1915. The trio

\textsuperscript{29} Brennan, Duke, 74.
embarked on their Australian tour in November of 1914. From the very beginning of the races in Australia, Kahanamoku impressed the Australian fans. Evans reported that the tour “as a whole was a grand success, and the performances of both Duke and Cunha far exceeded anything that was expected of them under all the circumstances.” Evans concluded his report by exclaiming that “Our Duke and Cunha worthily upheld the prestige of their native land and not only covered themselves with fame and glory but were a great advertisement for Hawaii nei.”

To state that the Hawaiian swimmers had performed well may be one of the great understatements of the day. During this short tour between mid-December, 1914, and mid-March, 1915, Kahanamoku swam in fifty-four races, placing in first place twenty-five times. He and Cunha also swam exhibitions at the races demonstrating their unique swimming styles in a variety of strokes for the fans in attendance. Kahanamoku demonstrated not only his world famous “Kahanamoku crawl,” but also variations of the breast, back, and sidestrokes as well as the Australian crawl. Given the circumstances Kahanamoku’s twenty-five wins in fifty-four races becomes even more impressive. Evans reported that “with the exception of the Championships in Sydney and one or two other races elsewhere, everything was run under the handicapping system.” While Evans lauded the handicapping system used extensively in New Zealand and Australia as great for “the development of the younger and inexperienced swimmer,” as well as the “speedier swimmer,” this system challenged Kahanamoku’s won-loss record. As Evans

31  Francis Evans, “Report to the President and Members of the Hui Nalu,” 1915, DKC, Box 6, BMA.
32  “DKC,” Box 9, BMA.
explained, “it puts everyone upon an equal footing and gives them all an equal chance to win.”

In essence, the handicapping system allowed slower swimmers a head start in front of the better swimmers, such as Kahanamoku and Cunha. On the Australian tour, Kahanamoku gave leads of up to twelve seconds in the 100-yard races and forty-five seconds in the 440-yard races. While this made for extremely exciting races at the finish, it is probably safe to say that had the races been run with everyone at scratch, as the American system operated, Kahanamoku would have won almost all of the fifty-four races in which he swam. The other problem with the handicapping system was that the times in the races were invalid for world’s records, of which Kahanamoku could have claimed a great number. Nevertheless, when factoring in the handicapping system it becomes clear that Kahanamoku dominated the world in swimming during his Australian and New Zealand tour.

Hawaiian leaders realized Kahanamoku’s marketability and got him to agree to represent them at the 1915 Panama Pacific Exposition in San Francisco. This world’s fair celebrated the opening of the Panama Canal and the explosion of growth and commerce it brought by connecting the Pacific and Atlantic oceans. Many nations built elaborate buildings at the Exposition center to highlight their cultures and promote business and tourism. The territory of Hawai‘i spent over $100,000 on its pavilion for the San Francisco exposition. One of the highlights of the Hawaiian building were

33 Francis Evans, “Report to the President.”
34 Ibid.
numerous fish tanks displaying “the most beautiful fish ever seen, fish whose painted brilliance you could not vision in your wildest dreams.”

Hawaiian representatives spent the money to enhance their image in the eyes of the world and specifically the United States. Besides the inherent beauty of the islands, Hawaiian Territorial leaders marketed themselves as the central piece of the protection of the Pacific Coast. Territorial Governor Lucius E. Pinkham elaborated this emphasis in an address he made at the exposition addressing the mainland visitors. Pinkham argued that it “is not for Hawai`i that this great military and naval outpost is being established thousands of miles in the midst of the Pacific.” Instead, he asserted that Hawai`i “exists for the protection of your Pacific Coast — your cities, your commerce and trade, and the mighty material and political progress of the United States of America.”

Pinkham’s remarks regarding the security of the U.S. had extra resonance for American listeners considering that the world found itself enveloped in the beginnings of World War I.

Pinkham attempted to position the Hawaiian Islands as an integral piece of United States security to his mainland audience. The Hawaiian delegation also promoted a person recognized around the world due to his athletic acclaim who represented not only his homeland of Hawai`i but had been used as a symbol of American national superiority. Duke Kahanamoku emerged as one of the most valuable resources that Hawai`i’s leaders could have imagined as they prepared to enter into this new global marketplace in San Francisco. After his arrival from Australia in Honolulu, Kahanamoku quickly set sail for

36 Ibid, 326.
37 Ibid
San Francisco to help with the Hawaiian delegation’s exhibit as well as to compete in the athletic contests which would be held in conjunction with the fair. 38

The Panama Pacific Exposition athletic contests had their roots in the 1900 Paris Olympic Games when the Baron De Coubertin arranged to hold the Olympics as a part of the Paris Exposition Universelle in the summer of 1900. 39 The pattern followed in the next Olympiad cycle as the Games of 1904 coincided with the St. Louis Exposition in the United States. Unfortunately, both of these Olympic Games were completely overshadowed by the enormity of the world’s fairs hosting them. Olympic historian Bill Henry noted that “the great bulk of the American people saw the year 1904 with its St. Louis exposition come and go without knowing that anything in the nature of the Olympic Games had been held in their country.”40 As a result, the Games became little more than sideshows of the fairs and fared poorly. As sport historian Mark Dyreson demonstrated “lost amid the myriads of exhibits and events at world’s fairs, the Olympic flame flickered and nearly died.”41 While the Olympic movement divorced itself from the world’s fairs in order to highlight the athletic experience, the expositions realized the popularity of athletic contests at their events and continued to offer world competitions at them.

38 “Kahanamoku to Travel to S.F. Exposition and Compete,” The Honolulu Advertiser, 26 March, 1915, p. 10.
The Pan-Pacific Exposition hired James E. Sullivan, the noted educator and leader of the A.A.U. and modern U.S. Olympic movement to organize the athletic Games in San Francisco. Sullivan’s plans were to be the “grandest ever conceived” for athletic competitions. Unfortunately, Sullivan “died on September 16, 1914 before he could see the fruition of any of them.” With the death of Sullivan and the beginning of World War I, which took many of the world’s athletes to the battlefields instead of playing fields, “the athletics of the Exposition suffered.”

Although they did not reach the level of respect that the Olympic Games did, these festivals nevertheless added to the flavor of the expositions. The San Francisco exposition had actually requested Baron de Coubertin for permission to stage the Olympic Games at the Exposition in San Francisco rather than in Berlin which had become engulfed in War. Coubertin “declared that the Games “belonged to Berlin and could not go elsewhere without Berlin’s consent.” Coubertin did however offer the “Olympic medal for the modern Pentathlon” to San Francisco. However, due to the events need for “equestrianism and a match with duelling [sic] pistols, proved impracticable and did not come off.” The Pan-Pacific Exposition lost much of the “International character” of the athletic events due to the war, but realized that their close connections with the Territory of Hawai`i could rekindle some sense of that spirit.

San Francisco organizers, recognizing their port as the natural gateway to the Hawaiian Islands in the early twentieth century, sought out Kahanamoku to participate in the swimming events. They anticipated large crowds coming to see the great champion.

43 Ibid, 111-112.
As Panama-Pacific historian and San Francisco native Frank Morton Todd explained, “the relations between San Francisco and ‘the islands’ have always been close. The island traffic has flowed through this port since they have had any traffic.” Todd noted that “to them we are always ‘the mainland,’ to us they are always ‘the Islands.’”\(^{44}\) In many ways San Francisco viewed itself as the older sister of Hawai`i, an ironic twist given that Honolulu had become a bustling multinational port city before San Francisco had developed into much more than a frontier outpost for mining supplies. In the nineteenth century Californians even sent their children to Honolulu to receive their college education at Punahou College since California did not yet have a university.\(^{45}\) Most American cruise liners embarking to Honolulu departed and returned to the city by the bay. News reports inevitably were filtered through the San Francisco papers on their way to and from Hawai`i. San Francisco had been the first mainland city that Kahanamoku had entered on his journey to the top of the swimming world. The city also hosted a meet upon his departure to Hawai`i after his Stockholm trip, cementing their connection to Kahanamoku. The *San Francisco Examiner* reported that when Duke Kahanamoku gave an exhibition in 1912 at the Olympic Club and “grabbed the rail at the end of his 100 yards swim there wasn’t a spectator who wasn’t willing to acknowledge that he had seen the fastest swimmer in the world.”\(^{46}\) San Francisco relished the idea of hosting the world’s greatest swimmer for their world’s fair. Kahanamoku did not disappoint. He dominated the swimming events during the competition and even took

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\(^{44}\) Todd, *Story of the Exposition Vol. III*, 322.

\(^{45}\) Ibid.

\(^{46}\) “Meet Results at the Olympic Club,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 25 September 1912, p. 12.
time to don traditional native attire to greet visitors to the Hawaiian exhibition.

Kahanamoku, who loved dancing the hula, also participated in some impromptu dances during the exhibition. Kahanamoku’s performances in the water drew the most attention however as he set won all three races he entered. He handily won the 50-yard freestyle, then came from behind in the last 20 yards of the 220-yard freestyle to outrace Perry McGillivray to the finish in an American record time of 2:26.4.47 The next day Kahanamoku continued his dominance winning the 100-yard swim event in a world record time of 54.4 seconds. Kahanamoku had not disappointed the organizers nor the crowds.48

Though hailed by the media and the fans, Kahanamoku continued to face racial issues regarding his celebrity. The images of his dancing the hula in native attire confirmed his status as a safe savage from a distant land. The bearer of aloha could not escape the symbolism of a world’s fair occurring in the wild West of the United States mainland. One of the most stirring and memorable images from this exhibition became the statue of the vanquished warrior on his horse by James Earl Fraser entitled “The End of the Trail.” The Native American brave with his head down in exhaustion and his spear no longer raised riding on a beleaguered horse signified to most Americans that the battle for the West had been won.49 In fact, one of the wilder territories in the West, known for its outlaws and Indian wars, Arizona, had just become the forty-eighth state of the union on February 14th, 1914. Arizona’s admission to the union proved to many in the Eastern

United States that civilization had overcome the savagery of the West. Now that the entire mainland now existed under the realm of United States law and order, the country was safe from the threat of natives. Hawai‘i’s appearance at this fair and the welcoming nature of Kahanamoku as its representative allowed Americans to believe that all was well in the land of indigenous peoples, that the work of civilization was bearing fruit.

In addition being cast in the role of the conquered savage Kahanamoku also had to deal with American disappointment and distrust of indigenous athletes. Just prior to the exposition, Kahanamoku’s teammate on the 1912 Stockholm Olympic team who had won the media acclaim as the world’s greatest athlete, Jim Thorpe, had been ruled a professional for receiving money for playing in a summer baseball league in North Carolina. American authorities stripped Thorpe of his Olympic medals. Kahanamoku, another noted indigenous athlete on that team came under scrutiny, began a long battle with Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) and U.S. Olympic officials regarding his status as an amateur.\(^{50}\) Kahanamoku’s effort to prove his amateur standing suffered another blow by the fact that his friend and fellow swimmer whom he trained with at the University of Pennsylvania had just been declared a professional. L.F. Sanville, a Kahanamoku comrade and a Penn swimmer allegedly had, while managing a hotel near Philadelphia, “given swimming instruction for which he received money, the acceptance of which made him a violator of the amateur law in athletics.” Kahanamoku had trained under the tutelage of George Kistler the legendary Penn coach, with Kistler’s Penn team in 1912 in preparation for the Stockholm Olympic Games. The president of the A.A.U., Gustavus

T. Kirby warned that anyone who swam against Sanville would disqualify himself from competition everywhere and be ineligible for national or Olympic as well as intercollegiate championships.”

Kahanamoku had to be extra-vigilant in protecting his amateur status, due to the inquiry surrounding the Thorpe and Sanville incidents. This meant giving up opportunities to turn professional and to accept money for swimming events and cavalcades as well as anything which would pay him for his swimming skills. He could accept expenses for trips to compete such as in Australia and San Francisco but those monies could only pay for his travel costs. These restrictions made it difficult for Kahanamoku since he had no other way to produce income other than through swimming.

Due to his lack of educational qualifications, professional experience and the lingering racial discrimination by many haole businessmen in Hawai‘i regarding native Hawaiians, Kahanamoku found himself in menial low-paying positions. High paying jobs befitting an international celebrity were unavailable for him in Honolulu. He wanted to continue to bring glory and honor to his Hawaiian people as he represented them in Olympic competition. Fortunately after his Olympic victories in 1912, a committee was formed by Honolulu citizens to provide a house for Kahanamoku. W.T. Rawlins, president of the Hui Nalu club chaired this committee. With a plea in both major newspapers for donations the Kahanamoku fund raised $1800 to buy a house on Ala Moana road. One of the members of the committee, W.R. Castle offered to sell a house

to the committee. On March 14, 1913, the committee voted to finalize the deal and “inspect the property and ascertain what repairs were needed before Duke Kahanamoku could move in.” In order to protect his amateur standing arrangements were made so that the “title to the property would be held by the Waterhouse Trust Co. as trustee.”

The house provided Kahanamoku a chance to continue to pursue his Olympic swimming career. As 1916 neared he set his sites upon repeating as the Olympic champion at the Berlin Games. To support his training he took on odd jobs when he could find them. In 1913 he became a rodman, or a surveyor, for the Honolulu Water company so that he could train after work. Kahanamoku continued to exude his brilliance in the pool and in open water. In June of 1913 he swam in his first national AAU competition in Hawai`i since his record-breaking races in 1911. In order to make sure that his times would not be questioned, Hawaiian AAU officials had no less than three different surveyors measure the course in Honolulu harbor to assure the proper distance. As he had done two years previously Kahanamoku rewarded the local crowds with new American records for the 50-yard and 440-yard races. He won the 220-yard race and he also set a world record for the open water 100-yard freestyle race.

Kahanamoku tested himself in many ways, including swimming in special events. In May of 1913, Kahanamoku swam a 50-yard race in Waikiki against fellow world class swimmer Will King and won. While the outcome was not unusual, the race was. As the *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* reported, Kahanamoku swam the race “using the

\[\text{\underline{\text{\footnotesize\text{\cite{52} J.F. Soper, \textit{Meeting of the Duke Kahanamoku Fund Committee.}}}}}
\text{\underline{\text{\cite{53} Sandra Kimberly Hall, \textit{Duke: A Great Hawaiian} (Honolulu: Bess Press, 2005), 39.}}}
\text{\underline{\text{\cite{54} “Duke Defeats All Opponents,” \textit{Pacific Commercial Advertiser}, 9 June 1913, p.8.}}}
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backstroke and King the racing crawl.” Noting that King was “no slow swimmer,” the newspaper surmised that Kahanamoku “has so perfected himself in the back stroke that he will probably take more honors when he enters the back stroke dashes.”55 While Kahanamoku never won those honors predicted in any international back stroke competitions it became clear that the Hawaiian swimmer could challenge any swimmer in any stroke at most any distance. The year 1916 looked as though it would be Kahanamoku’s Olympic climax since at twenty-five years of age he had entered the prime of his athletic career.

However, the outbreak in 1914 of World War I brought about the first crisis of the young modern Olympic movement. With Germany at war could the International Olympic Committee (IOC) stage the games in Berlin? Initially, hope reigned that the war would be over quickly and that the nations of the world would come to their senses. As months dragged into years it became obvious that Berlin and the 1916 Olympic Games would not be a positive combination. The political battle over the games raged on, with German officials proposing holding the games and excluding those fighting against them while Germany’s opponents tried to change the venue of the games and exclude the Germans. Eventually, all plans broke down and the inevitable cancellation of the 1916 Olympic Games dealt a blow to the dream of their founder, the Baron Pierre De Coubertin.56

The cancellation also dashed the dreams of Duke Kahanamoku, 10,000 miles away from the conflict on the tiny archipelago of Hawai‘i. Kahanamoku found himself at the prime of his athletic career without a showcase to exhibit his enormous talent. With the United States initially remaining neutral in the European battle, Kahanamoku’s career hit a snag in which neither his country nor his territory had any stake.

Kahanamoku, who had planned on swimming in the national A.A.U. championships in 1916 in order to qualify for the Olympic team, decided to maintain his plans to tour the mainland and participate in the United States national championship events. The tour produced mixed results as Kahanamoku journeyed east to compete for the first time in four years and embarked upon a rigorous travel schedule. Cities all over the East and Midwest competed to get the great swimmer to visit their region. Without the allure of an Olympic berth at stake, Kahanamoku elected to honor as many requests as possible. The result was a trip where the champion had little time for training and suffered numerous train trips. At one juncture, during one week Kahanamoku swam in a meet in Chicago on a Sunday, traveled to Bridgeport, New York, for a meet on Tuesday, went back to Chicago to swim in a meet on Thursday, and then traveled to Pittsburgh for the 100-yard national championship on Saturday.\textsuperscript{57} The dominance he had demonstrated in the pools since 1912 faded and he lost many races to eastern foes such as Perry McGillivray and Herbert Vollmer. In truth, Kahanamoku won about half of his races which for most swimmers would be a wonderful showing, but this was “The Duke,” and no one expected him to lose. If there could be an invincible swimmer in the public

perception then Kahanamoku embodied that notion, which resulted in headlines when he fell to defeat.\footnote{McGillivray Outswims Kahanamoku,” \textit{New York Times}, 16 April 1916, p. 23; “Duke Kahanamoku Fails to Qualify For Furlough Title Swim,” \textit{New York Times}, 10 April 1916, p. 12.} Kahanamoku retreated to Hawai`i and swam in meets at home during the summer of 1916. He quickly realized that he needed to find some means of making a living. In 1917, Kahanamoku moved to the Big Island and worked on Alika Dowsett’s Big Island cattle ranch. He had for a short time been dating Dowsett’s daughter, Marion “Babe’ Dowsett, who was also an accomplished swimmer. Kahanamoku became a \textit{paniolo}, roping and branding cattle and thoroughly enjoying the break from the tourist-crazed Waikiki and the pressure of competitive swimming. Kahanamoku the waterman had fallen in love with the life of the cowboy. In later years his wife, Nadine, would remark that Kahanamoku’s favorite picture of himself was one of him in a cowboy hat on a horse.\footnote{Personal Interview with Earl Maikahikinapāmaikalā Tenn, conducted on 6 May 2004 in Honolulu, Hawai`i on the grounds of Iolani Palace.}

The idyllic life of the \textit{paniolo} came to a crushing halt one day in early August when Alika Dowsett came and reported to Kahanamoku that his father Duke Halapu had passed away at the age of forty-eight.\footnote{“Family Group Record,” Duke Kahanamoku Genealogy Records from the Earl Maikahikinapāmaikalā Tenn Collection, Honolulu, Hawai`i, viewed on May 15, 2004.} Kahanamoku immediately sailed for O`ahu to be with his family in their time of grief. Duke Paoa Kahanamoku, as the eldest son, held the responsibility for providing for his family which had no life insurance, savings or other means of support. The younger Kahanamoku worked at whatever jobs he could find and began to ponder the possibility of joining the military. In the midst of grieving for his
father and trying to provide and nurture his family another death rocked the foundation of Kahanamoku’s past.

Queen Liliuokalani, the last monarch of the Hawaiian nation, passed away on November 11, 1917. The ties of the Kahanamoku and Paoa families were intricately knit with those of the Queen, and her death symbolized a personal as well as national passing to the swimming champion of Hawai‘i. Twice in the span of four months, Kahanamoku had to bury members of his ‘ohana who had led the way for him in understanding the traditions, heritage and values of the Hawaiian people. Kahanamoku honored his queen by serving as a pallbearer during her funeral.61 The older generation of Hawaiian leaders were passing away. In their wake stood a new generation who were struggling to find their way amidst a new world which valued money, progress and power over traditional values such as aloha, mana, lokahi and ‘ohana. Kahanamoku found himself in the midst of this battle. He now had to find ways to care for his family and at the same time bring honor to his people through his position as a representative of Hawai‘i. Fortunately, an opportunity arose which would temporarily solve his dilemma.

The United States involvement in World War I in April 1917, led to the mobilization of patriotic efforts to support troops in the conflict. In early 1918, the American Red Cross and the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) approached Kahanamoku about the possibility of establishing a water show to entertain citizens and to raise money for the much-needed services of the Red Cross and its war effort. He

heartily agreed and assembled a team of swimmers and divers who would tour North America putting on swimming exhibitions and competitions.\footnote{Brennan, \textit{Duke}, 111.}

The team consisted of Honolulu locals including Harold “Stubby” Kruger and Clarence Lane as well as former sports editor of the \textit{Honolulu Star-Bulletin} Owen Merrick as manager. Rounding out the team was “Claire Tait, a Portland boy who formerly held the Pacific Coast diving championship,” and who had become a good friend of Kahanamoku’s. Tait provided comic stunts through his diving and served as the trainer for the troupe.\footnote{Ibid.}

Advertised as a Hawaiian swimming exhibition, the show capitalized on the worldwide stature of Hawai`i’s most recognized citizen. The \textit{New York Times}, in promoting the three featured swimmers referred to Kahanamoku as “the foremost swimmer ever developed in any land,” and acknowledged that “truly sensational performances have spread his fame throughout the globe.” The newspaper also endorsed the credentials of the two young swimmers accompanying him. As Kahanamoku would continue to do throughout his career, he brought along young Hawaiian swimmers and allowed them an entry upon the world’s stage. Lane, arguably, seemed destined to dethrone Kahanamoku as the king of Hawaiian sprinters. Kahanamoku acknowledged that the young, inexperienced Lane held great potential and remarked that “if you want to beat Lane you must be ready to beat world’s figures.” Kruger, on the other hand, established remarkable results in the back stroke, often defeating freestyle swimmers in
exhibitions in the same manner that Kahanamoku had earlier in his career.⁶⁴ Kruger established back stroke world records in distances from 40 yards to 400 yards, while still remaining a worthy competitor in freestyle events. He had even defeated Kahanamoku in a mile and a half open water swim earlier in the year.⁶⁵

The exhibitions that Kahanamoku, Kruger, Tait, and Lane staged for the Red Cross and the YMCA in had real influence on the morale of American troops. Helen Fairchild, who died in France working as a nurse at Base 10, wrote a Christmas letter home to her mother in Pennsylvania in December of 1917. In the letter, she remarked that, “I admire the rest for their attitude because what the Red Cross and the Y.M.C.A. are doing for us over here means so much to us.” Elaborating on the horrifying experiences that troops encountered, Fairchild declared, “Really, it would be awful to get along without the things they send us and most of the pleasure that the troops get are the ones provided for them by the Y.M.C.A.”⁶⁶

Kahanamoku and the Hawaiian swimmers raised much needed money for the Red Cross and the YMCA during the war. The tour’s purpose received little notice from the mainstream, national media. The New York Times reported upon the exploits of the swimmers almost entirely as if it was a competitive tour. In its coverage of the tour the newspaper reported upon the exploits of the trio of Hawaiian swimmers nine times, with the primary focus upon the meets they swam in the New York City metropolitan area

between April 7 and 20, 1918. The only mention of the purpose for the trip came in September of 1918, at the conclusion of their journey, when the newspaper noted that the Hawaiian swimmers were about to wrap up their “American tour undertaken to raise funds for the Red Cross and can now look back with pride upon the work accomplished.” That paper that proclaims it publishes “All the news that’s fit to print” noted that “besides causing large sums to be turned over to the society in every city visited, they placed to their credit a long list of brilliant performances.” 67

The New York paper during this same period ran two articles which dealt with allegations that the Hawaiian swimmers had violated amateur rules and had “‘padded’ their $950 expense account on a . . . twelve-day tour of five cities in the Middle West,” never mentioning the altruistic nature of the tour. 68 Even when reporting that the charges of violating the amateur code had been dropped, the media outlet failed to note the fund raising purposes of this tour for the support of the war. 69 In contrast, the newspaper made it abundantly clear in both sub-headlines and the text of the articles when U.S. tennis stars played exhibitions in Canada and when the Westminster Dog Show staged an exhibition for the benefit of the Red Cross. 70 In spite of the lack of media attention regarding their tour’s ambitions, the Hawaiians performed superbly. They set world records at many distances. Exhibitions of new swimming styles entertained the crowds. One notable demonstration that the Hawaiians performed was called the “Chinese triple

68 “Hawaiians To Swim Here,” p. 10.
oar,” which the New York Times noted “found high favor with the large gallery.”

This event saw “the three swimmers compete with arms locked” over a distance of twenty-five yards in what the newspaper concluded was “a novel event in American waters.”

Kahanamoku established international marks for distances between 60 to 200 yards, although the New York Times pointed out that “only a few are likely to be bracketed, as the A.A.U. does not consider performances over any but regulation courses.” The Gotham paper also noted that in any conditions these record setting performances would be special but “in some cases they raced daily for a whole week or more, taking part in several events at each meet” and still “swim consistently around world’s figures.”

Calling the swimmers “truly amphibious champions,” the paper hailed their achievements with awe.

The quartet traveled the country and competed to earn money for the Red Cross and the YMCA to help the war effort. By the end of the tour Kahanamoku decided that he wanted to do more for the war effort. Following the lead of fellow swimmer Norman Ross, who had joined the Army Aviators as a flyer and had been able to compete against Kahanamoku sparingly in 1918 due to his service duties, Kahanamoku expressed a desire to enlist.

Towards the end of the Red Cross tour Kahanamoku announced that he would join the Naval Aviation Service. At the conclusion of the tour Kahanamoku traveled to

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72 “Hawaiians To Swim Here,” p. 10.
73 “Hawaiians List Records,” Sec. E. p. 3.
Washington D.C., intent on enlisting and doing his part in the war effort.\textsuperscript{75} Once again, one of the decade’s tragedies would thwart his plans.

Kahanamoku made it to Washington but before he could make it to the recruiting offices for the navy aviation services he became ill and checked himself into a local YMCA. There, in the nation’s capital, attempting to join his adopted homeland’s armed services, Kahanamoku battled an enemy far more deadly than any he may have faced in battle in Europe, the Spanish Influenza. This epidemic claimed more lives than those lost in the entirety of the Great War waging concurrently across the sea.\textsuperscript{76} Sadly, influenza would take the life of Kahanamoku’s good friend and mentor George Freeth, who died in 1919 at the age of thirty-six in California from this monstrous disease. After the tour Kahanamoku had disappeared from public view and the last that anyone knew, he was headed off to fulfill his patriotic duty. Ironically, this great athlete, the symbol of his race, who had been heralded around the world as an ambassador for his people, lay sick and dying, unnoticed in the capital of the nation which had taken away his future as an ali`i, of a disease that had devastated his own people upon contact with the western world.

Fortunately for Kahanamoku, fate intervened in a strange form. According to his biographer Joseph Brennan, a past love of Kahanamoku’s, Bernyece Smith happened to be traveling in Washington with politicians from Hawai`i, lobbying for legislation for the territory. While visiting Prince Kuhio’s office she opened a desk drawer and discovered

\textsuperscript{76} Alfred W. Crosby, \textit{America’s Forgotten Pandemic: The Influenza of 1918} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 4.
Kahanamoku’s camera. She recognized the camera as the one given to Kahanamoku on his Australian tour in 1915 — one that she had borrowed on numerous occasions.\textsuperscript{77}

Wondering how the camera had ended up in the offices, she began to inquire if anyone knew if Kahanamoku happened to be in the city. Through numerous contacts she tracked his path and began a search of hotels where he might have been staying. Finally, contacting the YMCA, she learned from an attendant there that there was a man of dark complexion residing at the facility. The YMCA attendant had no idea of who it was.

The attendant informed Smith that the man in question was gravely ill and might not last much longer. Bernyece Smith rushed to the Washington “Y” where she found the Olympic champion swimmer on a cot struggling for survival while those around him were oblivious to the worldwide celebrity status of their ailing guest or that he had just concluded an exhibition tour on behalf of their very own organization to raise thousands of dollars. The gracious aloha that Kahanamoku had extended to Bernyece Smith while she lived in Honolulu was returned to her lifetime friend. She arranged for him to be moved by ambulance to the house of a friend of Kahanamoku’s and personally nursed him to health, cooking, cleaning and feeding him daily. Finally, when he was strong enough she arranged for him to travel across the country and make his way by the streamliner \textit{Shinyo Maru} from San Francisco to Honolulu where he could fully recover. Smith traveled with Kahanamoku by rail to Salt Lake City where she had to leave him to make her way to Portland, Oregon, to return to work. Before they parted, she paid the

porter to take care of her sick friend and wired ahead to ensure that an Olympic club official and friend of Kahanamoku’s would get him to the boat bound for Honolulu.78

Kahanamoku’s war effort ended with his civilian duty for the Red Cross and the YMCA. Influenza kept him out of the naval aviation service he had hoped to join. The war ended while Kahanamoku was on board the Shinyo Maru en route to his homeland. During 1919 he recuperated. He began to train for competitive swimming again. Through his recovery period he lost to some young and upcoming swimmers in Hawai‘i. Once again, as they had done in 1918 with Clarence Lane questions arose as to the successor to Kahanamoku’s crown in swimming. In 1919, a new prodigy arose from the islands named John Kelii. Kelii had swam with Kahanamoku to a dead heat in July of 1919, in a 100-yard race that many locals believed Kelii had actually won. As a result, the New York Times stated that “the turning of the tables may now be in sight.”79 Once again, those who had counted out the “Human fish” would be mistaken. Kahanamoku continued to gain strength and recover from his bout with influenza. At the end of World War I, the Olympic movement announced that the 1920 Games would be held in Antwerp, Belgium. For Kahanamoku, the news restored his dreams of representing Hawai‘i at another Olympic festival and extending his mana for his people as he sought to defend the Olympic title he won eight years before. For those who sought to utilize him as a marketing tool and athletic icon, the news represented new opportunities. The question remained, though, whether Kahanamoku’s force and character would continue to be a draw in the post-war world. In a sense, the world was getting a chance to start

78 Ibid, 112-117
over after a decade of devastation from war, disease, and catastrophe. The Olympic Games, after an eight year hiatus, received a rebirth of sorts. Many of the athletes who had been teammates and competitors of Kahanamoku’s in Stockholm were now missing from the sporting scene. Some, such as Jim Thorpe, had been disgraced as professionals, some retired, and others such as Kahanamoku’s good friend Cecil Healy who perished on the western front in 1916, had died during the Great War. Politically, socially and even in the realm of sport the world had changed in those eight years. Kahanamoku remained, a holdover from the prewar world. Many had to wonder if at the age of thirty whether he could compete with this younger generation or even if he would still have the same appeal in a world looking to remake itself.

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CHAPTER 5

POWER STRUGGLES: HOW TO RETAIN ALOHA AND MANA IN A CHANGING ECONOMIC WORLD

With young competitors striving to remove the coveted crown of world’s greatest swimmer from the thirty-year old Kahanamoku, the 1920s became a decade of challenge for the Olympic champion. The Challenges he faced would not be confined to the pool. Kahanamoku would confront the realities of age, capitalism, and how to preserve the Hawaiian values which he had been raised with in a world where self-preservation became a key factor of life. *Pono* is a Hawaiian word which means goodness, excellence, and moral uprightness. It also refers to prosperity but not solely in a monetary sense. *Pono* relates to one’s prosperity in a holistic sense and is coupled with the public welfare as well as an individual’s. ¹ As Kahanamoku would have understood *pono*, financial prosperity had to be connected to the best interest of his people’s welfare as well as his own. His *mana* (authority) and *pono* were intricately interwoven. The decisions he made regarding his career would be based upon this deeper understanding of his role in representing *Hawai‘i nei*. Simply making a living while striving to represent his people

would prove difficult. Kahanamoku would have to learn to walk the perilous high wire of amateurism in an increasingly commercialized world.²

The decade of challenges began quickly. With the conclusion of World War I, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) moved swiftly in 1919 to name Antwerp, Belgium, as the host city for the 1920 Games. With little lead time for preparation, countries around the world scrambled to put together teams and funding for the renewed Games. Kahanamoku had led a revolution of interest in competitive swimming in Hawai`i due to his early success in the 1912 Stockholm Games. As a result, whereas Kahanamoku had been the only representative from the territory of Hawai`i on the 1912 United States team, the 1920 team boasted no less than twelve members, out of the twenty-five American representatives including the coach “Dad” Center who had discovered Kahanamoku in 1911 and helped train the swimmer in his early years. Center, a member of the Hui Nalu, enjoyed a long and close relationship with Kahanamoku. Also on the 1920 team were the Kealoha cousins, Pua Kela and Warren Paoa, as well as Ludy Langer, and Bill Harris. Each of them would win at least one medal at the Antwerp Games. Kahili Boyd, Helen Moses Cassidy, Joe Gilman, Fred Kahele, George Kane, and Harold “Stubby” Kruger rounded out the Hawaiian contingent.³


³ Dan Cisco, Hawai`i Sports: History, Facts, & Statistics (Honolulu: University of Hawai`i Press, 1999), 600-601. Aileen Riggin also was a member of this team. Riggin who spent part of her childhood in the Philippines had passed through Honolulu enroute with her family and would eventually move to Hawai`i and become a prominent resident of the Islands.
Kahanamoku had become the pied piper of swimming in Hawai`i and his influence obviously resonated in the legions following his example. This large Hawaiian contingent created quite a stir aboard the *Princess Matoika*, a rusting former troop carrier which carried part of the American team across the Atlantic. While many complaints were forwarded by the Olympic athletes as to the conditions on board en route to Antwerp, Kahanamoku and his fellow islanders entertained everyone and helped to keep morale high. Kahanamoku agreed with his fellow athletes concerning the conditions aboard the ship as evidenced by his signing the document in which the athletes outlined their grievances and placed the failure of improper treatment of the athletes upon the shoulders of the Executive Committee of the American Olympic Committee. Kahanamoku objected to “sleeping either in an ill-smelling hold, overrun with rats, and without sufficient ventilation, or on hard decks in rain; eating food originally good but served improperly due to overcrowded condition of the galley; poor sanitary conditions,” as well as the apparent theft of items which should have been “properly guarded.”

However, it seemed that he was able to overlook the raw treatment and bring some semblance of enjoyment to these emissaries of American athletic prowess who sport historian Mark Dyreson referred to as “America’s Athletic Missionaries.”

Antwerp Olympic historian Roland Renson commented that while “weight thrower Pat McDonald and swimmer Norman Ross acted as spokesmen for the riotous

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4. “Resolution of American Olympic Athletes August 1920,” Duke Kahanamoku Collection, M434, hereafter referred to as DKC, Box 3 File 69, Hawaii State Archives, Honolulu, HI, hereafter referred to as HSA.

athletes,” who staged what became known as “the mutiny of the Matoika,” “the only cheerful note was provided by Duke Kahanamoku.” Renson counteracts the grumblers with images of Kahanamoku, “the Hawaiian swimmer who, together with fellow Hawaiians, sang on deck while strumming a ukulele.”6 This relaxed and happy portrait of Kahanamoku occurred often in the memories of fellow athletes on board. Kahanamoku biographers Sandra Kimberley Hall and Greg Ambrose noted “the Hawaiians had a portable gramophone and played records for dancing. Duke also sang and played his ukulele.”7 Olympic gold medalist in springboard diving, Aileen Riggin, who later in life would move to Hawai‘i, recollected that the Hawaiians “played at night, they all brought their ukuleles and guitars, and they all had beautiful voices. I think that was my first introduction to Hawaiian music. It was a big fad in about 1915 or ‘16, and I had all the records, the Hilo March, and records like that, on my gramophone.”8

For Kahanamoku, the opportunity to compete in the Olympic Games again overshadowed the harsh conditions. More than most of his fellow athletes on board, the Hawaiian swimmer had struggled with his desires and had learned to be content with his present circumstances. Since his debut upon the world stage in Stockholm, Kahanamoku had struggled with the fact that while he had become a world-renowned figure, he still

could not make a good living. Banned from using his swimming skills as a means of income and still competing in the Olympic Games, Kahanamoku lived with the tension of having great skills which brought him fame but no fortune. Joseph L. Brennan, a longtime Kahanamoku friend and biographer highlights this frustration consistently in *Duke: the Life Story of Duke Kahanamoku*. Brennan noted that in 1916 when a reporter wrote that one of the “must do’s” in visiting Hawai‘i was to get one’s picture “snapped in front of the board which is marked ‘Duke,’” that Kahanamoku commented it “makes me feel like I’m Mister Hawaii or something.” Later that evening, when his father and brothers were having a good laugh with the younger Duke regarding the article and his fame and popularity, Kahanamoku observed “funny thing though, when I’m looking for a job employers walk past me as if I’m invisible.”

Brennan illustrates the frustration Kahanamoku endured in his inability to make a living and how he felt trapped in his swimming and surfing skills, yet he seemed to miss the underlying cultural tensions with which Kahanamoku dealt. When Brennan befriended Kahanamoku, much later in the Hawaiian’s career, the cultural assimilation of living in an American territory had possibly begun to alter Kahanamoku’s perspective. If Kahanamoku’s feelings were so strong regarding making money and earning a living as a reading of Brennan’s work suggests, why then did he not use his swimming career as a springboard to wealth? Kahanamoku could have been Tarzan instead of Johnny Weissmuller. What was it that drove this great athlete to continue to protect his amateur standing for twenty years of Olympic competition to the detriment of the financial well-

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being that Brennan argues were the source of Kahanamoku’s frustration and discontent?

Brennan’s answer is one that he claims as a Hawaiian value but more accurately reflects a western style of dealing with inner conflict. In describing Kahanamoku, Brennan argued:

“In his Hawaiian way, he reminded himself that there are two lives for each of us— an outer one of action and an inner one of the heart and mind. He recognized that one can always see a man’s deed and outward character, but not the inner self. There was always that secret part to everyone that had its own life, unpenetrated and unguessed by others. In that secret life Duke quietly rebelled at being a celebrity and honored, but without the ability to hold up his end.”

While Brennan is correct in addressing the issue of “two lives” the Kahanamoku biographers analysis derives from a dualistic view where the body does one thing while the mind and heart are completely separated. Such a view of life is very Western with its roots in the Greek philosophies of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. Sport philosopher R. Scott Kretchmar has investigated the impact of Western dualism on sport and argued that “dualistic methodologies may not work well . . . We need to look for other interpretations of what it means to be a human being.”

Hawaiian values are typically devoid of this Western dualistic style of thinking. The Hawaiian concept of dualism relates closer to the “‘grand motif’ of Chinese art and science, the Yin-Yang principle,” which believes that “all phenomena in our universe are organized in pairs of opposites; night and day, light and darkness, male and female, good and bad.” Hawaiian scholar George Hu’eu Sanford Kanahele explained that this dualistic view “exhibits a world of polarities and dichotomies, of disunities and disconnections.”

10 Ibid, 82.
Kanahele argued that Hawaiian thinkers resolved these problems with their concept of *lōkahi*. “In the Hawaiian context, the thought means to bring like and unlike things together in unity and harmony,” Kanahele stated, “by looking at it through the prism of interconnectedness. That is, Hawaiians saw a world in which all things are interrelated, linked as in a vast cosmic grid.” 12

If Kahanamoku actually lived within the Western dualistic worldview that Brennan proposed it would not be due to “his Hawaiian way” but rather due to the influence of the Western world as it interacted with his native culture and altered it. In Hawaiian culture the physical, spiritual and emotional aspects of life are intricately interwoven and inseparable, and are merely different aspects of the same whole.”13

While there is no doubt that Kahanamoku wrestled with the clash of cultures occurring in his homeland, the idea that his outward actions and persona would be completely different from his inner feelings and the way of his heart is almost inconceivable.

Ironically, Brennan uncovered the answer to the two lives dilemma and yet possibly did not quite understand it. In a conversation with his father which Kahanamoku revealed for Brennan, Kahanamoku related that his father had counseled him to “do the thing that makes you happy, it’s your life.” Kahanamoku replied “but I can’t swim forever.” His father replied, reflecting a more traditional view of Hawaiian values, that ‘happiness is when your heart is in the center of everything. So many people stand aside from life and just stare at it.” The younger Kahanamoku answered, “I know

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13 Ibid, 155.
Papa, I know. And I want to enter life. Seems to me that life is working out of what you are and what you are is how you react.” Kahanamoku’s father then instructed him “then go your way son. You are doing the thing you know and do best.”

The reality is that two differing views of life confronted Kahanamoku as he grew up in Hawai`i. Kahanamoku wanted to enter life but the struggle for him became which life to enter. Before him were two opposing views of life. One resided in the life of his ancestors which as his father had noted occurs when “your heart is at the center of everything.” In choosing this life, Kahanamoku would continue to use his mana to bring glory and honor to his people. They would be glorified through his exploits and character. He would continue the duty of the ali`i to honor their people with their god given gifts, without concern for personal wealth. The other life existed in the extrinsic cultural values of the United States whose influence permeated all societal structures in the Territory of Hawai`i. These cultural norms valued personal wealth as the standard of one’s success in life. Capitalistic values introduced by the haole businessmen in Hawai`i began to overcome traditional values in the islands and created a dichotomy for many native Hawaiians raised in the older structure.

Kahanamoku found himself in the midst of this struggle. What should be at the center of everything, his heart or financial gain? Which life should he enter? Should he use his gifts in swimming and surfing for financial profit and obtaining the standards of success flaunted all around even though, as an amateur with no educational background and dark skin, they evaded him? Alternatively, should he remain an amateur and

demonstrate to the world what it meant to live a life of *aloha* representing his people as a true ali`i would? As Kahanamoku would later explain, all that “I really want to be [is] Hawai`i’s ambassador.” People’s lives are rarely as black and white as these dialectic choices imply. Kahanamoku was no different. These struggles for true happiness and for material comfort would exist within him throughout his life as the cultural standards between the old Hawai`i of his ancestors and the new Hawai`i of modernity created conflicts in his culture as well as in his heart.

Hawaiians lived in the midst of this changing world. While those around him on the trip to Antwerp grumbled about conditions, Kahanamoku, the one athlete who had the right to object to his treatment as a world-class celebrity, chose instead to boost the morale of the other athletes and enjoy the life he had chosen. While Kahanamoku’s remarks to his biographer may depict the inner conflicts within his value system, the portrayal of a brooding, moody and discontent person bears no resemblance to the person remembered by friends, acquaintances and the media. Instead, the picture which emerges is of a happy, content, confident and humble man who truly enjoyed life. It is hard to imagine that the fruits of happiness and joy that an athlete in the limelight as much as Kahanamoku passed on to others could result from such a dark hidden inner life as Brennan portrays. Turk McDermott, an Olympic teammate of Kahanamoku’s, recalled “we were most impressed by his graciousness. He was a clean competitor and always a gentleman.”

The picture of Kahanamoku with his ukulele remained etched in memory. 

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15 Tomi Knaefler, “I Really Want To Be Hawai`i’s Ambassador,” *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 2 June 1966, p. 71

16 Brennan, *Duke*, 96-97, 82. These are just a few examples of the many times Brennan uses terms to describe Kahanamoku as brooding, despairing, and ashamed.
McDermott’s mind as well. “He would bring his ukulele right to the pool,” McDermott remembered, “It was really a sight to see him before a race, plunking on the uke while the other swimmers were biting their fingernails.”

Kahanamoku, while struggling with the changing face of his culture, seemed to hold on to the past throughout his swimming career. Without understanding the inner motivations fueled by his unique rearing, it is difficult to understand why this great athlete would choose to turn his back on lucrative offers to remain an amateur. Clearly, the old Hawaiian values and his sense of ha`aha`a (humility, modesty) led him in 1920 to Antwerp to defend his 100-meter title. Kamehameha Schools in adopting the value of ha`aha`a for their community defined it as something which “inspires the best effort of others in the accomplishment of identified goals through personal example.” As a traditional value at work in the modern setting, the school states that ha`aha`a “gains the respect and confidence of others by contributing to solutions and assuming a leadership role when necessary to accomplish goals, without conceit, arrogance or misuse of authority.” In his role as a leader at Antwerp, ha`ah`a aptly described Kahanamoku’s behavior on the Olympic team as well as for Hawai`i nei.

With just over sixteen months to prepare for the 1920 Games in a war torn country, the Belgian organizing committee worked miracles. While the facilities were not equal to those at Stockholm in 1912, the fact that the Games were staged at all bears witness to the hard work of the organizers. The swimming pool, unfortunately, left much

18 Pukui and Ebert, Hawaiian Dictionary, 44.
19 “Values To Larry Kekaulike 1-03-00,” Electronic mail, KS Values Curriculum Guide, 1-03-00, received 3 January 2001, p. 1.
to be desired. While the president of the IOC, the Baron Pierre de Coubertin declared it “a model of its kind,” the competitors’ impressions of the swimming facilities leaves one wondering about the Baron’s standards. American swimmers certainly were unimpressed with the facility. In their initial practices at the facility, they reported that “the water was rather slow and dead and exceptionally cold.” The *New York Times* reported that the swimmers hoped “the sun would soon warm it up.”

Aileen Riggin recalled that when they saw the facility they were “heartsick.” Since organizers had no time to build a 50-meter pool, they staged the swimming events in a canal. Riggin remembered that some locals had told her that this was the ancient “city moat, and it may well have been because there was a large embankment behind it as a protection for the city” where organizers placed benches for spectators. Riggin reported that the black water in the canal, was so cold that “many swimmers had to be rescued from hypothermia.” Indeed, the committee for water polo reduced the time for periods by half so that the players could endure the frigid conditions.

Even with the poor transportation, inadequate facilities, cool water temperatures and icy cold rain that fell throughout the competition, Kahanamoku, after eight years, had arrived back at the Olympic Games. The crowds welcomed him back and showed up to watch him practice. This was his stage and he reveled in the opportunity to compete and cavort with the greatest athletes in the world. Amidst all of the speculation that

younger swimmers would surpass him. Kahanamoku successfully defended his Olympic title in the 100-meter freestyle, beating his own Olympic record by swimming the distance in 1:01.4. In actuality, Kahanamoku had to swim the final twice due to a protest. In the 100 meter final held on August 24, Australian swimmer W. Herald complained that “he was pocketed by Kahanamoku and Norman Ross” as he finished in fifth place, just behind Ross. Kahanamoku broke all of his own records for the distance in winning the final. Americans objected to the protest but Olympic officials decided that the race would be “swum again on Sunday,” the last day of the swimming competition. They did, however, allow Kahanamoku’s records to stand to appease the American outrage. In the final final, five days later, Kahanamoku led a Hawaiian sweep of the medals as Pua Kealoha won the silver and William Harris took the bronze for the U.S. and the Territory of Hawai‘i. Herald moved up into fourth place edging out Norman Ross but remaining out of the medals. Kahanamoku had a banner day as he reset his Olympic record time in the 100-meter freestyle by a full second and anchored the U.S. 4 x 200-meter relay teams new Olympic record setting gold medal performance as well.

The Hawaiian contingent competed remarkably well, especially considering the cold conditions. Warren Kealoha garnered a gold medal in the 100-meter backstroke, Ludy Langer silver in the 400-meter freestyle. Fred Kahele finished just out of the medals in fourth place in both the 400-meter freestyle and the 1500-meter freestyle. Duke Kahanamoku and Pua Kealoha won gold medals for their contributions to the world record setting United States 800-meter relay squad, teaming with Norman Ross and Percy

Kahanamoku completed his 1920 Olympic competition playing on the fourth-place United States water polo team in the chilly water of the canal.\footnote{26} Outside of the competition, Kahanamoku thoroughly enjoyed his experience. He and the American bronze medalist in fancy diving, Hal Haig Prieste developed a “comedy routine on the way to the stadium.” Prieste recalled that “we’d act like we were getting into an argument. Duke was about a foot taller than me. He’d put his big hand over my face. I’d grab his wrist, then hang on and jump around.” Prieste fondly recalled that “it looked like Duke was shaking me with one hand. Then I’d get away and chase him down the street.” Prieste, who went on to a career in movies with Charlie Chaplin as a “keystone cop,” stunt man, and double, marveled at Kahanamoku. “That man was the most loved and honored athlete on the U.S. Olympic team,” he remarked. The witty comedian who loved mispronouncing Hawaiian names and words purposely, reported that after the Games “Duke Kakaako and me toured Europe.” Continuing their slapstick routine, Prieste joked that “a lot of people didn’t know that Duke Kamacola had a great sense of humor.”\footnote{28}

The reality was that Kahanamoku loved to have fun. He constantly goofed off in front of the camera for pictures and clowned around with his friends. One picture in the Bishop Museum illustrates this perfectly. In the photo, Kahanamoku and fourteen other surfers are posing on the beach at Waikiki with their boards standing erect behind them.

\footnote{26}{Bill Henry, *An Approved History of the Olympic Games* (New York: G.P. Putnam and Sons, 1976), 105.}  
\footnote{27}{Program from the “Presentation of the First Duke Paoa Kahanamoku Award To Peter V. Ueberroth,” United States Water Polo, Inc., 1998, p. 7. in authors personal collection.}  
Included in the picture are Kahanamoku’s brothers, David and Sam, as well as famous beach boy E.K. “Dudie” Miller. While all the other young men were focusing on the camera attempting to get a good shot for posterity, on the left side of the picture Duke Kahanamoku plays with the hair of the person standing next to him. The photo captures not a brooding champion, but one who loved life. Figure 5-1

Figure 5-1: Duke Kahanamoku plays around on the beach during a photo shoot. Duke is the third from the left, the one playing with another surfer’s hair. Photo Courtesy of Bishop Museum.

Photos of the champion regularly caught this side of his personality. While many reporters found him shy and quiet, photos show the champion surfing making goofy poses and clowning with his friends. Figure 5-2 One photograph captures him dancing with what looks like a woman’s jacket on his head while an unidentified man plays guitar.

29 “Surfers lined up with surfboards on Waikiki Beach, Waikiki, Honolulu, Hawaii; Duke Kahanamoku third from left,” Duke Kahanamoku Collection, MS 354, hereafter referred to as DKC, Box 5 Folder 2, people, CP 117270, n.d., Bishop Museum Archives, Honolulu, Hawai‘i, hereafter referred to as BMA.

30 “Duke Kahanamoku having fun surfing with pals, seen from Moana Hotel Pier, Waikiki, Honolulu, Hawaii,” DKC, Box 5 Folder 2, people, CP 118580, circa. 1912, BMA.
on the beach. These images of Kahanamoku as a free spirited person who loved to be with people are what many people remember of him. He earned the respect of other athletes and acquaintances not only due to his physical abilities but to his genuine care and concern he held for everyone he met. Kahanamoku attracted people to him and those who met him were seldom disappointed. Considering the fact that he was a living legend in his own era, that is a feat of some measure. Figure 5-3

Figure 5-2: Duke and friends clowning around on Surf boards. Photo Courtesy Of Bishop Museum

31 “Unidentified man with Guitar and Duke Kahanamoku being funny dancing, possibly at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, Oahu, Hawaii,” DKC, Box 5 folder 2, CP 117339, ca. 1915. BMA.
While all seemed to love and admire him, his teammates at the Antwerp Games seemed to all sense that the end was near as far as Kahanamoku’s competitive career was concerned. They assumed that athletes could not continue to compete at the high levels that Kahanamoku had after reaching thirty years of age. As the two-time Olympic sprint
champion in swimming sailed away from Belgium on board the *Princess Matoika*, his fellow Olympians honored him as the old man of the sea. The Bishop Museum collection in Honolulu holds a poster that Kahanamoku had been given to him by his fellow athletes. The commemorative poster from the 1920 Antwerp Games is signed by athletes from around the world. On the poster a salutation to Kahanamoku reads: “To Duke: Best Regards RIP FOB Princess Matoika August 2, 1920.” The farewell gift from his Olympic pals makes a humorous connection between the aging swimmer and the rusting ship that carried the Olympians to the Games in Europe. Both the ship and the swimmer would soon be put out of service his teammates joked.\(^{32}\)

Kahanamoku’s career certainly seemed as questionable as the old rusting ship’s. When Kahanamoku arrived back in Honolulu, things had not changed. Lauded as the territory’s greatest asset, Kahanamoku still failed to find suitable employment. Fortunately for Kahanamoku, the 1920s exploded with potential. This period ushered in a “golden age” for both athletics and the entertainment industry. The crossover between fame gained in athletic competition and the ability to market that in vaudeville stage acts or Hollywood films opened up new avenues for athletes. While the 1920s would see the rise of athletic icons such as baseball’s Babe Ruth and Ty Cobb, football’s Red Grange and Knute Rockne, and swimming’s Johnny Weissmuller, Kahanamoku became one of the first athletes to make the move into movie roles. Playing a central role in this decision to go to Hollywood was an old nemesis of Kahanamoku’s, the only foe to successfully alter his direction repeatedly. Just as it had almost him and forced him to

\(^{32}\) “To Duke: Best Regards,” *Antwerp Olympic Games Poster*, DKC, Box 3, BMA.
give up his dreams of flying in World War I, influenza again blocked Kahanamoku’s athletic career, thus forcing him to look to other paths to bring honor to his people.

After his success at the 1920 Antwerp Games, Kahanamoku along with Ethelda Bleibtrey, who swept all of the women’s races at Antwerp, Pua Kealoha and Ludy Langer, agreed to tour the Antipodes. Set as a return visit to Australia to compete in the national championships as he had after his 1912 Olympic victory it seemed a natural course for the champion swimmer to take. Australians adored Kahanamoku and longed to have the Hawaiian contingent come and perform in their country again. The trip scheduled to begin in January of 1921, would be without the services of Kahanamoku who once again succumbed to influenza.

When he recovered, Kahanamoku turned his attention to California rather than Australia. In 1922, Kahanamoku declared his intention to begin a career in the movies. Newspapers around the nation announced that the great Olympic champion would retire from swimming and give up his amateur status in order to make his way in the silent movie trade. San Francisco papers reported “that former breast stroke champion, friend of Kahanamoku,” Oscar Henning, had come to the city to prepare the “preliminary steps” for Kahanamoku’s new career. In Salt Lake City, the Deseret News reported that Henning convinced Kahanamoku to allow him to manage the swimmer’s new film career. Henning proposed floating a $750,000 corporation for “Kahanamoku’s ‘pictures.’” Henning outlined an “elaborate plan” to the media which he proposed would
“make Kahanamoku as world famous on the screen as he is a swimmer.” Henning’s plans envisioned Kahanamoku films competing head to head with established stars such as Douglas Fairbanks and Tom Mix or against “any other athletics screen actors who do their ‘dare devil stunts’ on land.” The selling point, according to Henning, would be that “Kahanamoku will do his on the water.”

The Portland Oregonian announced that “one of the world’s most famous women screen stars has been mentioned to ‘play opposite’ Kahanamoku as the heroine” in a picture to be filmed “in the Hawaiian Islands.” While never actually naming the starlet, the newspaper remarked upon the “remarkable world wide advertisement” such a film would be “for the ‘Paradise of the Pacific.’” Henning promised to “engage an ‘all star’ cast to support Kahanamoku” in the story which would be specifically written “based upon Hawaiian mythology and folk lore,” but for which Henning would “have the story properly dramatized for screen purposes.”

This venture was the first commercial proposal Kahanamoku entertained in which he would give up his amateur status, something which he had protected vehemently. Kahanamoku welcomed an opportunity to star in a film, which would depict his homeland, and the great history from which he had come. Henning, as a friend of Kahanamoku’s, may have realized the need for Kahanamoku to represent his people and his homeland while at the same time providing an economic opportunity for the Olympic champion. Unfortunately, those films never transpired. Henning’s dream became a hard

sell for Hollywood producers. It is unclear whether the logistics of filming in Hawaii at that time created the roadblock or if Hollywood executives were unsure of how Americans would take to a very dark-skinned leading man playing opposite a white starlet. Jim Crow certainly flourished on the mainland in 1922. Lynching occurred with regularity in the southern United States, especially if it concerned a possible breach of honor concerning a white woman and a dark skinned man. Southern Historian W. Fitzhugh Brundage demonstrated that “mob violence served as the ultimate sanction against willing sexual liaisons between white women and black men, a practice that defied the most fundamental notions of the southern racial hierarchy.”

Brundage noted that an estimated 3220 blacks were lynched in the south from 1880-1930. While interracial marriages in Hawai`i were commonplace and accepted for the most part, the same attitudes were not prevalent on the mainland United States. Kahanamoku came from Hawaiian ethnicity, not African-American, which was an ethnic distinction that allowed him somewhat easier entrance to society. However, his skin tone may have been too close to that of African-Americans for the comfort of white executives and a public uneasy with miscegenation.

Producers did agree to entertain the idea of movie roles for Kahanamoku, but leading roles eluded him. According to Olympic track and field star and sportswriter Charlie Paddock, Kahanamoku went to Hollywood with the intent to star in a film portraying King Kamehameha the Great, a role that Kahanamoku would have relished. It

39 Ibid, 8.
would open the door to represent his heritage and bring honor to his culture. However, as Paddock noted “that picture did not materialize.” Whether or not Kahanamoku would have agreed to pursue his film career if the allure of playing Kamehameha or portraying the legends of Hawai‘i had not arisen is unclear. Once in Hollywood Kahanamoku readily made friends and finally established a career in acting.

What is clear though, is that without the opportunity to promote his homeland by playing the role of Kamehameha, Kahanamoku decided against abandoning his amateur status. It seemed apparent from reports that under Henning’s vision Kahanamoku would have readily forsaken his amateurism in order to move on to a new career in which he could honor his heritage and the role that water sports played in its long and proud history. He could use his swimming ability to portray the strength recognized in leaders such as Kamehameha, or other ali‘i through their prowess in surfing, swimming and paddling outrigger canoes. Kahanamoku seemed comfortable foregoing his amateur status for the prospect of glorifying his heritage in this way. However, when that opportunity disappeared Kahanamoku decided to forego any use of his swimming ability in making films, thereby allowing him to retain his eligibility for amateur events. Amateur athletic rules at the time allowed Kahanamoku as a swimmer to make a living doing films as long as he never stepped foot in the water. If Kahanamoku performed in any roles involving water sports in films he would be declared a professional. Most media reporters assumed that when Kahanamoku declared that he would be gin his career in the movies that he would naturally do films where he would swim. This would have

been a reasonable assumption given that no one had any idea of what other skill anyone would be interested in watching Kahanamoku, a dark-skinned swimmer, perform.

Kahanamoku’s decision to forego swimming scenes guaranteed that the champion swimmer would never become the star that Henning foresaw. He played in films with Douglas Fairbanks and became close friends with the famous actor. Fairbanks and his wife, Mary Pickford, actually took Kahanamoku under their wing in Hollywood and helped him get parts in movies but Kahanamoku failed to rival the super star status of Fairbanks or the rest of Hollywood’s leading men. Perhaps due to his restraint in utilizing his swimming prowess for the movies, Hollywood executives viewed him as nothing more than a dark skinned bit actor, and were frustrated with not being able to cash in on the great swimmers world-renowned talent that they knew would attract patrons. Once again, Kahanamoku chose traditional Hawaiian values over great potential economic rewards. At thirty-two-years-old that gamble may have seemed foolish. Nevertheless, his sense of no kou pono (goodness or excellence in your behalf) to his people overrode his desires for economic gain.41

The risk also forced the Hawaiian swimmer to walk a precarious tightrope between professionalism and amateurism. Tensions intensified between these two poles of athletic performance in the 1920s. In the pre World War I period opportunities for professional athletes were relatively scarce. Professional baseball and prizefighting drew large enough followings for athletes to receive a decent wage. Beyond baseball and boxing some water carnivals and side shows surrounding circuses provided professional

41 Pukui and Elbert, Hawaiian Dictionary, 340.
potential for aspiring athletes. After the war, however, sport marketers began to see the commercial opportunities in athletic competitions. With the growth of college football and the associated stadium building boom which occurred in the early 1920s, professional football developed in the United States. In 1922 the National Football League organized in Canton, Ohio. The league used the fame of the disgraced amateur Jim Thorpe to promote its product. At the same time that professional football appeared other entrepreneurs began their own ventures.

In 1921 Tex Rickard built a huge temporary stadium in Jersey City, New Jersey on Boyles Thirty Acres, land he leased for six months in order to promote one major event. The world heavyweight championship fight between Jack Dempsey and George Carpentier attracted 90,000 paying customers and made Rickard over $1.6 million in gross receipts. William Wrigley Jr. used his ownership of the Chicago Cubs to vault him into other sporting entrepreneurial ventures including his $25,000 Catalina Channel swim which helped him to promote development on Catalina Island in California. Wrigley attempted to use the massive prize money in this race to entice Kahanamoku, a yacht-racing friend of his, into the professional ranks of swimmers, although the Hawaiian turned the offer down. Not to be outdone by any other promoter, C.C. “Cash and Carry” Pyle represented Red Grange and negotiated a contract with the Chicago Bears immediately after Grange’s final game at the University of Illinois. Pyle also

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represented tennis star Suzanne Lenglen and promoted such events as the ‘Bunion Derby,’” a transcontinental running race in which the winner was supposed to receive $25,000. With larger and larger pots of money available to athletes who desired to turn professional, the debate between what qualified one as a professional heated up.

The American standard for amateurism had developed from the British ideal which held that anyone who earned a living through the use of their body was a professional. This class-conscious standard barred carpenters, bricklayers, and other common laborers from partaking in amateur sports, thereby leaving that distinction in the hands of the upper classes. As the modern Olympics began in Athens in 1896, the athletes who competed in those Games tended to reflect this class-biased ideal of amateurism. However, as the American emphasis upon winning took root, American teams began to draw athletes from all occupations and ethnic backgrounds who demonstrated the potential to reveal to the rest of the world how the democratic notions of sport in the United States proved that it was a superior culture. As a result, class distinctions disappeared from the American view of amateurism and a more utilitarian standard began to develop which deemed one a professional if that athlete had received money for playing sport.

Jim Thorpe, Kahanamoku’s teammate on the 1912 Stockholm Olympic team became one of the first to get caught in this confusing web of amateur standards. Thorpe,  

the Olympic gold medalist in both the decathlon and pentathlon at Stockholm, received money for playing in a baseball league run by resorts in North Carolina one summer—a common practice among American collegiate “amateurs.” When this became known, the American Olympic Committee declared the “world’s greatest athlete” ineligible for competition as an amateur and stripped the Native American of his medals. The Thorpe case had personal connections to Kahanamoku due to the friendship he developed with Thorpe. As late as 1965, at the age of seventy-five, Kahanamoku disliked speaking about Thorpe’s ban as it was a “very bitter memory” for him. He insisted, “what happened to him [Thorpe] was a bad break for sports and for everyone.” Kahanamoku’s reflection on the issue probably held the frustration of the challenges of his own personal amateur status as well.

For Kahanamoku the issue revolved around his swimming. If he profited from swimming he would be declared a professional. This included receiving money for teaching swimming or for appearing in any movie in which he swam. One problem with the standard hinged on the fact that there were no concrete limits as to what it meant to profit. Expenses paid to athletes who were touring were legitimate under the rules. However, no one set a maximum standard that an athlete could receive regarding expenses. During Kahanamoku’s 1918 Red Cross tour this issue had been raised when he was accused of padding his expense fund on the tour. Some of the confusion during that tour revolved around the fact that Kahanamoku and his companions were collecting

money from the meets and giving it to the Red Cross and the YMCA for the war effort. When this became clear the swimmers were exonerated. Still, the shadow of professionalism always hovered around Kahanamoku. It became one of the biggest controversies of the 1920s and early 1930s in American sport. Magazine and newspapers writers chimed in on the subject throughout the decade.

As soon as Kahanamoku announced that he would begin a movie career, the press automatically assumed he had become a professional. The *New York Times*, in announcing Kahanamoku’s manager’s attempts to work out details for a film career, even stated that “if satisfactory arrangements are made he is to move over into the professional ranks next month,” linking the films with professional status. As plans for his career in film fell apart Kahanamoku made it clear that he had no intention of turning professional.

Shortly after the announcement of his potential film career, another issue arose revolving around the question of Kahanamoku’s amateur standing. Apparently, an advertisement for varnish, which used Kahanamoku as a representative, appeared in American magazines. A photograph of the Hawaiian appeared in the ad along with Kahanamoku’s reference to the varnish as “good medicine for surf boards.” The Amateur Athletic Union (A.A.U.) declared that Kahanamoku had used his fame as a

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55 Ibid.
swimmer for profit and demanded that the Hawaiian branch of the A.A.U. punish him. “Dad” Center, Kahanamoku’s coach, trainer, friend and the president of the Hawaiian A.A.U. “refused to obey” the “mandate” and, as the *New York Times* colorfully described it, “threw down the gauntlet to the national body.” The Hawaiian organization claimed that Kahanamoku did “nothing to invoke the ban.” They argued that “as a swimmer,” Kahanamoku does come “under A.A.U. jurisdiction,” however, “as a surf board rider he is indulging in a private pastime with which the A.A.U. has nothing to do.” Center’s argument worked. The national body backed down but Kahanamoku understood that he would live under intense scrutiny.

Some in the mainland press stood up for those athletes who struggled to display their skills and remain amateurs and still survive economically while doing it. Journalist John C. Kofoed argued in *The American Mercury* that using the definition of an amateur as a sportsperson who “receives ‘no pecuniary gain, either directly or indirectly, from the game he plays,’” necessarily meant that “no man who works for a living can fail to gain indirectly if he becomes a golf or tennis or polo star.” Kofoed reasoned that “if he sells bonds or insurance or automobiles he will find many more customers as a champion in any sport than he could as Mr. X.” The only athlete who could claim amateur status therefore, is “the man of independent means,” and Kofoed linked this standard back to “snobbery” and elite status. Kofoed investigated a number of controversial figures regarding the professionalism issue and made comparisons of their backgrounds. He compared golfer Bobby Jones with tennis player Bill Tilden. Both were national

champions in their sports and both were paid to write articles about their tournaments and their respective games. Jones, who graduated from Harvard and came from a very wealthy family was hailed by the United States Golf Association as the essence of amateurism. Tilden, who Kofoed recalled, “was brought up by an aunt in moderate circumstances,” worked for the Philadelphia Public Ledger before his tennis greatness became apparent. Tilden was banned from amateur tennis for earning money as a writer but Jones was not. 58

Kofoed believed that the amateur rules and those who established the rules were discriminating against those who came from meager beginnings. Ideally, the rules, which would “outlaw every act that might be construed as a capitalization of athletic fame,” he wrote “is beautiful in theory.” In practice he continued, “it would permit only such men to become champions as had sufficient incomes to support them in idleness.” Kofoed concluded that “it would be the perfection of that financial and social snobbery that has become so integral a part of American sport.” Kofoed wrote that “Tilden worked like a slave learning to play tennis because he loved the game. Golden rewards were not in sight for years. Why, then, should he be denied some measure of financial freedom that has come as an incidental but inevitable part of his success?” 59 Such sentiment which could easily describe Kahanamoku’s situation as well, demonstrating that Kofoed would have sided with Kahanamoku regarding the Hawaiian’s amateur status.

Ignoring the social class distinctions of Kofoed’s argument, sportswriter and novelist John R. Tunis also wrote extensively regarding the amateur-professional battle, 58

58 Ibid, 436.
59 Ibid, 437.
noting the complexities of differing standards used by governing bodies. Highlighting the discrepancies of cases, Tunis argued that “efforts to express such distinctions in hair-splitting rules can only end in confusion.” He endorsed abolishing the terms but holding on to the notion of an “amateur spirit,” which he referred to as “the most delicate and subtle thing in the world.”

Tunis viewed the “amateur spirit” as a spiritual quality which denoted a love for the game regardless of financial rewards. In this manner, he argued that “a professional athlete can have, often does have this spirit even though he plays the game on a salary.” However, Tunis’s concern revolved around the commercialization of American society and a loss of doing things for any reason other than money. He lamented that the loss of the amateur spirit boded ill for society even outside of sport. He asserted that “it is certainly a fact that in many spheres, in our games and sports, in our social life and in business, its decrease is apparent.” Tunis cautioned, “if it actually vanishes from our life, our country and the world at large will be every way the poorer.”

Amateurism and the values it brought with it impacted Kahanamoku’s every move. Americans had come to realize the influence of sport on its society and this critical issue transcended sporting fields and landed in the middle of public debate. Sports influence led The Nation to declare “Sport Is Elected.” Noting that the country in 1924 found itself in the middle of a presidential election the magazine announced, “we may say already-and with entire confidence-that the popular vote has been cast in favor of sport. It has been seated on the American throne. It has been clothed with almost

61 Ibid, 595.
dictatorial powers.” Weighing in on the issues of the professional–amateur debate, *The Nation* viewed the issue in a different light than most. It begrudgingly acknowledged that Americans “absorption in sports... are chiefly the spectacular professional performances in which a few individuals take part while thousands watch on,” equating this with Roman “bread and circuses.” Optimistically, the magazine argued that such professional performances “develop and encourage a great growth of amateur sport, of no import to the newspapers but of supreme consequence to the health and spirits of the people.”62 In essence the magazine hoped that the professionalism exhibited by great athletes could actually fuel the spirit of amateur sport by inspiring the common person to participate in sport as a result of watching his or her professional heroes.

As the arguments over professionalism in the 1920s revolved around broader new definitions which included “spectacular performances” and the love of money over one’s active participation in sport, Kahanamoku fit in neither of those categories. If viewed in the narrow view of directly or indirectly benefiting from ones sport activities then there is no question that Kahanamoku profited from his worldwide fame. Kahanamoku due to his upbringing, believed in the “amateur spirit” as Tunis did. The crux of the matter lay in the struggle to live out the life of an amateur and pay the bills in a commercialized world. Hawai’i held very little opportunity for its favorite son. The territory also found itself in the midst of changes and a growing commercialized tourist industry that altered life in the islands. As Kahanamoku’s status in the world developed so did his homeland.

In 1924 Genevieve Taggard reminisced about the recent changes from her fond memories of growing up in Hawai`i. Taggard, a haole who spent eighteen years in the islands as a child at the same time that Kahanamoku grew up there, ended up living on the mainland and found that she could not even converse with people who had recently visited Hawai`i. The memories she held and the experiences they described seemed incompatible. While her guests spoke eloquently about the pineapple and sugar industries and the growing commercial and hotel districts in Honolulu and Waikiki, she recounts “I had not been able to contribute one respectable fact to the discussion.” Her memories were of eating minnows, mangoes and passion fruit while paddling and swimming in taro patch ditches. She remembered a gift from a “negro cook,” a prison inmate being punished for “marrying three women,” who gave her a kukui nut with “the Lord’s Prayer carved and set with gold,” readable only with a magnifying glass. The Hawai`i her traveler friends told her about was one “I have never known: The land of the tourist who spares a week for seeing this little dot on the map, who lives in a hotel like the hotels in New York, rides around the island in a carefully closed Rolls-Royce and a cloud of dust.” She wondered, “can it be the same place as the one inhabited by John Frank and Merry Perry,” her Hawaiian playmates. “Sometimes I think I made it up,” she mused.

For Kahanamoku, the vast changes in island culture must also have created a sense of wondering if this land resembled the nation in which he was born. Whether it

63 Genevieve Taggard, “Chapters From Unwritten Autobiographies, IV, A Haole Scrapbook,” Bookman 59 (June 1924), 391.
64 Ibid, 398.
was a sense of being an outsider in his homeland or a desire for opportunities not afforded him in Hawai‘i, Kahanamoku moved to California in 1922 to begin his film career. Many challenges confronted him, including cultural changes in his homeland, a growing sense of needing to establish a career, and a struggle between his traditional values and desire to honor his people and a need to earn a living as represented in the amateur-professional struggles surrounding him. His greatest challenge, however, came in the form of a teenage swimmer from Illinois named Johnny Weissmuller who would challenge Kahanamoku’s throne as the king of swimming. The 1920s would be a decade of struggles for Kahanamoku.


CHAPTER 6

THE CLASH OF THE SWIMMING GIANTS: “TARZAN” VS. “THE DUKE”

“Of glory and the price, the higher up the scales you go the harder your work becomes, the more difficult for you to retain your place. When you are champion, you have become the legitimate prey for those beneath you. Your weaknesses will be exaggerated. The hour of your failure will be eagerly looked forward to. The slightest variation in your play will be interpreted as a signal of your decline. Do not permit yourself to be carried away by congratulations, or flatteries, or eulogies. Receive calmly the applause of the public. They will undoubtedly forget you on the morrow. All this is ephemeral. When the day comes that you will go down to defeat, you will taste the bitterness of your own disillusionment, but glory is often worth the price one pays.”

Excerpt from “How I Trained Suzanne,” by Charles Lenglen

The 1920s witnessed the rise of sport’s “golden age” and with it a peculiar characteristic. The fans and the media’s fascination with the building up of champions only to then attempt to bring down those same idols. This particular spectator trait began in previous decades but the roaring twenties saw the maturation process of this strange phenomenon. Observing that “we’re sports-mad idiots” professional tennis player and American champion Mary K. Browne pointed out the fickleness of the masses in regard to their champions. In an interview with The American Review of Reviews in 1927, the

Excerpt from Charles Lenglen, “How I Trained Suzanne,” quoted by Mary K. Browne in “We’re Sports-Mad Idiots!,” American Review of Reviews 75 (January 1927) : 106
magazine explained Miss Browne’s frustration with how fans “make an idol only to break him as cheerfully; in fact, they are always glad to see a new idol installed, and to have him torn down.”

Duke Kahanamoku had been on top of the swimming world for eight years as the decade began and had already dealt with upstarts challenging his position at the top ranks of swimming. John Kelii, Pua Kealoha, and Norman Ross all had been forecast to take down the Olympic champion and failed. However, on November 21, 1921 in a twenty-yard pool in Chicago, Illinois, an eighteen-year-old named Johnny Weissmuller broke the first of his sixty-seven career world records beginning a dizzying display of aquatic excellence which would challenge Kahanamoku’s hold on the popular if unofficial title of world’s fastest swimmer.

The two would not square off in a competitive race until 1924. The media and the American public refused to wait for a direct confrontation. As soon as Weissmuller broke a world’s record the eulogies mounted for the Hawaiian star. The aging swimmer’s accomplishments read like ancient history. A young conqueror had arisen and swimming fans and pundits clamored to jump on the bandwagon. Ironically, what should have been a decade of epic battles between two of the greatest swimmers in history ended up with few direct confrontations. Illness created most of the obstacles. In the seven years of active competition that these two swimmers shared, five of them were marred by illnesses to one or the other swimmer. Kahanamoku struggled through bouts with influenza in 1921, 1922, and 1928 while Weissmuller had a career threatening

\[\text{\textsuperscript{2}} \text{ Ibid, 105.}\]
strained heart muscle in 1923,\(^3\) was ill again in 1926,\(^4\) and eventually turned professional, retiring from amateur competition in January of 1929.\(^5\)

Regardless of the lack of head-to-head races between Kahanamoku and Weissmuller comparisons naturally arose due to the remarkable similarities in their careers. Both set multiple world records in a variety of distances and settings. Both had brothers who also became accomplished competitive swimmers only to fade in the bright glare of their older sibling’s glory.\(^6\) Hollywood beckoned for both men. Weissmuller’s career as Tarzan eclipsed that of Kahanamoku’s yet the Hawaiian opened many doors for athletes in the film industry through his solid if not spectacular performances. Both men won gold medals at two different Olympic Games. Kahanamoku and Weissmuller both held the nickname “human fish” - - Kahanamoku enjoyed it first. Not only did they represent the United States in Olympic competition in swimming but each participated on U.S. Olympic water polo teams as well. Both men took their positions as role models seriously, reportedly staying away from vices such as smoking and drinking.\(^7\) Most importantly, they shared a passion for swimming and a love for the water. They continued to swim, surf and boat for recreational purposes long after their competitive

\(^7\) While it is fairly clear from accounts that Kahanamoku never drank or smoked, for Weissmuller the evidence is not as clear. Later in his life he became known as someone who liked to drink quite a bit. See Johnny Weissmuller Jr., Tarzan, My Father (Toronto: ECW Press, 2002), 47. It may be that while training he never drank, or it could be that this was the image that the media portrayed of him.
careers, and the cheers, ended.  

While Kahanamoku and Weissmuller may have shared many loves and experiences throughout their careers they also were very different in the ways that they were promoted by the media. Compared to Kahanamoku, Weissmuller’s career was a flash in the pan. In fact, when the two met in competition for the first time in 1924 Kahanamoku’s thirty three year old age was already eight years older than Weissmuller would be when he retired at the age of twenty-five in 1929. Whereas Weissmuller competed for seven seasons as an amateur including two Olympic Games, Kahanamoku competed at the highest levels of swimming for three times as long, an amazing twenty-one years including competitive appearances at four different Olympic Games. Although Weissmuller did play a role as a symbol of German and Austrian ethnicity in the years after World War I, he gained instant acceptance as an American hero by the media. Kahanamoku who grew up under the Hawaiian monarchy always lived under clouds regarding his nationality. Influenced by traditional Hawaiian values, Kahanamoku placed a strong emphasis upon his role as an ambassador for his people. The swimming tank served as his royal court.

Weissmuller, on the other hand, came of age in the 1920s amidst the commercialism rampantly altering American life. It only made sense for him to do well and turn professional as soon as possible in order to cash in on the financial rewards of his success.

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Other deep-rooted values also make for interesting comparisons. Kahanamoku’s personality reflected the *ha`aha`a*, or humility, of his people and an insistence upon the compassion and mercy of *aloha* so as not to humiliate others. In this regard, Kahanamoku often would swim well enough to win while salvaging his opponent’s pride and honor.9 Hawaiian scholar George Hu`eu Sanford Kanahele explained that in Hawaiian culture “looking after the welfare of people arises from an underlying spirit of sensitivity and feeling for others that flows from humbleness rather than a conviction of superiority.”10 Kahanamoku, while competitive, also always seemed to consider the welfare of foes and friends.

Conversely, as one of his five former wives, Lupe Velez, remarked, Weissmuller had a hot temper and adopted the win at all costs ideals of mainland culture.11 He often would beat opponents by many seconds. As a fierce competitor, when Weissmuller slowed down people noticed, and the media and patrons described his attitude as “contemptuous,” playing with his opponents to crush their spirit with a quick burst to the finish. It did not help matters when Weissmuller promised at the 1928 London Games to give Swedish swim star and rival Arne Borg “a little medicine in the 100-meters.”12

A study of media reflections of these two great swimming stars demonstrates strong differences in their treatment. The press enjoyed Kahanamoku, and the easygoing nature of the Hawaiian appealed to the majority of those covering swimming events.

There were many interesting ways to shape Kahanamoku’s image including the ideal of the noble savage, an example of American polyglot society, or as a curiosity from America’s paradise. However, when Weissmuller burst upon the scene the newcomer instantly became the “American” swimming star. Whereas Kahanamoku’s success warranted his mention as a representative of American athletics, most mainlanders still did not know how to categorize the “dusky native.”

Weissmuller misrepresented his personal history as he emerged as the American star. He claimed he came not from some tropical island which most Americans would never see but instead from America’s heartland and second city, Chicago. In actuality, Weissmuller was born János Weiβmüller in Friedorf, Austro-Hungary, which is today Timisoara, Romania, to German speaking Austrian parents Petrus Weiβmüller and Erzsebet Kersch. Arriving in New York on January 26, 1905, the family’s names were translated into English Peter, Elizabeth, and Jonas Weissmuller. However, when Weissmuller needed to obtain a United States passport to compete in the Paris Games in 1924, he falsely gave his brother Peter’s birthdate and location since he had been born in the United States in 1905 in Windber, Pennsylvania. When question arose as to Weissmuller’s nationality in 1924, his father, Peter, Sr., stood up for him and stated unequivocally that “Johnny was born in Chicago, would be 20 years of age next June and has no intention of ever being anything but an American citizen.”

Weissmuller’s father as no other questions were raised and everyone gladly accepted that he was a one-hundred-percent American Champion on his way to Olympic history.\textsuperscript{15}

Weissmuller himself continued the charade writing in 1930 that “my birthplace is Winbar,[sic] Pennsylvania, but I do not remember living in any place but Chicago.”\textsuperscript{16} Apparently Weissmuller could not even get the spelling of his supposed birthplace correct in his story.

As an American citizen born to immigrants, Weissmuller represented the American dream. Even the tales of his rise to fame in swimming spoke of the pluck of a young swimmer whose determination and grit won him an opportunity to swim.

According to the New York Times, Weissmuller hounded an unnamed member of the Illinois Athletic Club (I.A.C.) for over a month asking for an opportunity to swim for the “great tricolor” club and join the “galaxy of stars already in the I.A.C. fold.” The newspaper reported that “finally one day the boy’s persistence was rewarded,” and the member half-heartedly introduced Weissmuller to I.A.C. coach Bill Bacharach explaining to the “tricolor trainer of watermen” that “here’s a fellow who thinks that he can swim.” Supposedly, Weissmuller slipped into the pool and Bacharach “realized that he had what is known in sporting parlance as a ‘find.’”\textsuperscript{17}

Other accounts credit American distance swimming star Norman “Big Moose” Ross with the discovery of Weissmuller and claim that Ross used Weissmuller as a

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid; Johnny Weissmuller, Jr., \textit{Tarzan: My Father}, 23. While questions surrounded the actual authenticity of Weissmuller’s citizenship throughout his career, media reports at the time of the controversy seemed more than willing to put the matter behind them as they crowned their new champion.


means to get back at Kahanamoku. In 1919, after he had won every swimming event at the Inter-Allied Games in Paris, Ross went to Honolulu to swim against the Hawaiian champion in a 200-meter race. Kahanamoku, allegedly scared of Ross’s prowess, retreated and refused to swim against the great swimmer from the I.A.C. However, after speaking with his coach “Dad” Center, Kahanamoku figured out a way to beat Ross by in essence tricking the swimmer who specialized in longer distance swimming events and swimming a slow pace. Thereby making the race a sprint, which favored Kahanamoku’s strengths.\(^{18}\)

Ross realizing he could not beat the great champion then went out in search of someone who could avenge his humiliation. Ross supposedly discovered Weissmuller “walking along the Chicago waterfront one day when his attention was attracted by the swimming of a youth.” Ross reportedly took “his protégé to the Illinois Athletic Club and put him under the watchful eye of Coach Bachrach” who groomed him as a tool for Ross’s revenge.\(^{19}\) While Ross did lose to Kahanamoku in a 220 yard race in Honolulu that event actually occurred in 1917, and Ross told Kahanamoku that “you’re the king, Duke” after the race.\(^{20}\) The two swimmers became lifelong friends as well, leading one to believe that the tale is more fabrication that fact. Whether or not there is truth in any of the stories told of the advent of Weissmuller, it is clear that the media used a variety of tactics to build interest in the sport of swimming.

At times, the press used Weissmuller as a Dick Merriwell figure, Burt Standish’s


\(^{19}\) Ibid

fictional all-American lad who would not drink or smoke and strove for excellence.\textsuperscript{21} Through his pluck and perseverance, he would prove his worth to the world. At other times, the focus shifted to a heated rivalry pitting Americans with superior skill against a scheming “native” (Kahanamoku) who could only win due to his trickery. This treatment of Kahanamoku is reminiscent of the familiar Uncle Remus tales of the Jim Crow era and the ingenuity of Brer Rabbit in out foxing his opponents.\textsuperscript{22} In the tales Brer Rabbit had less natural strength and ability than his adversaries Brer Fox and Brer Bear, but through ingenuity, cunning, and humor he is able to survive against all attempts of subjugation. He exemplifies what some referred to as the “good qualities” of the “plantation negro . . . full of quaint good sense, full of affection, of good humor, and of natural courtesy.”\textsuperscript{23} Interestingly the story and its reflection on Kahanamoku the “good Hawaiian” held some resonance in mainland culture.

In trying to build a rivalry, the press disregarded many essential facts about Weissmuller and Kahanamoku. When Weissmuller emerged in 1921 Kahanamoku was at a very different point in his career. In 1922 Weissmuller went to Honolulu to swim in meets at the request of the Hawaiian A.A.U. This supposedly would be the opportunity for the new prodigy to challenge the old champion on the latter’s home turf. The expected confrontation never materialized. While Weissmuller eagerly rose in the ranks of swimming lore, Kahanamoku found himself at a crossroads in his career. The thirty-two-year-old two-time Olympic champion struggled with what to do with his swimming

\textsuperscript{21} Burt Standish, \textit{Dick Merriwell’s Power, or Hold ‘Em Yale} (New York: Street and Smith, 1909).
\textsuperscript{22} Joel Chandler Harris, Adapted by Van Dyke Parks and Malcolm Jones, \textit{Jump!: The Adventures Of Brer Rabbit} (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986).
career. When Weissmuller arrived in Honolulu, Kahanamoku had for months been planning his departure for California to try his hand in acting. While not completely giving up on swimming competitively, Kahanamoku had for all practical purposes given up training rigorously to defend his title as world’s greatest swimmer. Shortly after Weissmuller arrived, Hawai‘i said goodbye to their most noted citizen. In 1922 Weissmuller and Kahanamoku did not face off in the pool.

Numerous sources attributed Kahanamoku’s departure as a method for dodging the young swimmer. Weissmuller’s son, Johnny Jr., reported with great disdain that his father claimed “the Duke refused to come to the States [mainland] to race me.” As a result, he reports that his father then decided to go to Honolulu to race “against the ‘invincible’ Duke Kahanamoku.” The younger Weissmuller asserts that “the Duke backed out of the race at the last minute. He had developed a sudden ‘illness.’”

While the younger Weissmuller implies that Kahanamoku had been too scared to race his illustrious father, the reality was that Kahanamoku never had intended on racing Weissmuller in Hawai‘i and had actually begun to move beyond competitive swimming and into his movie career. The move to California had been planned far in advance of Weissmuller’s trip to Hawai‘i. In addition, Kahanamoku had struggled with a bout of influenza in 1922 which had “peeled twenty-six pounds of fat and tissue” from his muscular frame. There had been nothing sudden about that illness. As a result, Kahanamoku had not been able to do any serious training. Under those circumstances a

26 Johnny Weissmuller Jr, Tarzan: My Father, 36.
race against Weissmuller was not a prospect that attracted the competitive juices of Kahanamoku. Kahanamoku had always competed against the best in the world, often racing them in handicap events as he did in Australia. He had been defeated in numerous races and had always handled it with grace. Losing to a young wonderful swimmer like Weissmuller would not have bruised Kahanamoku’s fragile ego as some writers imply. The bottom line really was that Kahanamoku intended to represent his people in a film rather than in athletics.  

Kahanamoku told members of the press that he was through with competitive swimming and “for that matter I have been through with it for a year.” Kahanamoku considered the “talk about a meeting between Johnny and myself to settle the matter of supremacy… foolish.” His mind was set on other issues and he openly admitted that Weissmuller was the future of swimming stating that “He is the greatest swimmer the world has ever seen.”  Kahanamoku had watched Weissmuller train before he left for California and realized that the times that the young Illinois swimmer was posting required extensive training, a task for which Kahanamoku was not prepared nor healthy enough to undertake. Kahanamoku’s manager Oscar Henning informed the media, “The Duke himself has timed Weissmuller in 52 1-5 seconds for the 100 yards in practice at Honolulu and knows just what he can do.” Henning then added, “The Duke will always be able to do what he is doing now-swim 50 or 100 yards faster than anybody except a world’s champion without a day of training, but he has no intention of attempting to

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compete with Weissmuller.”

Without Kahanamoku, the media then turned for another avenue to build a rivalry through “nationalism.” The press insisted that “it would fall to Pua and Warren Kealoha and W.W. Harris to carry Hawai`i’s colors.” The inference, once again was that Hawaiians were not truly Americans.

While building up this rivalry to demonstrate the prowess of Weissmuller as the truly All-American swimming star in contrast to the Hawaiians, the media also made sure to cover Weissmuller’s wins while often overlooking his losses. Selective reporting had created the myth that Weissmuller was undefeated during his amateur career. Those who have promoted the idea of Weissmuller as undefeated in amateur swimming had help from Weissmuller himself. In an interview with the New York Times in 1972, Weissmuller told the paper that “I was better than Mark Spitz is. I never lost a race. Never. Not even in the Y.M.C.A.. The closest I ever came to losing was on the last lap of the 400 in 1924 when I got a snootful.”

Weissmuller’s memory must have failed him as he announced his undefeated status since he lost at least two races in his amateur career. The first came in 1922 during his trip to Honolulu in. In a match swim against Warren Kealoha, Weissmuller went down to defeat - - a fact that went unreported at the time in the mainland press. The New York Times did reveal the loss the next year in announcing that Kealoha had established a new 150-yard backstroke world record. Calling Kealoha “the conqueror of Johnny Weissmuller, the Chicago swimming marvel,” it briefly mentioned that Kealoha defeated

30 Ibid.
Weissmuller in 1922.\textsuperscript{34} It must also have slipped Weissmuller’s memory when he lost to the seventeen-year-old schoolboy, George Kojac in 1927 in the 150-yard backstroke. In that National A.A.U. championship race Weissmuller actually came in third place, finishing behind George Fissler of the New York Athletic Club as well as Kojac.\textsuperscript{35}

It is unclear how many other races Weissmuller may have lost as the media often seemed to disregard his failures. As a result, fans and organizations such as the International Swimming Hall of Fame and the International Palace of Sports as well as modern day websites continue to accept the American idol’s word that he never lost a race without further investigation into the matter.\textsuperscript{36}

According to the existing records Kahanamoku never did beat Weissmuller in head-to-head competition. However, when Weissmuller struggled in 1923, due to illness and could not compete in most races running up to the national championships Kahanamoku again reappeared on the radar for American swimming. The announcement

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\textsuperscript{36} Some of the sites which continue to claim that Weissmuller was undefeated include these: Geoff St. Andrews, “Biography of Johnny Weissmuller,” http://searcht.netscape.com/ns/boomframe.jsp?query=Johnny+Weissmuller&page=1&offset=0&result_url=redir%3Fsrc%3Dwebsearch%26reqestId%3D9badb3d9f8a274%26clickedItemRank%3D1%26query%3DJohnny%2BWeissmuller%26clickedItemURN%3Dhttp%253A%252F%252Fwww.mergetel.com%252F%252F%253Egeostan%252F%26invocationType%3D%26fromPage%3DNSCPToolbarNS%26amp%3BampTest%3D1&remove_url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.mergetel.com%252F%257Egeostan%252F, accessed on 10 February 2006.; Wikipedia, “Johnny Weissmuller,” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johnny_Weissmuller, accessed on 10 February 2006; International Swimming Hall of Fame Website, “Johnny Weissmuller,” http://searcht.netscape.com/ns/boomframe.jsp?query=swimming+hall+of+fame&page=1&offset=0&result_url=redir%3Fsrc%3Dwebsearch%26reqestId%3D9badb3d9f8a354%26clickedItemRank%3D1%26query%3Dswimming%2Bhall%2Bof%2Bfame%26clickedItemURN%3Dhttp%253A%252F%252Fwww.ishof.org%252F%26invocationType%3D%26fromPage%3DNSCPToolbarNS%26amp%3BampTest%3D1&remove_url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.ishof.org%2F, accessed on 10 February 2006.
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by Kahanamoku that he had been through with competitive swimming since 1921 was premature. In fact, when Kahanamoku’s movie career fizzled members of the Los Angeles Athletic Club encouraged him to once again take up the sport to bring fame to their club. His love for the water brought him back to the pool at the club where he worked part time when not doing films. It became obvious to those at the pool that the aging swimmer still had explosive power in his body and friends at the club encouraged him to reconsider his decision to retire from swimming competitively. It turned out to be a good decision. In 1923 Kahanamoku made a statement in the pool that he was not yet ready to cede his Olympic title to Weissmuller. Kahanamoku broke his own world record in the 50-yard freestyle with a time of 22 3-5 seconds. He also established a new world record in the 25-yard freestyle and lowered his personal bests in the 100-yard freestyle repeatedly. The New York Times remarked that “at the age of 33, after a period of inactivity during which every one thought his career as a competitor was closed for good, the noted Hawaiian waterman, world’s sprinting champion and record holder for a decade, again stepped to the fore.” The article noted that Kahanamoku “is making better times for the dashes than he returned in the days of his international supremacy.”

For those looking for a rival to Weissmuller this news came at a great time. The closest that the press could come to concocting a competitive battle between the two swimmers was in January of 1923 when Kahanamoku announced that he had taken up golf. Highlighting the fact that Weissmuller “has usurped much of the Duke’s swimming

37 “Weissmuller Is Greatest Swimmer,” p. 16.
fame,” the media played on Kahanamoku’s claim “that it will be a long time before Johnny can beat him at golf.”\textsuperscript{41} Two swimmers competing as average golfers may be a great human interest story but it surely would not command the intense public interest that a swimming match would.

The timing of Kahanamoku’s resurgence could not have been better for the media as the older champion renewed hope for Olympic victories by American swimmers at the 1924 Paris Games. Shortly after Kahanamoku began his new assault upon the record books in 1923, he announced that he would make an Eastern tour and compete in the National Championships in Indianapolis where he had hoped to challenge Weissmuller.\textsuperscript{42} Unfortunately for Kahanamoku, Weissmuller contracted a serious illness in 1923 which threatened his swimming career. Serendipitously for sport journalists, Kahanamoku’s return to form filled the potential gap that Weissmuller’s illness created. Some reports claimed that Weissmuller’s condition was a strained muscle in his heart while other later reports blamed his infirmity upon influenza and indigestion.\textsuperscript{43} The press reflected the fears for Weissmuller’s swimming future. The \textit{New York Times} fretted that the “peerless swimmer” had suffered “a complete breakdown and fear is expressed by medical authorities that he may be out of the sport for months,” and may “never regain the speed which earned him the distinction of being the foremost all-around swimmer ever developed.”\textsuperscript{44} Kahanamoku’s return spurred pundits to declare the Hawaiian the favorite

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\item \textsuperscript{42} “Kahanamoku Coming Here,” p. 22.
\item \textsuperscript{43} “Comment On Current Events In Sport,” \textit{New York Times}, 16 July 1923, p. 10.
\item \textsuperscript{44} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
for national laurels in the absence of Weissmuller.\cite{45}

Weissmuller would not be out as long as expected. He made an unexpected return for the Indianapolis meet, winning the 50 and 100-yard freestyle events. However, the rival he beat ended up being his brother Peter and not Kahanamoku.\cite{46} The Hawaiian swimmer decided not to make the trip east due to filming schedule conflicts in Hollywood. Kahanamoku had retained his amateur status but he also had contracts he had to fulfill in his new occupation. Hollywood producers were concerned more with their deadlines than any competitive swimming meet which may have conflicted.\cite{47}

Kahanamoku may also have lost interest in the AAU National Championship meet without a potential race against Weissmuller on the horizon. Weissmuller was not expected to compete due to his illness and Kahanamoku possibly opted out of the trip assuming that he would not have an opportunity to race the Chicago flash. Regardless of the reasons, a potential showdown between the two swimming stars vanished for the second straight year. However, the next season with the Olympic Games looming would bring about the clash of the titans. In 1923, Kahanamoku had proven to himself and the swimming world that he could compete with Weissmuller and he become “determined that he will wear the American shield at another Olympiad,” proposing “to train for the Games in Paris as he never did before.”\cite{48}

The 1924 Paris Olympic Games would be the swansong for retiring modern Olympic founder and President of the IOC Baron Pierre De Coubertin. French officials, 

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\item \cite{45} Ibid.
\item \cite{46} “Two Titles Won By Weissmuller,” \textit{New York Times}, 24 August 1923, p. 8.
\item \cite{47} “Screen Actors Guild Contract,” Duke Kahanamoku Collection, MS 434, Box 1, File 11.
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eager to distance themselves from the memory of the 1900 Games held in their city, 
endeavored to celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of the founding of the modern Olympic Games in grand style. Coubertin had inaugurated the modern Olympic movement on June 23, 1894, in Paris. Many in France believed it only fitting to stage a grand and glorious spectacle in honor of the anniversary of the creation of the IOC and its illustrious founder and fellow Frenchman, Coubertin. The Paris Games were also a homecoming for Coubertin. The Baron had fled France during World War I and moved Olympic headquarters to Lausanne, Switzerland. A new stadium was erected to host the track and field, soccer and rugby events in Colombes, a Parisian suburb. The French also built a natatorium for the swimming events which would accommodate 10,000 spectators.49

With plans for this marvelous athletic festival well on their way to fruition, athletes from around the world began to train and dream of participating. Weissmuller looked forward to his first opportunity to shine at the worldwide gathering while Kahanamoku dreamt of making an improbable appearance at the age of thirty-four. All of their efforts would be focused on the climatic swimming finals in Paris. Kahanamoku continued his work at the L.A.A.C. and in the movies. He was emboldened in his efforts to make the team for Paris by the news that his younger brother Sam also planned to try out. The nineteen-year-old Sam, selected by the Hawaiian A.A.U. to compete in the sectional tryouts for the Olympic team, had swam “the open water 100-meter in 1 minute 3-5 seconds, a Hawaiian record and only one-fifth of a second over Duke’s Olympic

The opportunity to go to Paris and compete with his brother added an incentive for Kahanamoku to train diligently. Kahanamoku from an early age viewed himself as part of a collective group rather than as an individual. This distinction was a cultural trait. Hawaiians valued collectivism over typical American individuality. For Kahanamoku this collectivism exemplified itself through his identification with his swimming “gang.”

Growing up in Waikiki, Kahanamoku celebrated life within his group of friends and family who hung out on the beach by the Moana pier, surfing, singing and playing games such as surf polo. As the oldest brother, Kahanamoku became the natural leader of the six boys in his family. The Kahanamokus congregated with a larger group which included Lawrence Cunha, Dad and Mike Center, Sam King, Steamboat Bill, Tough Bill, Dude Miller, Lane Webster, and Knute Cottrell among others. Journalist John Williams of the Honolulu Star-Bulletin remarked in an article on Kahanamoku that “the more Duke talks, the more he uses those words: the gang.”

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51 Value education scholars utilized research by educational scholars Benham and Heck to demonstrate that even in educational systems “Hawai`ian culture favors cooperation, with learning taking place in a variety of informal and formal settings.” Value education scholars utilized research by educational scholars Benham and Heck to demonstrate that even in educational systems “Hawai`ian culture favors cooperation, with learning taking place in a variety of informal and formal settings.” American classroom structures they argued contrastingly serve to “foster individual competition […] which forces some to lead, others to follow, while still others become marginalized.” Gita Steiner-Khamsi, Ying Ying Joanne Lim and Walter P. Dawson, “Values Education Of Hawai`ian: The Intersection Of Hawai`ian, American and Asian Values,” in William K. Cummings, Maria Teresa Tattoo and John Hawkins, Eds., Value Education For Dynamic Societies: Individualism or Collectivism (Hong Kong: Comparative Education Research Centre University of Hong Kong, 2001), 115. M.K.P. Benham and R.H. Heck, Culture and Educational Policy In Hawai`i: The Silencing of Native Voices (Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1998), 192;

mischief such as hitching rides for free on the horse trams in Waikiki, and pitched in “any spare dough they had” for “root beer, and pie,” and “fruit which they chopped up into a bowl and poured on five cent cans of milk.” This gang would eventually morph into the *Hui Nalu*, the surfing and swimming club that Kahanamoku and others started in 1908.

As Kahanamoku related the story, the gang was sitting upon their surfboards one day by the reef and had been struggling to come up with a name until Kahanamoku suddenly blurted out, “look, there’s the name,” pointing at the waves breaking over the reef. Reportedly “the gang all turned, sort of expecting something like a bolting horse.” When they did not see what he had gotten so excited about Kahanamoku explained “all the waves come in together, in a *hui* or clubbed together, and *nalu* is Hawaiian for surf.”

Hence, the name of the famous club was established. Most histories of the *Hui Nalu* claim that the club began after the 1908 creation of the Outrigger Club. Kahanamoku insisted that in actuality Alexander Hume Ford who founded the Outrigger Club, came to the *Hui Nalu* with George Freeth “and persuaded the gang” to join his club. However, “some of the gang didn’t join the outrigger, though so the *Hui Nalu* remained a separate unit, Kahanamoku explained. Interestingly, Kahanamoku related that the two clubs still kept on meeting under the *hau* tree that served as the *Hui Nalu’s* clubhouse: “the outrigger with its grass shack and shade for the canoes added swank to the beach and conveniently handled the overflow from the hau tree.”

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53 Ibid.
The gang also realized the responsibility they had to the younger kids as well and made sure that they watched out for them. Fred Paoa, a cousin of the Kahanamoku’s remembered that “I got out to Canoe Surf with the big waves at the time—that’s at the Moana. Before I got there I hear this whistle. ‘Chee,’ I turn around, look. Duke’s on the board. He says to me, ‘Get inside.’ I didn’t know what he meant. So, Sam say, ‘Hey kid, you better go in.’” Paoa went in, still not understanding what had happened, and waited for the older Kahanamoku boys. They came in and explained, “well you’re too young. You’ve never been out there before . . . you better stay inside, get the small ones for a while.” Paoa related that “the big guys didn’t let any of the young kids out there. You gotta really know how to handle it [the big waves].”

Mervin Richards also recalled that growing up in Waikiki “the older boys at the beach always took care of us when we was small.” Richards, who learned to surf from Sergeant Kahanamoku, Duke’s brother, pointed out that the older boys “made sure that we were off the streets at eight o’clock [p.m.] or whatever and if you weren’t, you had a kick in the pants—get home. So they always try to teach us how to surf or whatever we could play in their area.”

Others who grew up at the same time as the Kahanamokus remember the Kalia area of Waikiki as being “a beautiful place to live.” Mary Paoa Clarke remarked, “we were just like one big family there.” Earle “Liko” Vida also remembered the

57 Mervin Richards, interview by Michi Kodama-Nishimoto, Ibid, 690-691.
58 Mary Paoa Clarke, interview by Warren Nishimoto, Ibid., 661.
neighborhood as a family, “we were all one all knitted so close together. That’s the beauty part of that area.” Growing up in this community and amongst his friends who meant so much to him, it is easy to understand that swimming with members of the old gang provided extra motivation for Kahanamoku as the 1924 Paris Games approached.

Kahanamoku remembered the special time that he 1920 Antwerp Games had been as the Hawaiian swimmers took center stage in entertaining the other athletes and dominating competition. This time at Paris with his brother at his side Kahanamoku would have another opportunity to become a part of a community, both Hawaiian and American, who would venture overseas together to play, compete and enjoy the collective joys of life. It was not a trip to Paris that so enthralled Kahanamoku. What attracted the swimmer was the gang with which he would be able to share the experience. Indeed, while in Paris Kahanamoku had been “invited to go down and swim in Algiers, but he refused because the French expected him to travel alone and put on a one man show.”

With the added motivation to once again be a member of a team which may include his own brother Kahanamoku approached the face-off with Weissmuller with renewed vigor. The Olympic tryouts in swimming for 1924, held in Indianapolis, highlighted the eagerly awaited showdown three years in the making. In that first confrontation, Weissmuller bested both Kahanamoku brothers as Duke finished in second place and Sam trailed in third. At the meet John T. Taylor, the chairman of the Olympic Selection Committee, told the press that Fred Rubien, the Secretary of the American

Olympic Committee (AOC) had telegraphed, informing Taylor that due to “a shortage of funds the American team would be reduced from thirty-six to twenty-four men.” Mr. Taylor speculated that only the top three swimmers in each race would therefore “be selected to go to Europe.” With that bit of news, it was a great relief for Kahanamoku to see his brother take the third spot and earn a spot on the American team. Joining the Kahanamoku brothers on the American team from Hawai’i were Warren and Pua Kealoha, W.T. Kirschbaum, Henry Luning, Charles Pung. Hawaiian Mariechen Wehselau made the women’s swim team. Also joining the team as a trainer was another Kahanamoku brother, David. Once again, Kahanamoku had an established gang of nine Hawaiians including two of his brothers, with which to cavort.

While the Hawaiians again dominated the makeup of the team, the media hype surrounded Weissmuller. In a swim carnival at the Long Beach pool in New York featuring the Olympic team, the New York Times headline for the event once proclaimed that “Weissmuller wins in Carnival Swim,” making note of the fact that he defeated Pua Kealoha in the 100-yard freestyle event in the sub-headline. The reigning Olympic Champion Duke Kahanamoku, received a brief mention at the bottom of the article, reporting that the Hawaiian won the 60-yard freestyle event and also had won a special relay event which pitted teams consisting of two women and two men. The paper observed that “a quartet made of the Misses Mariechen Wehselau and Ethel Lackie, Pua Kealoha and Duke Kahanamoku up, took the measure of a foursome headed by John Weissmuller,” ignoring the fact that the winning team consisted of mostly Hawaiian

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swimmers. Even if only in a relay, Kahanamoku had finally defeated Weissmuller. For the first time the Chicago star stared at the feet of Kahanamoku as they swam the anchor legs for their respective teams. Weissmuller would have to wait until Paris for redemption.

For the third time Kahanamoku sailed out of New York harbor amidst cheers for the Olympic team. The United States liner S.S. America took what Colonel Robert M. Thompson, president of the AOC, called “350 of the finest specimens of young manhood and womanhood that this country can find.” Newspapers reported that the crowd sent the athletes off, wishing them “Godspeed, success and a safe trip to the men and women who are soon to be struggling against the athletes of the world in a bid for another illustration of America’s athletic supremacy.” While Weissmuller had captured the heart of the American media, Kahanamoku still held the respect of his fellow athletes. The New York Times reported that as Olympic coach Lawson Robertson led his “American Olympic army into Paris,” the American swimmers had elected Duke Kahanamoku as captain of the team “by a big majority over Johnnie Weissmuller and Richards Howell.”

The 1924 Paris Games returned the glamour to the Olympic movement. As opposed to Antwerp in 1920, Paris organizers had ample time to plan for the Games and built facilities worthy of hosting an international championships. The Paris Games also reflected world wide cultural changes. The death of the corset in these Games symbolized the advances made by women’s rights movements. Reports from Paris noted

that the “Paris style creators who boast that they dictate the fashion of the world”
believed the “corset is doomed to share the fate of the hoopskirt and bustle.” The
Olympic’s influence could be seen by the “thousands of women athletes” attracted to the
event as either contestants or spectators. Trainers of woman athletes were “prohibiting
the wearing of corsets to girls who are training for the various events” due to their
constrictive nature. 66 The Olympic program for women in 1924 also saw minor
expansion in participation in sport but increased interest due to what sport historian Mark
Dyreson described as the women Olympians use as “icons of liberty” and “objects of
desire.” 67 Although still banned from participating in track and field events, at these
Games women were able to participate in swimming and diving, tennis and for the first
time, fencing. In the swimming competition Paris organizers also added two races to the
Olympic line-up for women. In 1924 women would swim for gold in the 100-meter and
200 meter backstroke races. In addition the women’s long race in the freestyle had been
expanded from 300-meters, as it was contested in Antwerp, to 400-meters in Paris. 68

While women realized greater freedoms at Paris others felt greater constrictions in
other ways. The Filipino Olympic athletes were required to fly the American stars and
stripes above their national flag at the opening ceremonies. The decision by the
American embassy and the Paris Organizing Committee limited the symbolism of
independence which flying their flag of the Philippine Islands would have had for the

67 Mark Dyreson, “Icons of Liberty or Objects of Desire,” Journal of Contemporary History 37(Fall 2003):
459.
68 Bill Henry, An Approved History of the Olympic Games (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1948), 106,
125-126.
athletes and the people of that country which had been conquered by American imperialism at the same time as the Hawaiian Islands were overthrown.\textsuperscript{69} Fortunately, for the members of the U.S. swimming team, the issues of constraints had little to do with their situation. For the women swimmers corsets were moot as they were not part of the normal swimming attire. The Hawaiian representatives on the team had full American citizenship and were not competing amidst a national controversy regarding their status.

Unfortunately, for the swimmers at the 1924 Games, the competition schedule resulted in very little attention being paid to aquatics. At the outset of the Games the \textit{New York Times} noted that “forty-five nations are taking part this week in the track and field championships which constitute the major competition of the Olympic Games.”\textsuperscript{70} Most of the swimming events occurred the week after the track and field competition ended, which signified for most American sports fans the end of the Olympic Games. In fact, at the conclusion of the track and field events the American media handed the Olympic championship to the American team although swimming, boxing, tennis and gymnastics events had yet to be contested. As a result, rather than front-page attention which became the norm during the track and field events, Olympic reports were subjected to smaller reports buried in the paper. Olympic swimming generally did not even make the front page of the sporting section.

On July 13, 1924, before any swimming events had taken place \textit{The Spokesman Review} in Spokane, Washington, published a series of congratulatory articles regarding

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  \item \textsuperscript{69} “Filipinos Must Carry Stars and Stripes Above Their Own Flag at Olympic Games,” \textit{New York Times}, 16 June 1924, p. 1.
\end{itemize}
the victorious American Olympic team. It highlighted the advancement of amateur athletics and the great number of participants in the United States from grammar schools to colleges and through to the club level. It noted how “several clubs contributed winners to the American Olympic team during the last two weeks.” Interestingly the articles made no mention of further events in the Games, leaving readers believing that the Olympic Games had been completed.71

Besides the lack of media attention to swimming, the other struggle for American swimmers came from the location of the new pool built by the French organizers. *Le Stade Nautique Des Tourelles*, a magnificent facility, allowed competitors to forget the dark and cold canal that had served as the swimming venue at the Antwerp Games. However, it took the American swimmers “several hours of bus riding daily from the Rocquencourt camp” where they were housed to get to Les Tourelles. Many of the swimmers, including the leading American women’s star, Gertrude Ederle, “suffered from serious muscular trouble” from the long rides on rough roads. Most of the swimmers ended up quartered closer to the pool to alleviate the travel problem.72

American swimmers overcame their travel problems and lack of media attention. They dominated both the men’s and women’s contest. The official report of the Paris Olympic Committee in 1924 cited grand facilities, perfect organization, warm temperatures about which no one could complain, and swimmers and swimming performances like none before in any Olympic Games as having led to a wonderful

swimming competition. Sam and Duke Kahanamoku swam in qualifying trials for the 200-meter breast stroke, an unusual event for both freestyle swimmers, and ended up with disappointing finishes. The Hawaiians probably swam this event in order to remain competitively fresh as their chief race the 100-meter freestyle final would be held on the last day of the events at Les Tourelles.

The 100-meter freestyle would prove to be the highlight of the meeting. The final day’s events were the most highly attended swim meet. Nearly 7000 fans made the journey to Les Tourelles. The only other day where attendance figures approached those levels during the swimming events happened on Bastille Day, July 14 a national holiday in which French citizens had the day off and could afford to travel the distance to see the new facility and the natatorial competitions. As expected, both Kahanamoku brothers and Weissmuller advanced through the first elimination heats in the 100-meter freestyle easily on the morning of July 19. In the semifinals that afternoon Duke Kahanamoku and Weissmuller won their races, setting up the long awaited final for the next day. Duke finished ahead of brother Sam in advancing. On July 20, the battle for swimming supremacy finally commenced. No more team qualifications, heats or warm up events stood in the way as Kahanamoku and Weissmuller met in an Olympic dual.

Both men started well. Kahanamoku pulled out to an early lead after 25-meters. At the turn, Weissmuller pulled even with the two-time reigning champion. Weissmuller began to create separation heading toward the 75-meter mark. In the last 25 meters, both

75 Ibid, 445.
Kahanamoku brothers put on furious sprints to the finish. For Sam it meant that he moved from fifth place to third, winning a bronze medal. Duke Kahanamoku broke his own Olympic record time he had set in the 1920 Antwerp Games. It was not enough to catch the speedy Weissmuller who broke Kahanamoku’s record by two seconds and won the gold medal.\(^6\)

The young phenom had claimed the title from the aging Hawaiian champion. Kahanamoku heartily congratulated the 20 year old Chicago swimmer. Americans had swept the penultimate swimming event of the Games. Weissmuller became the toast of the American team. Kahanamoku and Weissmuller met again in a post-Olympic race in London, pitting the American swimmers against those of the British Commonwealth. Once again, Weissmuller defeated Kahanamoku, sealing the issue of who was the dominant swimmer of the age.\(^7\) At age thirty-four Kahanamoku’s resilience seemed remarkable as he continued to push the much younger Weissmuller but youth prevailed.

After the Paris Games, Kahanamoku returned to the United States and continued his film career while Weissmuller’s fame and reputation grew. Kahanamoku continued to swim and compete sporadically. Weissmuller tried his hand in a few films in bit parts and spent time in California with his and Kahanamoku’s mutual friend, movie star Douglas Fairbanks. In 1925 *Kahanamoku* was honored by his homeland when he was elected the president of the Hawaiian A.A.U. He won the position over Mrs. E. Fullard Leo, the only woman ever nominated for the presidency of the organization.\(^8\)

In September 1926, friend and yachting mate William Wrigley, Jr., approached Kahanamoku about the potential of the Hawaiian champion entering Wrigley’s Catalina Channel Swim Marathon scheduled for January of 1927. Wrigley, in an attempt to promote real estate development on his land on Catalina Island had initiated the race as a marketing tool and offered a large cash award. The $25,000 prize would have been a nice bonus to entice Kahanamoku to swim the twenty-three mile race and join Olympic teammate Norman Ross. Kahanamoku however, turned Wrigley down, stating that he wanted to retain his amateur status for another crack at the Olympic crown that Weissmuller had taken from him in 1924. Kahanamoku fully intended to challenge Weissmuller again in 1928. The *Los Angeles Examiner* noted that Kahanamoku had been competing in “several local swims and those who have been watching him practice for another Olympiad believe that he will give his sole conqueror, Johnny Weissmuller, a close race in the ‘aquatic century.’” However, while their paths would cross again many times, that Olympic rematch never materialized. In 1928, Kahanamoku suffered another extended bout of influenza just prior to the Olympic qualifying races. Kahanamoku could not race. For the first time in sixteen years, Kahanamoku would not be on the Olympic swimming team. Weissmuller would go on in the Amsterdam Games to win an individual gold medal and gold for the victorious U.S. relay team.

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The last opportunity had passed for the two great swimmers to compete for Olympic gold -- although not due to Kahanamoku’s age. Ironically, Weissmuller would announce his retirement in December of 1928, effectively ending the rivalry. Weissmuller stated that “I am getting to an age where I must look to the future and try to earn some money.” He took a contract to model “BVD” (Bradley, Voorhies, and Day) swimwear at $500 per week.\(^\text{82}\) Whereas Kahanamoku struggled with making money through endorsements or even films that would not honor the legacy of his people, Weissmuller, raised in the consumerism of mainland culture, understood that success meant jumping at the right economic opportunities at the right time. Kahanamoku could not overcome his sense of *kokua* (to assist and help) for his people or the Hawaiian value of *hanohano* (dignity and honor) which he felt he owed to his *ali`i* legacy.

Kahanamoku would uphold those values and continue to swim as an amateur. After Weissmuller’s retirement in 1929, when the question was raised as to who would fill the void left by the “Prince of Waves,”\(^\text{83}\) Johnny Weissmuller, Norman Ross and their coach Bill Bacharach remarked that the Hawaiian was still “the greatest amateur of them all.”\(^\text{84}\) Kahanamoku outlasted Weissmuller, and continued to rate among the very best swimmers in the world, even at the advanced competitive swimming age of thirty-nine years.

There is no question that Weissmuller became the dominant swimmer in the 1920s, setting records in multiple events and distances. Still, it is interesting to note the


\(^{83}\) Ibid, 182.

differences in media coverage that he received as compared to Kahanamoku. As
previously noted in chapter two, Kahanamoku gained headlines in the mainland press
most often for either promotional reasons or when he was defeated in a race. This type of
coverage continued throughout most of Kahanamoku’s career. Weissmuller in contrast
always seemed to garner headlines and the absolute admiration of the media.

It could be that the mainland American media’s adoration of Johnny Weissmuller
stemmed from the fact that, racially speaking, most members of the press and the public
could relate to the image of a white Midwestern American boy as a hero. The dark-skinned Kahanamoku ruled the swimming world for a decade before the younger
Weissmuller challenged his supremacy. The mainland U.S. media, while fond of
Kahanamoku, never put him on the same pedestal as Weissmuller. Kahanamoku
received sub-headlines while Weissmuller drew top billing. In 1924, Weissmuller finally
dethroned Kahanamoku at the Paris Games, twelve years after the Hawaiian had first
become the Olympic champion. In a *New York Times* article summing up the wonderful
performance of the American swimming team in Paris, comparisons were made between
the Paris team and the United States team in Stockholm in which the writer noted only
two Americans won Olympic gold, one being Kahanamoku. The writer made special
note that Kahanamoku was from “Hawaii,” while making no particular designation for
the other American Olympic gold winner, H.J. Hebner.85

The article also denigrated the performances of the Stockholm swimmers by
stating, “a generation ago swimming was not a special American accomplishment. Few

boys or men swam well enough to compete with the champions of Europe.” The author furthermore noted how much greater Weissmuller’s time in the 100-meter freestyle was than Kahanamoku’s from Stockholm, never mentioning that Kahanamoku himself had surpassed his times from the 1912 Games numerous times. Interestingly, the writer also failed to mention the more recent successes of the United States swim team, at the 1920 Games, in which of the twenty-one available medals in swimming nine of those were claimed by Americans, including an American sweep of the 100-meter freestyle event. In fact, five of the seven men’s races resulted in American gold medals. Could it be that a subtle form of racism that led to this oversight, since out of those nine medals six were won by Hawaiian representatives?

While the media downplayed the success of the Hawaiian-Americans in 1920, Weissmuller’s press clippings contain nothing but praise for the young wonder. Every victory seems to be broadcast with headlines which included the Chicago boy’s name. In a very short period, Weissmuller became the face of American swimming. It could be that the white face of a supposedly American-born star resonated more favorably with mainland readers and fans than did the dark tones of the Hawaiian champion, who merely represented the U.S. in competition. While the mainland American public and media seemed to covertly favor a white swimmer who had dethroned a friendly native of Hawaii, this subtle racism underscored the more blatant battles Kahanamoku dealt with in his rise to prominence.

Ibid.

Despite the acclaim that Weissmuller received, and the acclaim that in some ways eluded Kahanamoku, as well as the rivalry between the two that the press attempted to create, the rivals developed a rich friendship. Kahanamoku joked with Weissmuller that if he had not taught him everything when he visited him in California, the younger champion would not have beaten him in Paris.\textsuperscript{88} Weissmuller respected Kahanamoku, though he seldom gave the Hawaiian much credit due to Weissmuller’s fierce competitive nature. It is clear that at the time, Weissmuller understood the paths Kahanamoku blazed for him in swimming and in Hollywood. After winning his Olympic crown in 1924 Weissmuller supposedly stated “I learned it all from him [Kahanamoku].”\textsuperscript{89}

Weissmuller’s challenge to Kahanamoku’s sprint domination in swimming resulted in the Hawaiian swimmers defeat in the short run. Weissmuller convincingly dethroned the Olympic champion in 1924 and claimed the title of the world’s fastest swimmer. Yet Kahanamoku had set the stage for the emergence of Weissmuller in both sport and entertainment. Kahanamoku’s personality brought swimming into the spotlight for American sport fans in the decade leading up to Weissmuller’s time in the sun. Kahanamoku also blazed the trail for American swimming heroes to move from the pool onto the silver screen, thus opening the door for Tarzan to walk into stardom.

\textsuperscript{89} Sandra Kimberley Hall, \textit{Duke: A Great Hawaiian} (Honolulu: Bess Press, 2004), 57. It is unclear where this quotation came from. According to Hall it was from an article in the \textit{New York Times}, 22 July 1924, p. 10. However the author has been unable to find this quote in that newspaper during any of its Olympic coverage, nor in any other source other than the similar mention that Kahanamoku makes in the previous citation.
Kahanamoku also outlasted Weissmuller, proving his unquestioned superiority for longevity at the top of swimming speed events. While Weissmuller survived for only seven years among the world’s best, Kahanamoku remained among the fastest swimmers in the world for twenty-one years. Before Weissmuller arrived on the scene Kahanamoku was the greatest swimmer in the world. And after Weissmuller retired Kahanamoku still remained and Weissmuller himself admitted that the Hawaiian was “the greatest amateur of them all.”

90 Paddock, “The Duke Again is King.”
CHAPTER 7

FROM ATHLETIC ICON TO MR. HAWAII

While the 1920s presented a multitude of challenges to Kahanamoku’s athletic career, his image worldwide began to change and blossom into a more well-rounded persona. His record as a swimming star allowed him entry to movies and celebrity status, within “proper” bounds allowed by his dark skin. Kahanamoku’s achievements as a surfer, actor and hero became the focus in media reports and articles. These stories were closely couched in the understanding of Kahanamoku as a Hawaiian in which ethnicity and the color of his skin could be constructed in acceptable terms for mainstream white Americans. As such, he solidified his hold both on the mainland and in the Islands as the visible symbol of the territory of Hawai`i.

In all these endeavors Kahanamoku easily fit into established social standards by becoming a star, albeit one that ranked in the second tier of American Celebrity. Surfing represented a “minor” recreation compared with mainland sports such as baseball, football, track and field and swimming. With Kahanamoku’s supremacy in the pool superseded by the younger Johnny Weissmuller in the 1920s, the media began to focus on Kahanamoku’s surfing skills. Surfing, while gaining popularity in the mainland in places such as California, still was a recreational pastime pursued by a small minority of
the population. There were no major surfing competitions in this era and thus it was regarded as less a sport and more of a hobby. Still, surfing as an exotic recreation had no better spokesperson than the native Hawaiian Olympian, Duke Kahanamoku.

Kahanamoku had actually been surfing all of his life. The sport had been promoted from the early 1900s by writers such as Jack London and publishers Alexander Hume Ford in promoting the exotic culture in Hawai’i.\(^1\) Kahanamoku is often credited with introducing the sport in Australia, both coasts of the United States, and Europe\(^2\). Whether or not he actually was the first to introduce surfing in all of these areas is debatable. However, he clearly advanced interest in the sport in all of these regions.

In Australia, thousands of people came out to Freshwater Beach in 1914 to watch Kahanamoku demonstrate his skill on a board he had made while visiting “the land down under” for a swimming exhibition. Interestingly surfing in Australia had roots which existed before Kahanamoku’s 1914-15 tour. In the 1880s, Tommy Tanna from the Pacific island of Vanuatu taught boys from the seaside town of Manly how to body surf. Attempts to use boards to ride the waves were also made with varying success by many others including Charlie Wickham and Frank and Charlie Bell.\(^3\) Hawai`i and surfing promoter Alexander Hume Ford visited Sydney in 1908 and wrote that he badly “wanted


to try riding the waves there on a surf-board, but it was forbidden.”

Australian surf-bathing pioneer Arthur Lowe noted that Manly councilor Charles Paterson, who also served as the president of the Surf Bathing Association of New South Wales, had a Hawaiian *alaia* surfboard imported in 1912. In the years before Kahanamoku’s arrival in Australia surf-bathers tried unsuccessfully to master the technique of riding the *alaia* board.

When Kahanamoku visited Australia he did not bring any surfboards with him due to conversations with Alexander Hume Ford and others who had traveled to the British territory. Kahanamoku remarked to Cecil Healy, “we were told the use of boards was not permitted in Australia.” Nevertheless, as Australian sport historian Douglas Booth explained, “timber merchant George Hudson donated a roughly shaped piece of sugar pine for Kahanamoku’s board that the Hawaiian finished using an adze and plane.” Kahanamoku’s Australian board weighed sixty-five pounds and measured nine feet long, and twenty-four inches wide. With the three-inch thick board, Kahanamoku challenged the prevailing mores of the “Mrs.Grundies.” Booth clarified that “according to the

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5 Lowe, *Surfing, Surf-shooting Pioneering*, 48. The *alaia* surfboard was a smaller version of the traditional Hawaiian surf boards used. Ben Finney and James D. Houston note that “the alaia boards are round-nosed with a squared off tail and very thin. The larger alaia boards in the Bishop’s [museum] collection range from seven to twelve feet long, average eighteen inches in width and are from a half inch to an inch and a half thick.” Ben Finney and James D. Houston, *Surfing: A History Of The Ancient Hawaiian Sport* (San Francisco: Pomegranate Artbooks, 1996), 42.


Oxford English Dictionary, Mrs. Grundy represents the tyranny of social opinion in matters of conventional propriety.9

In *Australian Beach Cultures* Booth explains how Kahanamoku’s exhibition shattered some of the Victorian moral stances of those Mrs. Grundies, such as bans on surfing, daylight bathing, and mixed bathing which were then being contested in Australia. On December 23, 1914, at Freshwater Beach, Kahanamoku not only demonstrated his prowess on the surfboard he also taught others how to ride the board. In fact, the thousands at the beach that day witnessed an outright challenge upon the propriety of Australian culture when the Hawaiian champion taught Isabel Letham, a fifteen-year-old girl, to surf upon his board, riding tandem with her.10 For the Mrs. Grundies it became the wave that destroyed the beachfront, challenging all notions of restraint and self-control over bodily desires. Thet saw a dark skinned man and a young woman dressed only in bathing costumes, not only riding waves at the same time but on the same board with various parts of their bodies unavoidably touching. Mrs. Grundy must have been appalled at the flaunting of Victorian ideals of morality, decency and propriety.

Regardless of the protestations of Mrs. Grundy, Kahanamoku’s surfing exhibition provided momentous impetus for the growth of Australian surfing. Three inductees of the Australian Surfing Hall of Fame were present that day at Freshwater. They carried on the legacy of Kahanamoku’s demonstration. Isabella Letham, Claude West and Justin

9 Booth, *Australian Beach Cultures*, 22.
“Snow” McAllister, a thirteen-time Australian national champion all pointed to the day they witnessed Duke Kahanamoku’s extraordinary display of skill with a surfboard as the key event in their devotion to the sport. Kahanamoku also gave exhibitions of surfing at Cronulla, Newcastle and again rode tandem with Isabel Letham at Dee Why Beach in early 1915.

The first surfing competitions in Australia occurred in March 1915, just after Kahanamoku’s visit to the South Pacific nation. In 1917, Claude West, to whom Kahanamoku gave the surfboard which he had made for his Freshwater exhibition, displayed its utility as a “rescue craft.” Historian Booth commented that as they were inspecting the beach to “study the surfboard problem, several Manly councillors observed Claude West, the star pupil of Duke Kahanamoku, use a board to rescue three people.” Inadvertently, Kahanamoku dealt the knock on the door in Australia to Mrs. Grundy that her time was up.

If the record of who first introduced surfing in Australia is debatable, it is clear that fellow Hawaiian George Freeth introduced surfing to California long before Kahanamoku arrived on the mainland. However, Kahanamoku clearly spurred the local interest in the sport when he moved to California in 1922. In fact, through Kahanamoku’s heroic efforts in 1925, the surfboard gained notoriety in the United States for its practical uses. Just as Claude West had demonstrated in Australia, Americans realized the utilitarian potential of the surfboard after Kahanamoku’s used it in a rescue.

11 Ibid, 40.
12 Ibid, 39; Booth, Australian Beach Cultures, 38.
13 Booth, Australian Beach Cultures, 73.
14 Ibid, 39.
While surfing with some friends during a storm at Corona Del Mar, Kahanamoku witnessed a 40-foot pleasure yacht named the *Thelma* violently overturned by the enormous waves. Seventeen people who had rented the boat for a fishing expedition suddenly found themselves thrown overboard. Kahanamoku grabbed his board and went to the rescue. The Hawaiian swimming champion made three trips from the shore to the capsized boat and back, saving eight of the passengers. Two of Kahanamoku’s friends, Owen Hale and Gerard Vultee also grabbed their boards and were able to rescue another four victims.\(^{15}\) Unfortunately, five people perished, a fact which bothered Kahanamoku terribly.\(^{16}\)

The exhausted surfer turned lifesaver struggled with the fact that he could not save everyone on board and retreated from the media who clamored to know more about the rescue. That night Kahanamoku recalled that he found sleep fleeting as the “wails of those lost haunted him, their plaintive eyes still stabbed.”\(^{17}\) Kahanamoku’s exploits were big news in the Los Angeles papers as well as in Honolulu. An editorial in the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* announced that “Mr. Robert B. Booth, a lifelong friend of Duke’s father, and his uncle Piikoi” would act as “Chairman of a committee to raise the very modest sum needed for a suitable medal” to honor Kahanamoku’s heroism. Interestingly, the paper could not resist noting the latent racist feelings in the territory by noting in the

\(^{17}\) Ibid, 151-155.
editorial that the two men were “fine types of Hawaiian mankind,” thus justifying their leadership regardless of their Hawaiian ethnicity.\(^ \text{18} \)

In California, the issue of ethnicity was less apparent in the media coverage but newspapers highlighted the usefulness of surfing. The Newport Chief of Police, J.A. Porter, noted the utilitarian usage of the surfboard by stating, “Kahanamoku’s performance was the most super-human rescue act and the finest display of surfboard riding that has ever been seen in the world.”\(^ \text{19} \) In a book he later wrote about surfing, Kahanamoku commented that “good sometimes comes from the worst of tragedies,” pointing to the result that “boards became standard equipment on the emergency rescue trucks as well as at the towers.”\(^ \text{20} \)

Kahanamoku’s 1925 rescue was not the first occurrence of Hawaiians engaged in lifesaving ventures in California. Ironically, George Freeth had established the first lifeguard stations on the southern California coast. Freeth himself had instituted an amazing rescue, eerily similar to that of Kahanamoku’s, although without the use of a surfboard. On December 16, 1908, eleven Japanese fishermen had ventured out in a storm in Santa Monica Bay only to be overwhelmed by the waves and the sea. Freeth dove off from the pier and swam out to their skiff, reportedly seizing the rudder, standing up, and surfing the skiff through the furious waves back to the beach. The *Los Angeles Times* reported that ignoring “a mad and crazy sea,” Freeth had accomplished a


\(^{19}\) Brennan, *Duke*, 156.

Herculean task. The Japanese fishermen returned to Venice the next day showing their appreciation for Freeth by giving him $50, a gold watch and contributed $37 to the sick benefit fund of the life-saving corps that Freeth had started. Freeth’s bravery also earned him a Congressional Medal of Honor as well as a Carnegie Medal. There is no doubt that word of Freeth’s heroic rescue would have made it back to the gang at Waikiki and the Hui Nalu club. Interestingly, Kahanamoku had once again followed his friend and mentor’s footsteps when he made his surfboard rescue.

While Kahanamoku obviously followed Freeth in the introduction of surfing to the West Coast of the United States, legend holds that Kahanamoku introduced surfing to the East Coast while in New York City waiting to sail to Sweden for the 1912 Olympic Games. He demonstrated the sport both in Atlantic City, New Jersey and at 38th Street in Rockaway Beach, “a southerly strip of land in New York City’s borough of Queen’s.” Unfortunately, 38th Street where Kahanamoku introduced surfing to New Yorkers fell into the hands of “drug dealers, addicts and hoodlums,” in the late 1980s and due to safety issues, New York’s City’s council “sanctioned surfing some 50 blocks away, off 91st and 92nd streets in a safe, grassy, beachside neighborhood of apartments and small shops.” New Yorkers renamed the 91st Street beach after Kahanamoku. The 38th

22 “Give Their Gifts To Their Saviors,” Los Angeles Times, 18 December 1908, p. 5.
Street site continued to be remembered by surfers in Rockaway on or around Kahanamoku’s birthday. They would gather for only a few moments at sunset at the spot where the council had approved a sign designating the area “Duke Kahanamoku Way.” The sign advocated by members of the community led by surf shop owner Tom Sena, James Breslin, son of New York newspaper columnist Jimmy Breslin and nuns from the St. John’s Home for Boys as well as “Rockaway’s ‘beach priest’” Reverend Bob Lawsine struggled to survive at 38th street due to vandalism and a housing project which displaced the sign.  

Kahanamoku’s connection to Rockaway formally disappeared in 2004 however as the sign at 91st Street Beach was replaced by another in honor of a fallen firefighter from the September 11th 2001 World Trade Center tragedy. Gail Allen the mother of Richie Allen petitioned for her son to be honored by having the 91st Street Beach named after him, only to find that the beach already had been named after Duke Kahanamoku. Allen had been a lifeguard at the beach during his college years, and as a surfer had loved the area. Interestingly even Sena who had fought for the Kahanamoku tribute earlier altered his story regarding Kahanamoku claiming that the Hawaiian never actually surfed at Rockaway, but merely swam there in 1912, disputing decades of memories passed down by neighborhood residents. As the New York Times commented “the memory of Sept. 11 quickly proved more powerful than the Duke’s legend” and the council voted in favor of the Allen family.  

Ironically the only area where Kahanamoku had truly been the first to

\[27\] Mayer, “Surfers At Rockaway,”. 
introduce surfing in the United States, ultimately would erase the official memory of that event from public acknowledgement in favor of honoring a victim of terrorism.

Swimming allowed Kahanamoku entry to society through the avenue of sport and yet surfing remained Kahanamoku’s passion. After the Olympic Games of 1920, Aileen Riggin remembered that the Hawaiians taught everyone how to surf in the Atlantic Ocean near Calais, France.29 It seemed that wherever he went he introduced surfing to the locals and expanded the influence of the ancient Hawaiian sport.

In the 1920s, the idea of surfing a wave was a fantasy only available to those near the ocean and with access to a surfboard. Still, surfing provided excitement and thrills even for those dreaming about the experience. Kahanamoku helped to expand those dreams through articles about the sport. The Youth’s Companion carried an article written by Kahanamoku entitled “Full Speed Ahead!” The magazine catered to young Americans and told tales of adventure while advising them about the virtues of American life and culture.30

In an introduction to an article written by Kahanamoku, the editors noted that “no other sport can furnish quite the thrill and healthy exhilaration of surf-boarding. Dashing through foaming green and white breakers at express-train speed is an experience not to be missed.” They commented that Duke Kahanamoku “is a member of the picturesque Hawaiian race and is a sportsman of the front rank, whose prowess has made him an Olympic champion and holder of so many swimming titles that it would make you dizzy

if we quoted them.” The editors glowingly predicted that Kahanamoku’s article “will be an inspiration to you when next you visit the seacoast.”

The article itself described the sport of surfing and gave advice and information regarding how to ride a wave and to study the breakers. Kahanamoku also elaborated on body-surfing and on the best ways to accomplish feats on a wave without a board. Kahanamoku exhorted the young readers that “if you are proficient on skis, you will make a good surf-board rider. The two sports are very similar.” He also noted that in his experience as an instructor “women, as a rule, make better surf-board artists than men,” due to the superior balance of females. An interesting comment written in a magazine marketed to boys.

Despite Kahanamoku’s passion for surfing and his consistent efforts to introduce the sport around the world, it still remained an exotic hobby in the minds of most Americans. Surfing was not a threat to other “true” sports such as baseball, football, or even swimming. Surfing could be the domain of the Hawaiian champion with minimal resistance as it held little chance of competing against sports where white Americans reigned supreme. In essence, it became a safe haven for the American media to popularize the swimming champion. Kahanamoku, however, saw surfing differently. Throughout his life championed for the sport to be included in the docket of Olympic sports.

31 Ibid.
32 Ibid.
Regardless of Kahanamoku’s insistence that surfing was a sport worthy of Olympic status, the reality remained that in the eyes of most Americans it existed as a recreational endeavor unworthy of extensive media coverage and most likely a passing fad. If women were truly better at the sport than men as Kahanamoku had claimed then the manliness of the sport could also be questioned in a male dominated culture. Surfing could pose no true threat to baseball or football, sports where ruggedness reigned supreme. As a result, Kahanamoku’s role as the king of surfers created no threat to white dominated society and its sports.

As Kahanamoku moved from the world of surfing and swimming into the film industry, this pattern of subtle second-class status for the dark skinned Hawaiian continued. While Kahanamoku had dreamed of being able to represent his people in movies, possibly even portraying King Kamehameha the Great, 1920s mainstream American culture was not prepared to have a dark leading man, regardless of his ethnicity. In 1922, when Kahanamoku left for Hollywood, it had only been seven short years since David Wark (D.W.) Griffith’s revolutionary film *The Birth of a Nation* had debuted in 1915, and only one year since it had been re-released in 1921.

Originally released in January of 1915 under the title *The Clansman*, the movie was based upon North Carolina Baptist minister Reverend Thomas Dixon Jr.’s 1905 anti-

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black play *The Clansman: A Historical Romance of the Ku Klux Klan.* 36 The Birth of a Nation held all box office records in the United States until Walt Disney released *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* in 1937. 37 The movie proved so popular that the studio re-released it in 1921, 1924, 1931 and 1938. 38 With caricatures of the Ku Klux Klan as heroes and blacks as violent rapists and villains, white Americans were fed images which confirmed their stereotypical fear of dark races and the threat of miscegenation. Groups such as the NAACP as well as many individuals including Jane Addams, Booker T. Washington and Charles Elliot protested the film’s obvious racist views. 39

Annette Wallach Erdmann expressed her indignity in a letter to the editor of the *New York Times* shortly after the opening of Griffith’s film at the Liberty Theatre. Erdmann objected to the portrayal of the negro as a “cruel, inhuman, almost demented being” as being “unjust” and contributing to the creation of “prejudice against a race.” She argued that the film presented a “biased point of view that overemphasizes the mistakes of reconstruction days” while exalting the Ku Klux Klan. The Klan, Erdmann argued, is “portrayed as constantly rescuing defenseless maidens from the outrageous hands of the colored man.” 40

Despite the public outcry from some quarters, the film made over $60 million in its first run even when charging the exorbitant and unprecedented sum of $2 for tickets. Reviewers praised the film for its technical innovations and accurate historical portrayal of American history. When the preview of the movie opened in Riverside, California in January 1915, the Riverside Enterprise glowed, “no photo-play of its proportions has been so enthusiastically applauded in this city.” When the film finally had its official opening in New York City in March of 1915, critics there were equally mesmerized by the epic story. Reverend Thomas B. Gregory wrote an article for the New York American in which he summed up the basic historical theme of the movie. Gregory wrote that when unwitting Americans brought slaves into this country they were “rocking a devil in the cradle of liberty, [and] “are preparing such an Iliad of Woe as Homer never dreamed of.” Gregory’s account of history continued after the Civil War when instead of a “reunion” of the north and south “Hell broke loose” in the form of Reconstruction. The Reverend explained that “all the horrors of that ‘ten years of hell’ are made to live before us [viewers]…the scoundrelly carpet-baggers, the venomous half-breeds, the hordes of ignorant blacks, the crushed but still proud and courageous whites, cast down.”

Happily, for Gregory and for many others who viewed the film, the South rids itself “of those who would wipe out its civilization. The carpet-baggers vanish, the great mass of black savagery calms down and cease to be a menace, the ballot box is regained by its former masters and once again the chaos takes on the form of order and peace.”

The valiant Ku Klux Klan rescued the South. Gregory proclaimed that the greatest value in the film “lies in its truthfulness.”

More than a century later film historian Arthur Lennig commented that “The Birth Of A Nation when it first came out in both North and South was generally extolled for being an accurate and stirring dramatization of America’s past.” Lennig observed that the film “was almost universally praised by film reviewers, editorial writers, historians, clergymen, politicians, union leaders, socialists and the public at large.” President Woodrow Wilson, Chief Justice White and members of the Supreme Court, the Senate, the House, and the Diplomatic Corps viewed the film at private showings. Lennig illustrated that “Birth’s depiction of carpetbagger and Negro conduct during Reconstruction created no controversy among the Washington elite of 1915: Not one word of protest was reported from the thirty-eight Senators and the fifty Representatives from the House who were present.”

With the images of racism represented by The Birth Of A Nation accepted by mainland American culture, it becomes clear that the United States still dwelt within the constraints of racism. To see an African-American in a leading role on the big screen would have created a great uproar across the country. To have them play across from a leading lady who was white was unthinkable. In fact, not until 1967 when Sidney Poitier

44 Ibid.
45 Lennig, “Myth And Fact, 137.
tackled the issue of interracial relationships in the film *Guess Who’s Coming To Dinner* was the idea broached in a manner that did not end in tragedy.\(^{47}\)

While not of African-American ethnicity, Kahanamoku had very dark skin - - even for a Polynesian. Many times people mistook him for a “Negro.” Kahanamoku biographer Sandra Kimberley Hall noted that during the time Kahanamoku lived in Los Angeles, one such incident occurred. In an interview she conducted with Viola Hartmann, a champion swimmer and diver. Hartmann, recalled that on the way to a swimming meet at Lake Arrowhead, they stopped at a restaurant. Upon seeing Kahanamoku, the waitress told him “we don’t serve Negroes. You need to go out,” she said, pointing toward the door. According to Hartmann, “Duke started to ever so slightly get up gracefully, but we all spoke up in unison, ‘He’s not a Negro. He’s a Hawaiian and that is not the same.’” Apparently the reasoning worked as “the waitress was very puzzled and served us, and him. So Duke stayed.”\(^{48}\)

While the waitress succumbed to the impassioned pleas from Kahanamoku’s friends that being a Hawaiian and a Negro were completely separate issues, for many Americans at the time the connection could not be quite so easily resolved. The movies would not hide the pigment of his skin nor would any Hollywood producer be willing to subject their film to the economic, social and political backlash of starring a dark-skinned leading man. Reporter Fran Reidelberger commented that “the only time a studio was looking for someone to play a Hawaiian, they bypassed Duke for someone they thought


looked more like a real Hawaiian.” In reality, considering the time period, Kahanamoku, the real Hawaiian, probably looked too dark for Hollywood’s business moguls.

In spite of Hollywood’s racism Kahanamoku did make it onto the “silver screen.” Kahanamoku played roles as Indian chiefs, sheiks and other secondary parts. Interestingly he never played an African-American role in any film. While his skin color may have limited his roles, Kahanamoku’s name still helped sell tickets and the studios realized that fact, making sure to mention in publicity reports that Duke Kahanamoku would be appearing in their films. Kahanamoku started out in silent films in 1922. As the industry developed “talkies,” Kahanamoku moved with the new technology and landed speaking parts. Kahanamoku played many parts in nearly 30 movies including Sioux Indian chiefs, Turks, Hindu thieves, and South Sea island natives.

Kahanamoku lamented to biographer Joseph Brennan that “I never play a Hawaiian.” In actuality Kahanamoku did play Hawaiians in a few films and even played a Hawaiian chief in *Wake of The Red Witch* with John Wayne in 1949. His statements may have been representative of the overall body of work that he performed and the relatively few roles offered to him to play Hawaiian roles. Kahanamoku also mentioned


51 Hall, *Duke*, 51. Hall makes this claim of thirty which is noted in other places as well. The films I have researched lower that total to 23. However, even in some of those films Kahanamoku played only an extra and gained little or no credit for his roles so there may be 30 or even more films in which he participated. Many of the early silent movies have been lost to us so verification of all the films Kahanamoku acted in is impossible without the actual film to view in its entirety.
that the studios “make every effort to see I don’t get my feet wet,” allowing the great swimmer to retain his amateur status.\textsuperscript{52} His movie career actually continued to 1955 when he appeared in the Oscar award winning film \textit{Mister Roberts} with Henry Fonda, James Cagney, and Jack Lemmon. In the comedy-drama about war he played a native chief named Duke Kahanamoko [sic] He also reunited with his former Hawaiian Olympic swimming pal Harold “Stubby” Kruger who played Schlemmer in the film. Kruger, after his swimming career ended, joined Kahanamoku in Hollywood in 1927, appearing in his first film \textit{The Beloved Rogue}.

In addition to past athletic heroes such as Kruger, the list of stars that Kahanamoku played alongside is formidable and embodies a “who’s who” of Hollywood elites. Henry Fonda, John Wayne, Anita Stewart, Clara Bow, Lon Chaney, Boris Carloff, Douglas Fairbanks and Ronald Colman were just a few of the many leading men and ladies who Kahanamoku appeared in films with. He also worked with some notable directors, including John Ford. Director Victor Fleming allowed Kahanamoku more opportunities than anyone else in Hollywood. Fleming’s body of work included such classic films as \textit{The Wizard of Oz} (1939), \textit{Gone With The Wind} (1939), \textit{Treasure Island} (1934) and \textit{Joan of Arc} (1948).\textsuperscript{54}

Ironically, Fleming began his work under the tutelage of \textit{The Birth of a Nation} producer and director D.W. Griffiths. Griffiths, the son of a Confederate Colonel never

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{52} Brennan, Duke, 137.
\end{flushleft}
understood the racial controversy sparked by his epic film. In his mind, it was purely a film about the horrors of war steeped in the truth of history. Fleming’s experience with Griffiths during this controversial period must have taught him a great deal about the controversial nature of race as represented on the big screen. Film historian Michael Sragow noted that Fleming had a gift for conjuring “a sense of childhood that included risk and wildness.”

In the *Wizard of Oz* the sense of entering a new land with fright and adventure allowed the film to remain a network television ritual for children from 1956 until 1998. What better way to capture the sense of adventure and wildness than to hire a true native to play as a south sea’s islander? Fleming signed Kahanamoku to play many parts in his films. Fleming was careful about the roles given to the great swimmer but understood the Hawaiian also added to the sense of wildness in the pictures. Kahanamoku’s first film with Fleming was the 1925 adaptation of Jack London’s South Sea tale, *Adventure*. Kahanamoku played Noah Nou, an island chief. Kahanamoku reminisced in a 1949 radio interview that “*Adventure* with Victor Fleming, Owen Moore and Wallace Berry,” was his most memorable film from his early days in Hollywood. Kahanamoku also appeared in Fleming’s *Lord Jim* in 1925. Kahanamoku played the role of Jim’s servant

57 Ibid.
58 “Duke Kahanamoku radio interview on KGU at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, 19 July, 1949,” Transcript, Duke Kahanamoku Collection, M-434, hereafter referred to as DKC, Box 2, File 49, Hawaii State Archives, Honolulu, Hawaii, hereafter referred to as HSA.
Tamb’ itan, in this Indonesian adventure. Joseph Conrad, the author of the novel which the movie was based, introduces the character Kahanamoku played in this manner:

His complexion was very dark, his face flat, his eyes prominent and injected with bile. There was something excessive, almost fanatical, in his devotion to his “white lord.” He was inseparable from Jim like a morose shadow. On state occasions he would tread on his master's heels, one hand on the haft of his kris, keeping the common people at a distance by his truculent brooding glances. Jim had made him the headman of his establishment, and all Patusan respected and courted him as a person of much influence. At the taking of the stockade he had distinguished himself greatly by the methodical ferocity of his fighting.59

The role of Tamb’itan seemed perfect for Kahanamoku in the eyes of American audiences. A dark skinned man, “fanatical in his devotion to his ‘white lord,’”fit their desires.60 In other words, the role depicted a dark-skinned man who understood his place and served the dominant white race with fierce loyalty and gratitude.

Kahanamoku worked with Fleming on two other films. One was filmed in Hawai’i and entitled Hula. Released in 1927, the film starred Clara Bow and was shocking for its nude bathing scenes. Bow clearly drew all of the attention by playing a Hawaiian girl who pursues the man of her dreams, even though he was married. Bow’s beauty and charm carried the film and ironically, Kahanamoku’s role remained minor despite his being the only true Hawaiian in a film portraying Hawaiian life. The timing for Kahanamoku worked out perfectly as he the filming coincided with his trip home in 1927 for the opening of the Waikiki Natatorium.61

60 Ibid
That jewel of a swimming venue situated on the beach at Waikiki ironically mirrored Kahanamoku’s position in Hollywood. Once again, Kahanamoku provided the star power yet received second billing. Honolulu officials invited the greatest swimmer that the territory had ever produced and the face of Hawaiian swimming if not all of Hawai‘i, to return home and swim in an exhibition to open the new pool. The opening even took place on his birthday, August 24 and yet the leaders of Honolulu decided to name the 100-meter pool the War Memorial rather than name it after Kahanamoku. Located a short distance from where he grew up and near the Outrigger Canoe Club of which he served as the most noted member, it seems almost a given that any aquatic facility built should have honored the one man responsible for building it. Newspaper reports made no mention of Kahanamoku’s significance in the building of that facility as the person who introduced Hawaiian swimming prowess to the world. They chose instead to focus upon American sensation Johnny Weissmuller, who traveled to Hawai‘i to swim in the inaugural meet, and Governor Farrington of the territory of Hawai‘i who delivered the opening speech. \(^62\)

In contrast to how Yankee Stadium became known as “the house that Ruth built” in honor of the Yankees great slugger, and Kahanamoku golf partner, Babe Ruth, no one connected Kahanamoku to the swimming facility. The omission demonstrated that while Hawaiian leaders loved to use Kahanamoku as a tool to draw crowds to events such as the opening of the natatorium, they balked at truly honoring their island hero. Six thousand people jammed the sold out facility that evening to see their hero swim in

City officials did not erect a plaque for Kahanamoku at the Natatorium. Other than the thunderous applause for the champion as he swam in the pool, no other honors were awarded him that night. Kahanamoku’s friends in the film industry while basically employing the same treatment, did seem to understand the special role that Kahanamoku held in respect to Hawai`i and the image of the islands that the mere mention of his name conjured up around the world.

The final film on which Kahanamoku and Fleming worked together demonstrated that understanding. The 1931 documentary *Around The World In 80 Minutes With Douglas Fairbanks*, included a segment on Hawai`i featuring Fairbank’s close friend Duke Kahanamoku. Kahanamoku served as the representative for the islands in the movie, demonstrating both his native connections to the exotic land as well as his role as a proponent of modern culture and the progress of Western cultures influence on Hawai`i. In a sense, in this film he played the real life Tamb’itan of Hawai`i to his white friend Fairbanks, who had helped him break into the world of film. The image of being the grateful servant to the white lords and the headman of their establishment, in this case the territory of Hawai`i would be one which Kahanamoku would be cast often. This role of greeting those who came to the islands Kahanamoku maintained in both an official and unofficial capacity throughout his life.

While not all film roles Kahanamoku played were as obvious in their racial posturing as in *Lord Jim*, many of them had him playing a sidekick, villain, marauding pirate or lustful islander. Kahanamoku worked with many other directors besides

63 Ibid.

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Fleming, especially as the “talkies” came into vogue. He played a key role in *Girl of the Port*, originally named *The Firewalker*, as Kalita, a friendly Fijian native portrayed as a happy-go-lucky laborer who does not quite understand the world of progress and white society and yet is amicable and friendly to all. When the actions of the self-appointed boyfriend of a showgirl, played by Sally O’Neill, stranded on the island become menacing, the audience sees Kalita’s real strength develop. Kahanamoku, as Kalita, leads his fellow natives to the rescue and restores the dignity of the showgirl as well as a young English nobleman she has attempted to aid.  

The increase of significance in his roles, and the sexual attraction that existed between the Hawaiian and the starlets as evidenced in *Girl of the Port*, failed to propel Kahanamoku’s film career beyond the limits created by the color of his skin. He would never win the outward love of white heroines in the films. He would always settle for a platonic relationship.

While Kahanamoku could not break out of the stereotype of the noble native on film, he did break some color barriers behind the scenes and opened up doors for other minorities, not to mention athletes. Kahanamoku became the first of a long line of Olympic champions who would attempt to turn their Olympic gold into lucrative film careers. The most famous of these would be the swimmer who defeated Kahanamoku in 1924 for the gold medal at the Paris Olympic Games, Johnny Weissmuller. Better known as Tarzan in American culture, Weissmuller used his swimming success to vault him into

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64 *Girl of the Port*, 65 minutes, (Hollywood: Radio Pictures, 1930), full length motion picture.
a long and successful acting career portraying the jungle hero. His predecessor, Kahanamoku, opened the door for Weissmuller’s success. For Weissmuller, his skin color mixed well with his athletic success and allowed him opportunities to play leading men.

Others also followed the path blazed by Kahanamoku from the pool to the movies including fellow Hawaiian swimmers Harold “Stubby” Kruger and Buster Crabbe. Crabbe eventually would follow Weissmuller in the role of Tarzan in the 1930s. However, both Crabbe and Kruger were of mixed Hawaiian ethnicity and were fair skinned as opposed to Kahanamoku’s dark complexion. As a result, they faced minimal barriers in comparison to Kahanamoku. As the 1920s came to a close it became clear to Kahanamoku that while his roles in the movies were paying the bills, he would never become the star that he had hoped he might. In addition, while the work provided for his needs and established relationships for him with the Hollywood elite, it failed to fulfill Kahanamoku’s desire to bring honor to his people and act as a proper ali`i. He could not even play a key role as a Hawaiian in any of the pictures. In addition to those feelings two other factors began to draw Kahanamoku back to his home, his `āina (earth) and `ohana (family).

Hawaiian scholars note that Hawaiian identity is deeply rooted in a sense of place and of belonging to the `āina to the land. As Hawaiian cultural scholar George Hu`eu Sanford Kanahele argues:

66 Ibid, 45.
In the case of the traditional Hawaiian, for example, almost every significant activity of his life was fixed to a place. No genealogical chant was possible without the mention of personal geography; no myth could be conceived without reference to a place of some kind; no family could have any standing in the community unless it had a place; no place of any significance, even the smallest, went without a name; and no history could have been made or preserved without reference, directly or indirectly, to a place.67

Kahanamoku grew up still attached to the traditional roots of his culture. He understood and felt the primacy of place that characterized traditional Hawaiians. Fellow beachboy Grady Timmons observed that “Duke also favored traditional ways. He spoke Hawaiian. He preferred Hawaiian foods. He believed that canoes and surfboards should be made the old way.”68 Even though life for him in Los Angeles seemed to be working out for the most part, he sensed his disconnection from his people and his homeland. His memories of where he grew up near Waikiki meant more than just remembrances of good times; they represented a connection to who he was at his core. The person of Duke Kahanamoku was intricately tied to the land he came from, the place that his `ohana inhabited. “In the Hawaiian mind,” Kanahele determined, “a sense of place was inseparably linked with self-identity and self-esteem. To have roots in a place meant to have roots in the soil of permanence and continuity.”69

For Kahanamoku a career in the movies provided none of those feelings. Hollywood was a place far from stable and permanent. The movies moved from fad to fad. One year, pirates were popular and the next Westerns were in vogue. Kahanamoku

69 Ibid, 181.
played parts that always changed. He became a Fijian, then a Turk, then a Persian, and then a Native American in his make-believe lives. The studios he worked at constantly changed as sets were produced for each new film and each new scene; a Middle Eastern desert, a ship on the high seas, or a South Pacific island jungle all existed on the same piece of property. For someone who grew up in culture where places exhibited roots, the call for permanence and continuity of his home must have grown appealing.

Possibly an even greater pull was that of `ohana or his family. During the 1920s Kahanamoku’s mother began to suffer from a number of ailments and wanted to have her eldest son near her in the late years of her life. As the requests from his mother continued to come and the longing to renew his connection to his homeland grew, Kahanamoku began to weigh his options. Those options grew with the help of his mother. She arranged for a position to be offered to her son as the supervisor of Hawai`i hale, Honolulu’s City Hall. Frances Brown, an old family friend and a Honolulu politician, had come to Kahanamoku’s mother and asked her “if there was anything he could do for her.” According to Kahanamoku, his mother replied “‘there’s just one thing. Please see that my oldest boy’ that’s me, ‘is taken care of.’”

Brown garnered the job of supervisor of city hall for Kahanamoku. In later years Kahanamoku scoffed at the position: “Ha! Superintendent was nothing but official toilet cleaner, but at least I was my own boss.” Regardless of the slight of being given the job of janitor with a title of superintendent, Kahanamoku accepted the opportunity to come home to be closer to his `ohana and specifically his mother.

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71 Ibid
While in the position of superintendent, Kahanamoku also adopted the title of unofficial greeter of Hawai‘i. This made sense in part due to the fact that most visitors to Hawai‘i at the time were business or celebrity elites with whom Kahanamoku had numerous interactions during his athletic and movie careers. He often would go down to the docks to welcome an old friend. Since Kahanamoku was the most recognizable Hawaiian on the planet, every visitor to the islands clamored for an opportunity to meet or at least catch a glimpse of Hawai‘i’s one true celebrity. Kahanamoku chose to become the greeter out of his belief in the *aloha* spirit. Kahanamoku believed that “*aloha* is the key word to the universal spirit of real hospitality which make Hawai‘i renowned as the world’s center of understanding and fellowship.”\(^{72}\) He noted that he had been greeting visitors “as long as he can remember,” and explained that “the malihinis [newcomers] didn’t know about the Aloha spirit of Hawaii so I tried to show them. I know the beauty of these islands and I wanted them to know it too.”\(^{73}\)

Kahanamoku viewed this responsibility as an opportunity to represent his people to those visiting his homeland and allow tourists to see the generosity that encompassed Hawaiian culture. His endeavors to welcome people properly were purely voluntary and even cost him financially. As the great Olympian elaborated, “I used to greet them with real carnation leis, not these paper ones like today, but real expensive carnation leis.”\(^{74}\)

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\(^{74}\) Ibid.
The leis were never paid for by city, county or state funds. Kahanamoku always bought them himself and bore the cost of the proper greeting from his own pocketbook.75

In this simple gesture he exhibited the traditional Hawaiian values of *kela* and *lokomaika‘i*. *Kela* is the act of excelling and exceeding expectations. Kahanamoku’s gift of expensive carnation leis to welcome visitors demonstrated that aptly. *Lokomaika‘i* refers to generosity, grace, benevolence and good will, all characteristics substantiated through Kahanamoku’s willingness to pay for the leis out of his own funds.76

While Kahanamoku continued to exhibit many examples of his early upbringing and the traditional Hawaiian values which accompanied it, there is no question that the 1920s became a foundation for changes in his values and perceptions. As his wife Nadine later reflected on his ten years living “on the mainland when he was in the movie,” the experience dramatically changed him. She believed that when he came back from California “he was more ‘haolefied’ himself than Hawaiian in many ways.”77

Unquestionably, the Hawai‘i which Kahanamoku had left in 1921 to pursue his acting career had changed drastically. In many ways, Kahanamoku had changed as well.

During the 1920s his home in Waikiki had been dramatically altered as political leaders dredged the *Ala Wai* canal to capture the rice fields and farms for economic and real estate development.78 As he returned home he retained the foundation of traditional Hawaiian values and attempted to live those out in the new capitalistic and political world.

75 “Receipts For Flower Leis,” Duke Kahanamoku Collection, HSA, Box 1, file 30.
of the territory of Hawai‘i. As he returned to his `ohana and his `āina the future of both Kahanamoku and Hawai‘i would inevitably evolve and reflect the modernization of a culture and a man through the influences of American political and social values. If the 1920s could be seen as the foundation for those changes, the 1930s would exhibit the genesis of Kahanamoku as a modern icon of Hawai‘i, a role which would evolve and develop throughout the rest of his life.
The year 1932 marked a pivotal year in the life of Duke Kahanamoku. The Los Angeles Summer Olympic Games marked the end of his illustrious swimming career. Although the forty-two year old Kahanamoku failed to earn a spot for the United States on the swimming team, finishing third in his heat at the Olympic trials in the 100-meter freestyle, he earned a position as an alternate on the U.S. water polo team. This election would mark the second Olympic Games in which Kahanamoku would represent the U.S. in water polo, the other being the 1920 Antwerp Games. It also would establish Kahanamoku as the first man in history to participate in four Olympic Games. While Kahanamoku’s Olympic career ended an astounding twenty years after he burst on the scene, events in his homeland of Hawai`i were unfolding which would help shape the future of the world’s most enduring Olympian.

Hawai`i’s idyllic peaceful reputation was shattered in September of 1931 with the alleged rape of a United States naval officer’s wife in Waikiki. The case and its resulting
racial tensions would influence Kahanamoku’s decision to enter the world of politics and run for sheriff of Waikiki in 1934.  

Prior to 1931, the picture painted by the mainland media, particularly periodicals, promoted Hawai`i as a utopian civilization. *The Literary Digest* reported that W.E. “Pussyfoot” Johnson, a “two fisted sheriff who made a name for himself by gunning for bootleggers” became duly impressed after a visit to the islands. “Pussyfoot” Johnson had been appointed by President Teddy Roosevelt in 1906 to the position of Chief Special Officer to end the alcohol trade in the Indian territories. Johnson visited the islands in 1930 on a worldwide tour promoting the “dry message” for the World League Against Alcoholism. He exclaimed that “Hawaii, with her multitude of races, mingling on the basis of confidence, of equal rights, with the last traces of prejudice almost entirely eliminated, and all tinctured with a little Christian love, seems surely to be a Door of Hope for the world.”

Sarah M. Lockwood, in a 1931 article entitled “Everybody’s Happy in Hawaii” for *Country Life*, commented on race relations by noting that a belief in progress “persuades the white man, first, to go there and drag those native children out of the water, away from their surfboards and fishing, to clap them into uncomfortable garments and to set them to work.” Lockwood noted the inconsistency in those actions as the white man then “without the slightest compunction, ride their surfboards himself, in less

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clothing than even the natives used to wear.” However, the conclusion that Lockwood communicated to her readers is that “it is probably alright, a necessary feature of this thing we call progress.” She argued that the natives are “better off than they have ever been,” and “they like it.” With “sanitation, good schools, and hospitals, good roads and cozy houses …radios, jazz music and movies” she envisioned no reason why natives would not welcome the progress of the white man.4

Lockwood interviewed Hawaii’s territorial governor, Lawrence Judd, at the governor’s Iolani Palace headquarters and glanced at the portrait of “old King Kamehameha (1753-1819), a grand old savage in his crimson robes.” Judd, observing the reporter’s glance, summed up the perspective of most Americans, by commenting, “they were an interesting people, but the best thing that ever happened to them was when America came along and put them on the map.” Governor Judd’s parting words to Lockwood and the American people were that “everybody’s happy in Hawaii!”5

Johnson, Lockwood and Judd’s optimism about racial harmony in Hawai`i would quickly be replaced by growing fears about the “savageness” of the brown-skinned natives of the islands. The night of September 12, 1931, would see an undercurrent of race tensions erupt in Oahu. That evening, Thalia Fortescue Massie, wife of Lieutenant Thomas H. Massie left a gathering of naval officers and their wives at the Ala Wai Inn, a local nightclub in Waikiki. Locals referred to Saturday nights as “Navy night” and stayed away from the club on those nights.6 Leaving the club to take a walk, Mrs. Massie

4 Sarah M. Lockwood, “Everybody’s Happy In Hawaii,” Country Life 59 (February 1931); 98.
5 Ibid.
disappeared for a little over an hour before a car containing Mr. and Mrs. Eustace Bellinger, Mr. and Mrs. George Clark and the Clark’s son George Jr., picked her up along a lonely beach road. According to the testimony of the Bellingers and the Clarks, Mrs. Massie declined their offers to take her to the hospital or the police station. She initially told the two families that “some Hawaiian boys” had abducted and assaulted her. Mrs. Clark had asked her if she had “been hurt in any other way.” Thalia Massey had reportedly answered that she had not. As Hawaiian Historian David E. Stannard surmised, the two families “had no reason to doubt Thalia’s claim that she had not ‘been hurt in any other way,’ because, as Mrs. Clark later recalled, ‘we all noticed her evening gown seemed to be in good condition.’” Mrs. Massie later amended her charges to her husband Tommie Massie, claiming that she had been repeatedly raped as well.

Later that night police arrested Horace ‘Shorty’ Ida as a suspect. Ida eventually told the interrogators the names of his friends who had been with him in his car that night. Ida and his friends had had an unrelated incident in Ida’s sister’s car in which one of the boys had allegedly struck a woman, Agnes Peeples, in an fight over a near-miss car collision. Police officers believed that a connection existed between the two incidents and investigated based upon that assumption. Ida and his friends, Joe Kahahawai, Ben Ahakuelo, Henry Chang, and David Takai, were all charged with the beating and rape of Mrs. Massie. They became lightening rods of controversy, dividing the community along

8 Wright, Rape In Paradise, 9.
9 Stannard, Honor Killing, 54-5.
10 Ibid, 127.
The haole community expressed outrage over the brutal attack of a white woman by native boys. The haole-dominated newspapers painted the young defendants as “a gang of fiends.” The multiethnic local community however, rallied around the defendants.

Amongst the multiethnic local community resentment of strong U.S. military presence in the islands accounted for some of the support, but the fact that the evidence in the case did not match the victim’s story also helped to create dissension. In addition, Kahahawai and Ahakuelo were local sports heroes. Though not stars of the magnitude of Duke Kahanamoku, the two boys were football heroes in the local “barefoot leagues.” Barefoot football had a strong local tradition in the islands and drew large crowds for its games. An indigenous brand of American football originally started on the plantations for their workers, the leagues had grown to include other teams from off the plantations. The league’s participants played barefooted and abided by weight regulations, thus creating a competitive league for typically smaller framed ethnic groups such as the Japanese, Filipinos and Chinese.

Ahakuelo had become one of the leagues top players. Kahahawai had been a star player on his St. Louis High School team a few years before. Both were also noted

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11 For thorough investigations of this case, referred to by many as the Ala Moana Case and the subsequent Murder trial of Mrs. Massie’s husband and mother please see Wright, Rape In Paradise, and David E. Stannard, Honor Killing.
13 “Massie Rape Suspects May Have Alibi.” Hawaii Hochi (Honolulu), 14 September 1931, p. 5.
boxers. Ahakuelo had even traveled to New York City in early 1931 to represent the territory in the National Amateur Boxing Championships at Madison Square Garden. The *New York Times* reported that at “the instigation of persons connected with the local Amateur Athletic Union,” officials had attained his full pardon from the Territorial Government on separate earlier charges of assault so that he could compete in these championships. These charges surrounded an alleged gang rape that had occurred in 1929. Rose Young, the seventeen-year-old girl who had made the accusations, actually changed her story on the witness stand and admitted that sexual relations she had on the evening in question, had been consensual. She made up the story about being forcibly raped and had agreed to have sex with all of the young men. Regardless of this admission, the jury still decided to send a message to the young men about the inappropriateness of their actions from a moral vantage point and convicted the young men on a new charge of “assault with intent to ravish.” Ben Ahakuelo would spend three months in jail and would have to gain clearance from his felony charges to travel to New York City to compete in 1931 at the national championships. It is unclear whether Kahanamoku had a hand in this request but considering the fact that he had elected as the president of that organization in 1925, it would be hard to believe that he had been unaware of the request or unfamiliar with “Flash” Ahakeulo as a local athlete.

Hawai`i had become a community which revered its sports figures and the arrest of two notable figures created some tension. Other leading figures from the sports world

came to the aid of the defendants. One such figure actually went to the police station to stand up for the boys. Sam Kahanamoku, Duke’s brother and an Olympic medalist himself immediately came to their assistance when he heard the news. The younger Kahanamoku gave authorities information that would give the youths an alibi. That information somehow became lost in the communication amongst police officials.\(^\text{20}\)

Under pressure to find the culprits, the prosecution decided to go forward with the case against the local boys, regardless of the inconsistencies in the evidence. They had a victim who was from a respected family and defendants portrayed in media reports as young gangsters.\(^\text{21}\) The racial undertones reflected a situation that would have been common in the mainland South. Ironically, Lieutenant Massie hailed from Kentucky.\(^\text{22}\)

The trial eventually went forward. The prosecution’s evidence continuously fell short of convincing. Based on the lack of evidence, the jury failed to reach a decision and a mistrial ensued. The defendants, released on bail, had to report daily to the police station as they waited for a retrial. U.S. Naval officers recommended that the defendants be placed in jail for their own safety. They warned that they may not be able to control their troops.\(^\text{23}\) Predictably a group of naval men abducted Ida and beat him one night, allegedly drawing out a confession from the beaten man. However, Ida strongly rejected the accusation that he had admitted his and his friends’ guilt. Prosecutors believed the

\(^{20}\) Wright, *Rape in Paradise*, 69, 104.
\(^{23}\) Wright, *Rape in Paradise*, 183.
sailors and rather than arrest them for their actions the men were roundly praised for their bravery.\textsuperscript{24}

Sharing the feeling that the system of government in the islands had failed them, Lieutenant Massie and Thalia Massie’s mother, Mrs. Grace Fortescue, along with two other enlisted men from the naval base, kidnapped another one of the defendants, Joseph Kahahawai, as he was leaving the police station after reporting in. They tortured and murdered the young man in vigilante style. The police arrested the vigilantes when they discovered the defendants driving away from Honolulu with Kahahawai’s body in the back of their car. Prosecutors faced with the vigilante’s red-handed capture had no choice but to charge them with murder. Racial tensions escalated even further through the murder trial and its conclusion. The murder defendants attained representation by famous defense attorney Clarence Darrow, adding to the media hysteria and intrigue.\textsuperscript{25} In spite of the great Darrow’s efforts, a Honolulu jury convicted Mrs. Fortescue, Lieutenant Thomas Massie, and enlisted men Edward J. Lord and Albert O. Jones, of the manslaughter of Joseph Kahahawai. The defendants earned a sentence of ten years at hard labor.\textsuperscript{26} Hawaiian Territorial Governor Lawrence Judd then commuted the so-called “mixed blood” jury’s decision. The white defendants served one hour at a reception in Iolani Palace before Judd allowed them to walk away free.\textsuperscript{27}

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\textsuperscript{24} Ibid, 180-1. \\
\textsuperscript{27} “All In Massie Case Freed After Serving One Hour: Will Drop Assault Case,” \textit{New York Times}, 5 May, 1932, p. 1.
\end{flushright}
Prior to the commutation, mainland political leaders and the media decried the verdict. Bills were introduced in both houses of Congress providing for a Congressional pardon for the four defendants.28 The fears of the business elite in Hawai`i had to do with economics and political impact. As mainland leaders debated the Hawai`i problem consequences beyond the judicial implications of the trial were at work. The Navy ordered that the Pacific fleet on maneuvers in the region bar their sailors from landing at Honolulu and taking shore leave there. The result was a huge economic loss of money normally spent by the sailors in Honolulu bars, restaurants, and shops.29 In addition, the threat of martial law and a radical restructuring of Hawaiian government, including military rule of the territory, were threatened. At the heart of the concern had been the sheriff’s department and police officials. These positions were political positions elected by the populace of the islands.30

Theon Wright, a former resident of Honolulu and a renowned journalist, described this political dimension in a letter to the editor of the New York Times. Explaining the situation in Honolulu, he noted that “the contest is between the ‘police machine,’ which declines to interfere with or arrest many of the hoodlums of the city, and the regular elements of the Republican party,” which were trying to halt the move by “this new menace to its authority.” Wright, whose father was the editor of a Japanese daily paper in Honolulu the Hawai`i Hochi would later write a book about the Massie case. Wright contended that “Sheriff Pat Gleason was one of the old ‘St. Louis alumni’

group,” a powerful political ring which had held great influence during Democratic administrations. Gleason, Wright maintained, had formed a “new political ring based on the Police Department,” which represented “the last political autonomy of the Hawaiian group.”

Business leaders realized that the greater questions of maintaining law and order would directly affect their political control of a government, which they had wielded since the overthrow of the monarchy. Responses were necessary in the political arena or their lucrative businesses could be hampered by “drastic changes” in the “Hawaiian Government” by the national government under military rule.

The commutation of the sentences appeased many of the white leaders. Darrow noted the international significance of the move. He stated that “this is the way it should be, and I approve of what the Governor has done.” In a strange critique of the legal system, Darrow stated that the “case has gone before a jury of a hundred million people. That jury has rendered its verdict, unhampered by foolish and absurd rules of law.”

Conversely, there were those in Hawai`i who decried the commutation of the sentence by Governor Judd. Republican national committeewoman Princess David Kawananakoa reflected the views of many native Hawaiians. The Literary Digest quoted her response: “With this commutation the verdict of a jury, composed of men of intelligence, sound judgment and good character, with the facts and law before them, becomes a farce, and the truth, as brought out by the prosecution, becomes a travesty.”

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33 Wright, Rape In Paradise, 273.
Kawananakoa then asked the obvious question many people in Hawai‘i were pondering, “are we to infer from the Governor’s act that there are two sets of laws in Hawaii—one for the favored few and another for the people in general?”

Theon Wright also noted the apparent double standard as he brought to light the fact that prior to the Massie case a police officer who while returning an “imbecile Hawaiian girl who had escaped from the Girls Reformatory in Waimanalo” assaulted her. Charges against him were not sustained and yet Wright noted that “this incident,” which he argued was “infinitely more dastardly from a sentimental viewpoint than the attack on Mrs. Massie,” drew no attention from the national or territorial governments. He noted that this attack failed to become “heralded by the newspapers throughout the land,” because “it was only a half-wit Hawaiian girl that was involved.”

In the midst of the turmoil, Duke Kahanamoku returned home to Honolulu from California. Through the help of his mother and his best friend, Francis Brown, Kahanamoku accepted a position that sounded wonderful by the title, superintendent of Honolulu Hale or City Hall. In reality, it was nothing more than a well-titled janitorial position. Part of Kahanamoku’s job responsibilities included mowing the lawn during the afternoon rush hour. With a tinge of bitterness, Kahanamoku observed “this is the best time to show I am working. Everyone passes by along here around this time and they all see me earning my salary.”

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34 “Stilling The Storm In The Pacific Paradise,” *The Literary Digest* 113 (May 1932): 5.
37 Timmons, *Waikiki Beachboy*, 74.
Despite the sense of being on display like an animal in an unfenced zoo, Kahanamoku continued to serve as the unofficial face of Hawai`i, greeting numerous celebrities.\(^\text{38}\) During the murder trial Kahanamoku met Clarence Darrow and taught the famous lawyer how to surf. The *New York Times* noted that the interaction between Darrow and the Hawaiian beach boys began tenuously: “The brown men who ride their surf boards at a speed of thirty miles an hour came forward curiously to meet the man who is defending four persons of his race who are accused of having killed one of their own.” The paper went on to state that the beach boys “seemed to like him.” The seventy-five year old Darrow then shook hands with the beachboys after they realized that Darrow was there with their leader Duke Kahanamoku, known as the “king of the beach at Waikiki.”\(^\text{39}\) The Olympic champion then took Darrow out into the surf in an outrigger canoe.\(^\text{40}\) Darrow, the famous criminal attorney who had risen to notoriety through such cases as the Scopes Monkey trial, had agreed to defend the Massies’ for a fee of $40,000 plus expenses and an additional fee for an assistant. Historian David Stannard noted that the fee was “equivalent to well over half a million dollars today for less than two months of work,” and “over half of Babe Ruth’s $75,000 salary of 1932.”\(^\text{41}\)

The defendants needed more than the necessary amounts of cash to entice Darrow. For Darrow to represent the murder defendants’ strong social and political influences also became necessary. One of the defendants in particular, Grace Fortescue,  

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\(^{39}\) Timmons, *Waikiki Beachboy*, 67.  
\(^{41}\) Stannard, *Honor Killing*, 298-289.
had strong social and political ties. She was the wife of Major Granville Roland Fortescue who had served President Theodore Roosevelt as a military aide in his White House administration. Major Fortescue, a cousin of President Roosevelt’s, was the illegitimate son of Teddy Roosevelt’s “wealthy and powerful ‘Uncle Rob.’” The marriage of his daughter Thalia to Thomas Massie in the Washington National Cathedral in 1927, was reportedly “a notable social event.” During the trial society friends of the Fortescues came to her aid and sent money to help pay for Darrow’s fees.

Darrow’s presence made the case an international affair. The hope among the elites was that Darrow’s reputation would calm the strong racial turbulence swirling around Honolulu. It also coincided quite conveniently with the recent release of Darrow’s autobiography, *The Story Of My Life*. The book’s sales soared. It remain on the national bestseller lists for months. The image that Darrow painted of his life was that of the defender of the underdog. He claimed to be afflicted with an inability to meet people who were oppressed and not try to help them. His reputation for having no race bias and assisting “Negroes” were cited as reasons to believe that his presence would help heal the racial strife surrounding the trial.

To that end, having Darrow photographed with the great Olympian, and beachboys at Waikiki to demonstrate that Darrow’s interest in the case had no racial motivations could be perceived as a strategic public relations move. However, the case

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42 Ibid, 9.
and the circumstances surrounding it held deeper racial tensions than Darrow could have perceived.

The *haole* population had doubled in Hawai`i in the ten years since Kahanamoku had last lived in the islands and many of those *malihini haoles*, or new whites, had come from the American South. One of the *malihini* women noted the depraved state she perceived in Honolulu stating:

I was raised in the South. If my old Negro mammy should come here I would hug and kiss her—but the Negro belongs in his place. I can’t endure the Hawaiians. I go swimming at the beach to cool off, but I begin to boil when I see how some of the white woman act up with Hawaiian men who take them out on surfboards. My boy has a Hawaiian friend at school. I try to appeal to his pride to induce him to choose another pal. I do not want any half-breed grandchildren. The mere thought of it makes me boil.47

Hawai`i became a deeply divided community. Race played a huge role in the split. Whether the Hawaiian boys were viewed as gangster villains or innocent victims of mistaken identity could easily be measured by the color of one’s skin. In the midst of the racial turmoil and mistrust sat the police forces who seemed to be blamed by everyone.

The sheriff’s office in Waikiki took on the majority of the criticism for its failures in both cases from all sides. The Massie affair had implications much farther reaching than the local vicinity of the islands. Due to the fact that it involved U.S. naval officers and their families, some of whom were well connected in American politics, the case generated great interest on the mainland.

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In fact, in 1932, Charles B. Honce, Associated Press executive editor reported that according to a vote of his editors the Massie case had become one of the top world news stories of the year. Despite sensational events such as the Lindbergh child kidnapping, the Los Angeles and Lake Placid Olympic Games, Amelia Earhart’s transatlantic flight, the economic depths of the great depression, gangster Al Capone’s imprisonment, the election of Franklin Delano Roosevelt as President of the United States, and the Japanese invasion of Manchuria, the Pacific crime saga captured the world’s attention. The Chicago Tribune also named the Massie case “one of the greatest criminal trials of modern times.”

While Hawaiian business leaders had been attempting to bring attention to Hawai’i for decades to enhance tourism and economic viability, this type of publicity was far from what they relished. Hawai’i’s image had gone from one of utopian race relations in paradise to a land where it “is unsafe for white woman” due to “savage, even fiendish” criminal attacks of “natives.” The Literary Digest reported charges that “island authority has broken down, that the police are incompetent, and hoodlums run wild.”

Honolulu leaders sought to temper the outcry on the mainland for a stronger federal presence on the islands by instigating reforms. Some members of Congress had brought forward the idea “authorizing the President to appoint an Attorney General and a High Sheriff for Hawaii each at a salary of $9,000.” The President would also have authority to cancel appointments without the approval of the Hawaiian Senate. Senator

50 “Devil’s Busy In Our Pacific ‘Paradise,’” 3.
Royal Samuel Copeland from New York remarked concerning the guilty verdicts in the Massie trial, “it is distressing beyond words that so cruel a verdict could be rendered in an American possession.” Copeland concluded his attack on the justice system in Hawai‘i by emphasizing that “I join with every straight-thinking citizen in the conviction that something is wrong in Hawaii.” In addition, groups on the mainland began to apply their weighty political power. The Washington State department of the American Legion drafted a resolution to Congress calling for “military rule in the islands.”

With national outrage and reform swirling around him, Governor Judd called an immediate special session of the legislature to tackle police reform. Interestingly, Judd called this session after “a committee of business men representing the Honolulu Chamber of Commerce” had paid him a visit and expressed the business community’s desire for a special session. The cost of the session was estimated to be $40,000 to $50,000 and would “be borne by the Territory.” When considering that this sum would be equal to a half a million dollars in today’s economic standard, it is clear that the local leaders were prepared to go to great extremes to retain control of their possession.

President of the Honolulu Chamber of Commerce Walter F. Dillingham emerged as the chairman of the committee and expressed the views of the business leaders. “We want the Governor to know he has the backing of the business community, but that immediate action must be taken,” Dillingham warned. Pulling no punches, Dillingham cautioned, “we do not want the situation clouded by any other subjects or by petty

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political trading.” In case the subtleties had been missed by the legislature, Dillingham made clear what was at stake: “we feel the legislators must agree that the Legislature itself is in jeopardy, with threats of a commission government and martial law. We believe Honolulu can take care of its own troubles.”

The business committee essentially wanted a five-member police commission appointed by the governor to control finances and policies of the police department. This change would remove all power regarding the police away from the mayor and city council. As a result, the control of law enforcement would have less to do with the electoral processes of politics and the wishes of the people, and instead be under the appointment of powerful elites. Dillingham and other business leaders believed that this sacrifice would appease mainland critics of Hawaii who felt that the “oriental” and “racial” elements of the island territory could not be trusted with upholding “proper” civilized standards.

Admiral William V. Pratt, Chief of U.S. Naval Operations, summarized many mainlanders view in his analysis of the situation. “On one side was the failure of the native ‘beach boys’ to comprehend the moral standard of the whites; on the other was the failure of the white women to know the peril which lay in the attitudes of the natives.” Admiral Pratt surmised, “the Hawaiian is a different sort of bird. His attitude toward women is not ours.”

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54 Ibid.
55 Ibid.
56 Walter F. Dillingham, A Memorandum (Honolulu, 1932), 10-11. found at University of Hawai‘i Library, Honolulu, Hawai‘i.
57 “The Honolulu Uproar,” Literary Digest 112 (30 January 1932); 10.
This sense of white ethical and moral superiority had a long history in the U.S. as well as in the Hawaiian islands. The use of terms such as “native” and “beach boys” that Pratt and many others associated with Hawaiians and locals in Hawai`i denigrated the “mixed blood” character of the people of Hawai`i. It implied that they were backwards and uneducated, that they were a primitive society which lived from the desires of their loins. The use of these images had been in play for over a century. Some even voiced the opinion that “in all half-castes there was a tendency towards moral as well as physical deterioration.”

Hawaiian scholar Michael Haas demonstrated that institutional racism was established in Hawai`i through the use of theories including, social Darwinism, plurality of humanity, and integration. All of the varying theories held varying typecasts which denigrated local ethnic culture. Regardless of the progress of civilization in Hawai`i the stereotypes always were useful to build a sense of white superiority.

One of many ironies in the stereotyping existed in the fact that Iolani Palace, the home of the Hawaiian monarchy had electric lighting before the White House in Washington D.C.. Hawai`i had been an independent monarchy which had negotiated multinational treaties. The literacy rate in Honolulu exceeded that of the United States for decades. Hawai`i’s monarchy had even fashioned itself after European monarchy’s

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60 William Searle, *The President`s House: A History* (Washington, D.C.: White House Historical Society, 1986), 594. Electric lighting was installed in 1891 in the White House but only as a supplement to gas lighting at first. By 1902 the entire building had finally been converted. In contrast, the Hawaiian monarchy had Iolani Palace converted from basement to attic beginning in 1886. By April 28, 1887 the Palace had been fully wired and the electric lights were operational. In March of 1888 permanent street lights were first turned on in Honolulu and “on November 15, 1889 the government electric plant first provided power for the incandescent lighting of offices, stores and residences.” “The King’s Birthday,” *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, 16 November 1886, p. 2.; Robert C. Schmitt, *Firsts In Hawaii: An Alphabetical Listing* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990), 154.
such as Great Britain rather than the younger, rough and tumble model of American
democracy.\textsuperscript{61} The Christian missionaries had great success in converting Hawaiians due
the faith due to the strong tradition of Hawaiian values which in many ways mirrored the
 teachings of Christ.\textsuperscript{62} Regardless of these facts, the image of a native people with no
moral compass dominated white perceptions of Hawaiians even into the 1930s. In 1939,
\textit{The Honolulu Advertiser} printed a picture of a “native luau” which showed twenty-some
natives sitting on grass mats on the ground, scantily dressed and eating food from \textit{ti}
leaves with their hands. The paper used the image to advertise books which
demonstrated how to bring the “tasty dishes and the colorful customs of the native luau”
into the home. In other words, homemakers could now safely civilize even the feasts of
the native and bring them into proper dwellings in real homes.\textsuperscript{63} Kahanamoku
unwittingly helped to perpetuate these images by playing South Sea Islander characters in
films who while in some ways represented the noble savages still remained savages.\textsuperscript{64}

Dillingham and the committee of business leaders understood the predominant
racial attitudes of white Americans and, in fact, agreed with them in principle. However,
having been lifelong residents of Hawai`i, they also appreciated that the powerful \textit{haole}
business leaders were in actuality a minority. This reality meant that in order to maintain
peace and mollify the growing sense of racial injustice, change would be required in
areas other than the structure and organization of the government. Lillian Symes, a

\textsuperscript{61} Stannard, \textit{Honor Killing}, 69-70.
\textsuperscript{63} “At A Hawaiian Luau,” \textit{The Honolulu Advertiser}, 3 February 1939, p. 20.
\textsuperscript{64} \textit{Girl of the Port}, 65 minutes, (Hollywood: Radio Pictures, 1930), full length motion picture.
resident of Hawai`i attempted to explain for Harper’s Monthly Magazine readers the “unique situation for the Anglo Saxon raised on ‘the white man’s burden’ formula.” While white leaders controlled the “Territory’s industry and its money bags,” Symes pointed out that they did not have control of its votes. As a result, white Hawai`i “must meet the Hawaiian, part-Hawaiian and native born Oriental on terms of political equality.”

Attempting to educate mainlanders as to the situation in Hawai`i and retain important political power for the white business elite, Walter Francis Dillingham wrote and circulated a pamphlet titled, A Memorandum to members of the press and his personal friends on the mainland to explain the climate in the islands in regards to the Massie cases. In this memorandum, which Dillingham noted was to be “For Private Circulation and Not for Publication,” the prominent business leader explained that the cases had nothing to do with race issues. “The problem,” he contended, “is a sex crime problem” no different from anywhere else in the world. He emphatically defended the Hawaiian race as “a peace loving people with true sporting instincts, and their sex relations have been more social than brutal.” In alluding to the sporting instincts of Hawaiians, Dillingham evoked the memory of Hawai`i’s legacy of sport champions familiar to American audiences and in particular Duke Kahanamoku the actor, athlete and visual image of Hawai`i to the world.

However, while decrying the issue of race by emphasizing the high character of Hawaiians, Dillingham then altered course and demonstrated the deeper racial prejudice

at work. He explained that the fact everyone had “lost sight of” was that “if the group accused were guilty, they were not a group of Hawaiian boys other than that they lived in Hawaii.” Dillingham argued that “this group was composed of: two Japanese, one Chinese, one Hawaiian, and Kahahawai, who was half-Negro and half-Hawaiian.” In actuality, the boys were all local Hawaiians, born and raised in Hawai‘i. Kahahawai was not of “Negro” ethnicity but a full-blooded Hawaiian, as was Ahakuelo. Ida and Takai were from pure Japanese ancestry and both were naturalized U.S. citizens. Ida was the son of immigrant Japanese parents and had been born in Maui on a plantation. Chang was of Chinese-Hawaiian descent and had more Hawaiian blood than Dillingham.

Dillingham used the supposed differences between the hoodlums and “true” Hawaiians to hide his blatant racism. Dillingham did not believe in any sort of equality for dark-skinned people in comparison with whites. He had actually testified before Congress “that God had made the white race to rule and the colored to be ruled. It was as plain as the pigment in the skin.” Dillingham shared his racist views with General George Patton whom he had regular correspondence. In 1932 Patton consoled Dillingham on the state of affairs in Hawai‘i by explaining what Dillingham could do in Hawai‘i. Speaking of the “total lack of balls and backbone evinced by our rulers” on the mainland, Patton remarked that “in Hawai‘i you can start a dictatorship and hold on to it

66 Dillingham, A Memorandum, 6-7.
67 Stannard, Honor Killing, 121.
68 Ibid, 95.
for a while.”  However, to retain the control that Dillingham had grown accustomed to in the islands would take more than legislative changes. As Dillingham implored his friends on the mainland, “I believe that Honolulu is better able to cope with its problems through leaders and organizations made up from its citizens” as opposed to federal appointments. To this end Dillingham elaborated that “with certain changes in our laws, with the elimination of politics from our system of handling crime, and with our citizens thoroughly aroused to the importance of their duty,” Honolulu would rise up to “as high a standard of American ideals as any mainland community.”

With legal reform and an appointed police commission accomplished, Dillingham set out to arouse the citizens to their duty. To prevent the powder keg of ill feeling from exploding in the faces of Honolulu leaders Dillingham and others realized that they would need to build a bridge to other ethnic groups on the island. They began to look to Duke Kahanamoku as a possible solution. No one in Honolulu could bring together people in the same way or held the reverence of islanders of all ethnic backgrounds as Kahanamoku. He would need to see his duty and be aroused to serve. However, he held the potential to be such a powerful leader that his placement in the political hierarchy must be strategically planned to limit his influence. Thanks to the legislative measures in place the perfect position would soon be available for Kahanamoku.

The police reform measures enacted in Hawai`i allowed for the formation of a police commission and the appointment of a chief of police. Conveniently for

70 George S. Patton, Letter to Walter F. Dillingham, 11 July 1932, (Box 24 Folder 553) Walter Dillingham Papers and Correspondence, Bishop Museum Archives, Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum, Honolulu, Hawai`i.
71 Dillingham, A Memorandum, 10-11.
Dillingham the first appointed chief of police for Honolulu just happened to be his “confidential man and secretary” of ten years, Charles F. Weeber.\textsuperscript{72} Because of this new appointed position, the job of sheriff of Honolulu faced severe restrictions. Whereas Sheriff Gleason had previously been the focal point of all police investigations, now the responsibilities of his office were limited to management of “the jail, prisoner transportation to and from court hearings, the morgue, cattle branding and weights and measures.”\textsuperscript{73} The Territorial legislature also provided Dillingham with an extra gift by reducing the annual salary of the sheriff from $7200 to $4200. The decreased pay structure would ensure that the elected position would be a less attractive position for those seeking power thereby limiting the potential pool of candidates.\textsuperscript{74}

With the power of the sheriff’s position restricted and controlled, Dillingham and his business friends began to look for someone who could challenge Gleason in an election and oust the incumbent. Unfortunately, the position of superintendent of City Hall had left a bad taste in Kahanamoku’s mouth in regards to favors from politicians. Not only was the position demeaning but his pay had decreased from a starting rate of $200 to $180 per month. To add insult to injury, the newly elected “Democrats kicked Duke out of the city hall,” in 1933, since his appointment had come under a Republican administration.\textsuperscript{75}

Kahanamoku felt strong enough and had swam well enough to believe that he could once again compete with the best in the world. Honolulu papers reported that even at “42 years old this summer ‘The Duke Of Hawai’ is in fine form,” and remained “a marvelous physical specimen.” Kahanamoku determined that he was not yet content to be “the grand old man” of swimming. With the added impetus of the Games held in Los Angeles, the city that had adopted him for almost ten years, the opportunity to represent both Hawai`i and the U.S. presented an appealing opportunity.

Ironically, while Hawai`i officials had treated Kahanamoku with little respect in his superintendent fiasco, in the rest of the world he remained a revered hero. He appeared on a Sport Kings Gum collectors sport card in the United States. A German sport memorabilia company featured Kahanamoku on two of its sport photo collections in promoting the 1932 Olympic Games. Kahanamoku’s return was front page news across the country. Ultimately, he failed to make the swimming team but did become an alternate on the U.S. water polo team. Kahanamoku gave no excuses for his failure to make the team. “I was really in there trying,” Kahanamoku told reporters, “it’s the old story-the legs. They were O.K. for seventy-five meters. After that, it was just too bad.” Finally realizing that the legs were not going to allow him to swim at the competitive levels he had grown accustomed too, Kahanamoku left Olympic competition behind. In true Kahanamoku fashion he focused not on his struggles but on the success of the

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76 “Will Try Again, Olympics,” Honolulu Star-Bulletin, 15 June 1932, p. 10
79 “Olympia 1932 ,” Sammelwerk Nr. 6, Bild Nr. 123, Gruppe 20, Photo of Duke Kahanamoku arriving in Los Angeles from Hawaii for the 1932 Games. Author’s personal collection.
younger Hawaiian swimmers who were following in his wake. Referring to Buster Crabbe and the Kalihi brothers who had qualified for the finals in the Olympic trials, the New York Times reported, “‘that’ said the Duke, ‘tickles me.’”

Returning to Honolulu after winning another bronze medal with the U.S. water polo team at the Los Angeles Games, Kahanamoku resumed his superintendent position until his dismissal in 1933. He then began a new profession as a gas station lessee. Friends of Kahanamoku offered him the opportunity to lease two Union oil stations in Honolulu. Kahanamoku made his name into the prominent sign for the stations. He also worked the pumps and serviced patrons’ cars. While it gave him a sense of self-respect and an opportunity to make a decent living, pumping gas could not fulfill Kahanamoku’s deeper desires. Kahanamoku complained to his brothers that “maybe now I’m just an exhibit,” as tourists would take pictures of him washing their windows or checking the air in their tires. Others also realized that the job somehow failed to reflect the prestige of the great champion. A song titled, “Duke Kahanamoku, Olympic Champion Now Pumping Gas,” summed up the sad situation of Hawai‘i’s hero.

In 1934 Walter Dillingham enlisted the help of his brother Harold to help convince Kahanamoku to take a chance on running for the position of sheriff. Harold G. Dillingham and Kahanamoku shared a passion for sailing and had many common friends in Hawai‘i and California in yachting circles. While in California Kahanamoku had become good friends with William Wrigley, Jr. and joined Wrigley’s Catalina Yacht

When the new President of the Honolulu Chamber of Commerce, Harold Dillingham, decided to race in the 1934 Trans-Pacific yacht race from San Pedro, California to Diamond Head Lighthouse in Honolulu, he asked Kahanamoku if he would like to crew for him. Kahanamoku’s love for yachting and competitive disposition led him to jump at the opportunity.\(^{85}\)

Kahanamoku undoubtedly had the qualifications necessary to crew in the race but the Dillingham’s had ulterior motives as well. Harold Dillingham would have over two weeks on the boat to propose the idea of running for office to Kahanamoku. The great swimmer would be a captive audience with plenty of time for Dillingham to influence his decision. Certainly it did not hurt their cause when Dillingham’s yacht *Manuiwa* won the race, traveling the distance in 15 ½ days in July of 1934.\(^{86}\)

July of 1934 also provided another opportunity for Kahanamoku to view politics close at hand while also being placed in a rare position of honor further influencing the great sportsman toward a career in politics. Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the President of the United States, paid a visit to the Hawaiian Territory at the end of July 1934, becoming the first U.S. president to set foot on the shores of the Islands. The Hawaiian press welcomed “President Lokawela,” the Hawaiian pronunciation and spelling of Roosevelt, with great fanfare.\(^{87}\) Both the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* and *The Honolulu Advertiser* published “Roosevelt Tribute Editions” in their papers with welcomes from businesses,

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\(^{84}\) Letter From Duke Kahanamoku To Owen Churchill,“ 27 September 1940, DKC, Box 1, File 9, Swim Fins, Owen Churchill, HSA.

\(^{85}\) Duke P. Kahanamoku, “Waikiki Yacht Club,” DKC, File 88, Box 4, HSA.

\(^{86}\) Ibid.

articles on Hawaii history, industry, culture and traditions. Kahanamoku took out an advertisement welcoming the president on behalf of his Union Oil stations. In the advertisement, a picture of Kahanamoku accompanies the text: “Duke Kahanamoku . . . member of the crew Manuiwa . . . will be glad to greet all his old friends at either of his two service Stations-on Nuuanu St. or on Kalakaua Ave.” At the bottom of the advertisement was the message “Aloha! President Roosevelt.”

The importance to Kahanamoku of his yachting adventure with Dillingham is evidenced by the emphasis in the advertisement proclaiming his claim to fame as a member of Dillingham’s victorious crew rather than his exploits as a multiple Olympic champion. The other significance of the advertisement follows in Kahanamoku’s embrace of political realities. Interestingly, Kahanamoku’s advertisement greeting the president only appeared in the Honolulu Star-Bulletin and not in the other major daily paper, The Honolulu Advertiser. It is possible that Kahanamoku elected not to do business with the Honolulu Advertiser, owned and managed by Lorrin Thurston, or it could be that the Advertiser declined to run Kahanamoku’s ad for political reasons. Regardless, it is clearly a noticeable omission and spoke to the changing alliances of newspapers and politicians during Kahanamoku’s life in Honolulu. The Star-Bulletin highlighted the famed swimmer, including a photo of his gas station in its “Roosevelt Edition” in its pictorials of Hawai‘i.

The *Star-Bulletin* also highlighted another incident regarding Kahanamoku which the *Advertiser* failed to mention. As 60,000 people came out to greet President Roosevelt the *Star-Bulletin* reported that “escorting the ship were 15 canoes, manned by Hawaiians in yellow capes such as were worn by Hawaiian warriors in the past. One of these craft was a double canoe carrying Duke Kahanamoku costumed as Kamehameha the Great.”

The *Star-Bulletin* captured the beauty and the color of the significant imagery of Hawai‘i’s greatest monarch portrayed by its best known resident welcoming the leader of the free world and the president of the territory. Amazingly, the *Advertiser*, led by the Thurston family who helped overthrow the monarchy, declined to even mention the symbolic act in its coverage of the event.

The obvious snub of Kahanamoku gave clear evidence of the *Advertiser*’s bent regarding any potential political run the Hawaiian legend might make. For Kahanamoku, the opportunity to proudly portray Kamehameha the Great and to represent his people to his adopted nation’s president perhaps whetted his appetite for political office. It may have inspired him to serve as the bridge between the past and the future for Hawai‘i nei. With the recent yacht race with Harold Dillingham fresh in his memory the prestige of demonstrating the *aloha* of his people to Roosevelt, Kahanamoku began to seriously weigh his future options in politics. These events seem to have aroused in Kahanamoku what the Dillinghams had hoped for, a local leader who trusted them and wanted to fulfill his duty to his people. Best of all for the *haole* leaders, Kahanamoku had no political

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91 An examination of the *Honolulu Advertiser* during the coverage of Roosevelt’s visit found no mention of Kahanamoku’s participation.
background and could be molded by trusted advisors. He was not only seen as a friend to people of all races he truly was a friend of theirs and could help them unify and control the island in the best interests of the business elite.

Kahanamoku had returned to his homeland amidst great racial unrest due to the Massie trials. As a native Hawaiian who had attained world-wide fame he became a natural choice for those seeking a leader who could help ease the crisis. Kahanamoku’s greatest desire was to bring honor and glory to his people and his homeland. Now that his athletic career had concluded, his means for that purpose had passed. Kahanamoku found himself faced with decisions as to what direction the rest of his life would take in regards to that pursuit. His powerful and influential friends hoped that he would choose to accept their invitation to run for the office of sheriff but they would be left waiting as Kahanamoku considered his options.
Unfortunately, for Harold and Walter Dillingham, the interest they had aroused in Kahanamoku for political office in July dissipated in August. In fact, on September 6 the deadline for filing for the election came and went without Kahanamoku seeking nomination. The midnight deadline passed Duke Kahanamoku’s name was not among the record “one hundred and fourteen candidates for Territorial offices.” Kahanamoku’s competitive interests remained focused on sport. Days before the deadline he made headlines by winning a single skulls race against his chief rowing rival, Bob Fuller. Kahanamoku and his brothers, Louis and Sam, all competed in the regatta and won their various races.

Perhaps the diversion in training for the races kept Kahanamoku from filing the necessary paperwork needed to run for sheriff, but there may have been other issues involved in his failure to meet the filing deadline as well. Kahanamoku probably had many misgivings about running for office. His past dealings with island politics had not been favorable.

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1 “114 Seek Territorial Office In Primary Election,” The Honolulu Advertiser, 7 September 1934, p. 1.
3 “Healani Upsets Nomads,” The Honolulu Advertiser, 4 September 1934, p. 10.
Growing up in a land filled with political turmoils, experiencing firsthand an imperialistic government coup enacted upon friends and family members, and living in an occupied territory would have had a tremendous impact on a young boy. Experiencing the struggles of a trusted friend, Prince Jonah Kalanianaole Kuhio, in political life also would have helped form negative opinions as to the legitimacy of island politics. Even more disconcerting were the recent political fiascos he had personally experienced. The political appointment of his superintendent’s position, his reduction in pay while holding that position and his firing all were politically motivated. Those experiences would leave a sour taste in most people’s mouths. Added to that scenario was another event that occurred after his ouster from city hall.

Indignant with his fellow Democrats for kicking Kahanamoku out of his appointed position, Senator David Trask drafted a bill proposal to give Kahanamoku a $350 per month life pension. A preamble to the bill noted that Kahanamoku had “advertised the territory of Hawaii in terms that cannot be measured in dollars and cents.”\(^4\) The haole dominated press in Hawai`i criticized the plan insinuating that his role as superintendent of City Hall was a job worthy of his stature and that if the legislature wanted to reward him they should have him work at his job and earn the money. The Honolulu Star-Bulletin ran an editorial criticizing Senator Trask for not coming “to the defense of Duke when his fellow Democrats were putting him out of his job; taking away from him his means of a livelihood.” The editorial surmised that the answer to the issue of honoring Kahanamoku properly did not rest in a pension for his service to the territory.

Instead, the legislature should “restore Duke to his former position where he was earning what he was paid and was well suited from every standpoint.”

In essence, the newspaper advocated that Kahanamoku’s position in Hawaiian society found its best placement in cleaning City Hall and mowing its grass for a salary that had been cut by ten percent while he had been in the position. Ironically, as the debate surrounding Kahanamoku’s potential pension swirled in Honolulu and white newspapers rejected the idea, another pension proposal gained wholehearted approval by the same media outlets. The day before denouncing the idea of a pension for Kahanamoku, the Honolulu Star-Bulletin had printed another editorial announcing its unequivocal support of an annual pension of $5000 to be given to Grace Goodhue Coolidge, the widow of President Calvin Coolidge. While it is understandable for a leading newspaper in a Territory to demonstrate loyalty to the United States during a period of grief in supporting a former president’s widow, it is interesting that they would so strongly react to a much smaller amount being given to a man who had brought the greatest recognition to the Territory since King Kamehameha the Great. The newspaper noted, “luckily, Mrs. Coolidge is not in want, and the delay will not cause her any hardship.”

Obviously, the paper believed that the wealthy Mrs. Coolidge’s place in American society was to earn more money, which she did not need, to remain known as the former first lady of the “do nothing President,” Calvin Coolidge. The next day the

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7 Coolidge earned the reputation of the “do nothing President” as he consistently attempted to hold the status quo and not make changes in governmental, programs, policies and actions. For more information on
press clearly demonstrated that Kahanamoku’s place as a descendant of the Hawaiian monarchy and the Territory’s most famous resident was to work at menial tasks befitting his status as a dark-skinned Hawaiian. The endemic racism of politics must have given pause to Kahanamoku as he pondered running for political office.

Regardless of Kahanamoku’s potential misgivings and his failure to seek nomination by the deadline, those who felt he needed to run for sheriff were not dissuaded. While Kahanamoku continued to assert his athletic dominance, his influential friends continued to pursue him. They finally persuaded the reluctant champion to enter the race. The Honolulu Advertiser reported the surprise announcement that Kahanamoku would “enter the race for the shrievalty following the earnest solicitations of many of his friends.” Those friends must have had extreme power in Honolulu political circles to allow the star swimmer to enter the race four days after the filing deadline had passed. The Advertiser noted that “the popular Hawaiian athlete has the backing of a large group of influential Democratic party leaders.” In fact, as Kahanamoku made the announcement the newspaper noted that his papers for filing were still being drawn up and “circulated by his friends yesterday and will be filed with the city and county clerk within a day or two.”

Interestingly, none of the other five candidates ever brought up publicly the issue of Kahanamoku’s late filing status, perhaps out of fear from upsetting the powerful political block behind the swimmer which no doubt included the Dillingham brothers.


Those who have chronicled the life of Duke Kahanamoku point to the years of his reign as sheriff as acclamation of the great swimmer’s popularity in the territory. Kahanamoku biographers Sandra Kimberly Hall and Greg Ambrose divulge that Kahanamoku “ran for the office of Sheriff of the City and County of Honolulu in 1934, defeating his experienced Republican opponent by a sizable majority.” They then noted that “his 13 consecutive terms in office—until the office was abolished—is yet another record Duke racked up.” Hall and Ambrose erroneously state that “he only once had an opponent.”

Joseph Brennan, another Kahanamoku biographer, also made short mention of Kahanamoku’s elections, noting that “in 1934 he ran as a Democrat against the Republican candidate Pat Gleason. He won by about 3000 votes.” Brennan mentions that “with his father having been in police work for so many years, Duke came to the sheriff’s office with a basic knowledge of the work. He benefited from having the respect of the department.”

Furthering the legacy and legend of this great athlete, these claims sound wonderful and demonstrate the undying love for Kahanamoku that the Hawaiian people held. In reality, his political career was highly contested, especially in the beginning. There was no wholesale acceptance of the Olympic swimming champion’s role in political arenas. It is true that Kahanamoku faced less and less opposition later in his career and ran unopposed a number of times. At the beginning however, he faced tough

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challenges. It may also be that people grew used to the fact that the office of sheriff held little real political power after the reforms created in the aftermath of the Massie trials and it became an undesirable position for many politicians. Obviously, those who abolished the position in 1960 believed the office to be unnecessary.

Regardless of later perceptions of the value of the office, in 1934 Kahanamoku faced stiff opposition in both the primary and the general election. He ran against a pool of candidates who challenged his lack of experience and played upon their many years of police work. While Kahanamoku could only point to his father’s career as a police captain as his knowledge of police work he was running against fellow Democrat and incumbent, sheriff Charles H. Rose, as well as several respected Republicans, including Patrick K. Gleason, a former sheriff; David Hao, a former deputy sheriff under Gleason and Herman Clark, a former deputy U.S. Marshall.11

These men represented years of police experience and had no qualms about highlighting their strengths in campaign speeches. With his celebrity and name recognition Kahanamoku became a strong challenger in the election, making lack of experience even more attractive a target for those campaigning against him. At his first Democratic rallies in Manoa and Lanakila Park, Honolulu papers reported that Kahanamoku “was greeted by prolonged applause” and “a rousing reception” as he “appealed for support in a short speech.” At the same rally his chief opponent, Sheriff Rose, mentioned that “he had served as sheriff for eight and a half years and that he had

worked as a deputy sheriff for many years” before that. Rose outlined the strategy for Kahanamoku’s future opponents, attack the great athlete on his lack of experience while staying away from personality issues. Kahanamoku, understanding his lack of experience never invoked the memory of his father’s police background and chose to focus on his integrity. Local columnists chimed in with reports on the pure record of Kahanamoku in regards to his representation of Hawai’i. Doc Adams, a regular columnist for The Honolulu Advertiser, declared that

“If I were his press agent I would mention somewhere in my campaign material that a man who was a world famous athlete for years and in all that time never tried to figure out a way to pad an AAU expense account, ought to be a rather trustworthy person with whom to entrust the keys of the County Jail.”

Adams also highlighted the contributions of Kahanamoku to the territory, stating that “if the miles Duke has swum to wring nickels out of the public, for the benefit of other people and causes, could be laid end to end you’d have a swimming pool reaching from here to San Pedro [California].” In trying to demonstrate Kahanamoku’s importance to Hawai’i Adams summed up the great swimmer’s influence:

“It may seem rude to say it, but sugar could be manufactured in Hawaii from then until whenever, and large blocs of advertising could tell the benefits of absorbing pineapple, and neither of these vital industries would (or did) have a chance to focus the world’s attention upon Hawaii as did the fact that a big husky from the Sandwich Islands made monkeys out of the best swimmers in the world and introduced a new style of paddling in that competitive sport.”

14 Ibid.
Advertiser sports columnist William Peet chimed in with Adams, remarking that “long before I ever heard of the Hawaiian Islands or even dreamed that some day I would live there, Duke Kahanamoku’s swimming feats were stamped indelibly on the Peet brain.” Peet agreed with Adams that “no one individual born in these islands ever gave Hawaii the newspaper publicity that did Duke Kahanamoku.” The references to Kahanamoku’s contributions in the development of Hawai‘i through sport proved popular to the rank and file of both Democrats and Republicans. Playing upon his celebrity seemed a reasonable strategy to counteract his lack of experience. Kahanamoku also employed another strategy. He clung to his roots in Hawaiian culture. Kahanamoku’s speeches, though short, were delivered first in Hawaiian and then in English, a sure sign to voters of where his first love resided. Kahanamoku understood the heart of the Hawaiian people and their culture.

For mainland politicians, Hawaiian campaigns must have seemed more like a circus than serious political discourse. Hawaiian campaign rallies included speeches given in various languages, lei draped candidates who would speak through the mass of flowers bestowed around their necks and dance hulas or sing songs for the entertainment of the people. Huge crowds of up to 10,000 people enjoying food, flowers, music and festivity typified a Hawaiian political rally. Kahanamoku understood this and took opportunities to dance, sing, and enjoy the celebrations. Kahanamoku’s dancing at his

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campaign rallies even led Sheriff Rose, attempting to compete with the popular champion, to comment that “although 61 years of age he [Rose] is ‘still able to do the hula.’”

Kahanamoku’s fame and Hawaiian heritage did not assure him victory. The issue of experience continued to dog him. In the primary election against Rose voters appeared evenly split between the candidates. In fact, the sheriff’s race for the Democratic nomination ended up as the closest of any primary election in 1934. The day after the voting the race remained too close to call. In the final tally Kahanamoku finally emerged victorious by a mere 127 votes out of 17,787 cast for Democratic candidates, a mere .00714 per cent of the vote. Kahanamoku did not exactly win a landslide victory. In a gracious as well as politically expedient gesture, Rose immediately supported Kahanamoku in the general election against former Sheriff Pat Gleason. The Republican nominee won his primary by over 3200 votes.

Kahanamoku’s Democratic primary victory came as a shocker for many in Honolulu, William Peet, despite his personal support in an earlier column, declared, “Duke Kahanamoku certainly pulled a surprise at the primaries. Only a few conceded him a chance.” However, now that he had won the primary, the Democratic candidates lined up squarely behind the popular athlete. Besides Rose, who committed to speaking upon Kahanamoku’s behalf at rallies, other prominent political figures also spoke out in

20 “‘Thank You’ Party Draws 8,000 and All Candidates,” The Honolulu Advertiser, 10 October 1934, p. 8.
favor of their new brother in the political arena. Two members of the Honolulu board of supervisors who, ironically, had fired Kahanamoku from his position as Superintendent of City Hall two years earlier even rose up to speak for the former Olympic champion. The two politicians, Manuel Pacheco and Henry B. Wolter, both veteran members of the board of supervisors, spoke often at rallies for Kahanamoku. Pacheco told crowds that “you will make no mistake if you elect Duke P. Kahanamoku as your Sheriff. He is a young man who has made a name for himself and for Hawaii nei.”

Gleason, recognizing Kahanamoku’s lack of experience began to exploit the vulnerability the same way that Rose had done in the primary. However, Rose attempted to circumvent the strategy. In a reversal from his primary statements, Rose argued that “when Duke started out to swim he didn’t know much about swimming, but when he got through he made Hawaii famous all over the world.” Rose drew the correlation that “although Duke is inexperienced in the duties of sheriff, he can become a capable sheriff just as he became an excellent swimmer.” While being a capable sheriff and an excellent swimmer have very little real or imagined correlation the emphasis on Kahanamoku’s world-renowned athletic prowess resonated with voters who showered the sheriff candidate with hearty applause and serenaded the great champion in song. However, the Republican candidates were not going to allow Kahanamoku to live off his athletic success. Gleason challenged Kahanamoku’s record and political savvy.

In a speech in lower Kalihi, a multiethnic Honolulu neighborhood and a strong area for Kahanamoku in the primary, Gleason argued that “Mayor Wright appointed Duke Kahanamoku at a fair salary as custodian of the city hall.” Gleason charged that “then along came the Democratic majority of the board of supervisors two years ago, which reduced Duke’s pay to a ridiculously low figure and his official position to that of an ordinary janitor.” According to Gleason this caused Duke to resign the job in shame. Pointing out his own experience of “more than a quarter of a century” of holding office Gleason then forcefully attacked Kahanamoku, arguing that “no matter how great one may have been in athletics, that is no sign that he has the qualifications and ability for such a position as Sheriff.” Republicans played upon the insignificance of athletic ability regarding qualifications for sheriff. Contending that their candidate, Pat Gleason, could also highlight his athletic accomplishments they noted “Gleason’s boyhood prowess as a baseball and football player,” and “the fact that he took the first Hawaiian baseball team to Japan and brought here the first baseball team from Japan and from the mainland.” They argued, however, that athletic prowess “in itself does not fit Gleason for sheriff. What qualifies Gleason is that he has had many years experience as sheriff and kindred positions.”

With the attacks on Kahanamoku’s lack of experience in anything other than athletics taking precedence on the Republican front, Democrats navigated a different tack. While demonstrating Kahanamoku’s achievements, the strategy seemed to shift to a sense of fulfilling Hawai‘i’s indebtedness to their great proponent, Kahanamoku. While

25 “Along The Ballot Front,” The Honolulu Advertiser, 26 October 1934, p. 4.
26 “Democrats Converge For Final Appeal,” The Honolulu Advertiser, 5 November 1934, p. 3.
Kahanamoku spoke briefly at rallies, mainly thanking voters for the support they had given him, others such as Sheriff Rose brought up a question that in all humility Kahanamoku could never broach. Rose contended that “thousands of people on the mainland and in Europe know about Duke and through him many have come to learn of Hawaii. The people of this city owe Duke a debt and they can pay this debt by electing him as sheriff.”27

The battle lines had been drawn. Popularity and public indebtedness were pitched against law enforcement experience in the general election. On the morning after the polls closed it appeared that experience had won out. The Honolulu Advertiser reported in its morning editions that Gleason held a slim lead over Kahanamoku of 1670 votes to 1580.28 However, by the time the evening editions hit the presses things had changed. Kahanamoku won the election with 19,017 votes compared to 15,976 for Gleason, a difference of 3041 votes.29

It is often difficult to determine what it is that voters are saying in election results. In this election the same is true. There can be no doubt that Kahanamoku’s fame and popularity had an impact on the election. However, the integrity issue also may have played a strong role as Kahanamoku had a peerless record while Gleason still carried the residue of the Massie cases with him. He had been sheriff when the reigning business and political powers wrested much of the power from the office of the sheriff thus making it a safe place to elect a figurehead sheriff. In reality, due to these changes the

27 “Mayor Again Target Of Candidate,” The Honolulu Advertiser, 27 October 1934, p. 10.
29 “General Election Results,” The Honolulu Advertiser, 8 November 1934, p. 8.
office of sheriff had very little to do with law enforcement but had become a management position with responsibilities for overseeing the jail, the office of weights and measures, the coroner’s office, and prisoner transportation to and from courtroom appearances. The issues of police experience were therefore moot and much ado about nothing. While it is still unclear how much the Massie cases had tarnished Gleason, it is interesting that his replacement, Charles Rose, fared better against Kahanamoku in the primary race than did Gleason in the general election. It also did not hurt Kahanamoku’s cause that Rose not only spoke at every rally on behalf of Kahanamoku but also vowed in those speeches that “I promise you that Charlie Rose will be on hand to give Duke the benefit of his years of experience in this line of work.”

It could be that this last minute reassurance swayed those questioning Kahanamoku’s lack of experience and felt that the time to repay the debt had come. Another possibility exists that many voters shared the sentiments of someone in the crowd at a rally on River Street on October 26. At that small gathering held in a steady rain, Kahanamoku addressed the crowd from a small hastily erected platform. As two Japanese boys sat contently eating ice cream behind the platform,” a listener spoke up saying, “That’s all, Duke. You’re all right. You win already.”

Regardless of the reasons for the victory, the fact remained that Duke Kahanamoku had entered a new era of his life. He had become a politician and public

30 “Democrats Turn Guns On Wright,” The Honolulu Advertiser, 2 November 1934, p. 4
31 “Along The Ballot Front,” The Honolulu Advertiser, 26 October 1934, p. 4.
servant. Kahanamoku’s swearing in ceremony was captured on film in the Honolulu Star-Bulletin in a photo under the caption, “He’s Sheriff Duke Now.”

Understanding his inexperience and trusting Charlie Rose’s support, Kahanamoku turned to the elder Rose not only for advice, but handed his onetime adversary a coveted position. Kahanamoku selected Rose as his Chief Deputy Sheriff, a move which would create numerous headaches for the new sheriff. Rose continued to operate the sheriff’s office as if it was his and the corruption which had begun under his watch would continue.

Not only had Kahanamoku inherited a job which had been stripped of power after the Massie cases and selected as his right hand man a holdover from the corruption which had preceded his administration but the territory of Hawai‘i still struggled with an identity crisis within the rest of the world. While political and business leaders in Hawai‘i attempted to reduce the political and public relations fallout from the Massie cases, the reality existed that some of the tarnish on the reputation of the “Paradise of the Pacific” remained from those world famous scandals.

Just after his election as Sheriff a report came out of France that Le Jour, a leading Paris daily newspaper, had been carrying a serial entitled “Aloha! ou la Princesse Hawaïenne.” According to The Honolulu Advertiser the tale was “a scandalous libel on the fair name of the American Territory and the Hawaiian people.” Written by a Pole, Antoni Marczynski, and translated into French by Civel, Le Jour advertised the tale as “a

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33 Clipping from an untitled article from the Honolulu Star-Bulletin, written in 1935, found in the Duke Kahanamoku Collection M-434, hereafter referred to as DKC, Box 7, File 105, “Clippings 1930-36,” Hawaii State Archives, Honolulu, hereafter referred to as HSA.
mysterious adventure of terror, love and anguish portraying adventures among the savage tribes of Hawaii.” The reason *The Advertiser* took issue with the story was that it was set “in the early 1930s—not centuries ago. Today, mind you!” In the eyes of the publishers of the newspaper this “horrible, bloodthirsty tale of rapine, murder, cannibalism, torture and vengeance,” repeated many of the stereotypes of Hawai`i which they had been fighting since the world learned of the attack of Thalia Massie.\(^\text{34}\)

Besides the exaggerated tales set in their homeland, the Territory had other image issues as well. It seemed that even thirty years after becoming a United States Territory that mainland Americans still had no clear conception that Hawai`i was an official part of the United States with its residents deemed full American citizens. *The Honolulu Advertiser* printed a story about G.J. Cook from Lowellville, Ohio, who had sent a letter to the paper hoping to start a “Correspondence Club” with residents of Hawai`i. Cook stated that the club existed for “the exchange of letters between English speaking boys and girls in ‘foreign countries.’” *The Advertiser* indignantly responded, “evidently he doesn’t know that no less an authority than President Roosevelt himself recently declared that ‘Hawaii is an integral part of the United States.’”\(^\text{35}\)

The newspapers soon realized that the problem of viewing Hawai`i as a foreign country existed in far greater numbers on the mainland than they initially believed. In fact, not only did the ignorance exist in a small town in Ohio but in President Franklin Roosevelt’s own home, The White House. In October of 1934, First Lady Eleanor

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Roosevelt wrote in her regular article in *Woman’s Home Companion* concerning “Our Island Possessions.” Mrs. Roosevelt exposed her lack of knowledge about Hawai‘i in the article despite the fact that her husband and two sons had just returned from a trip there. In fact, one of her sons, Franklin Jr., after learning how to surf with Duke Kahanamoku had been so taken with the sport and the islands that he had asked whether he could stay on in Hawai‘i when his father and brother left. Mrs. Roosevelt mused, “many times I wonder whether the people of the United States have any real interest in our insular possessions. I doubt if many of us even know that we own the Virgin Islands or Puerto Rico or Hawaii.” Continuing in the article, she noted the minimal interest that Americans may have had, stating, “occasionally when our navy planes make a flight to Hawaii some one says; ‘I suppose we do have some interest in that island in the Pacific.’”

*The Honolulu Advertiser* responded to the article by scolding Mrs. Roosevelt: “Oh Mrs. Roosevelt! Do not insist that we tell you how many islands are included in geographical Hawaii, or even in political Hawaii, for frankly we do not know . . . But there are eight major islands.” The paper extended an invitation to the First Lady: “Worth visiting, Mrs. Roosevelt, is Hawaii. Need we say that the latchstring is always out? P.S. - - And Hawaii is a Territory of the United States, no possession.”

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The Honolulu Star-Bulletin also attempted to fight the public relations battle through its pages. The paper even printed a copy of the treaty of 1897, demonstrating Hawai`i’s status as an official Territory and not a possession of the United States.\(^{39}\)

The real issue behind the indignance expressed by the papers had to do with the issues of statehood and Hawai`i’s rights within the United States. The Massie Case had taken Hawai`i from the seemingly innocent period in which the islands were viewed as the beloved “Paradise of the Pacific.” In addition, the military threats of imperial Japan to the East had established Hawai`i as a strategic part of United States defenses. The future seemed unclear for residents of Hawai`i. Would it eventually be granted admission as a state in the United States or would it become a staging ground and large base for military operations? Those seeking statehood pointed to the Americanization of the territory as proof of its progress. Helen Poindexter, the Hawaiian governor’s daughter, told friends in Butte, Montana that she envisioned “total vanishment of the native Hawaiian.” Poindexter noted that “the second generation Hawaiians are becoming Americanized and that many marry into other races.”\(^{40}\)

Poindexter clearly misunderstood native Hawaiian history by claiming that Hawaiians were only in their second generation. She obviously referred to the second generation of Hawaiians after the Islands had become a U.S. Territory. Regardless, the image of a vanishing culture and people reflected fears of those in Hawai`i as well. “Oh, Youthful Singer Beneath The Moon,” a poem written by C.L. Maple clearly exposed this

sensation. Maple infused the reader with beautiful imagery of a “slim Hawaiian youth” singing of “life and love and all the hidden treasures of this earth” which frees our “captive soul” and allows us to be “what I long to be.” The tranquil portrait of the innocence of the native lifestyle however is muted in the last stanza when the poem concludes:

But ah, too soon across night’s vast domain the stars have sped;

The nascent orb of Luna is sinking in the farthest west;

Her scintillating road is dimming now upon the water’s crest.

The strings are mute, his song is stilled; The lad has gone to rest,

While ‘round me olden memories assail, the wraiths of years long dead.  

(Maple’s imagery of a vanishing race is unmistakable. Duke Kahanamoku’s life as a surfer and representative of the Hawaiian race can easily be constructed from an examination of the poem. People realized that “the lad has gone to rest,” but in electing Kahanamoku as sheriff there also existed the hope that some of the loss of the vanishing culture which so entranced the world could be recaptured, at least symbolically. In addition, the election of Kahanamoku would help mainlanders understand the true Americanization of Hawai’i as the great swimmer had emerged as an symbol of American athletic superiority through his Olympic success. Kahanamoku served as a prime example of the savage becoming civilized.

However, the Americanization process and assimilation of the American ideals in Kahanamoku had not completely disconnected him from his roots. Kahanamoku

remained at his core Hawaiian and clung to the Hawaiian traditions and values ingrained into his life. As a result, the complexities of the American political process and the two-faced nature of many politicians were foreign to Kahanamoku’s understanding. Immediately upon taking office as sheriff he became ensnared in numerous governmental scandals.

Kahanamoku’s faith in people’s basic goodness and honesty met with the realities of political gain and greed in the first year of his new administration. This value of kūpono, meaning to behave honestly, uprightly, fairly and justly, existed for Kahanamoku at the very essence of a leader’s quality. Kahanamoku seemed unable to comprehend a world where politicians and leaders who were the servants of the people would not have the best interests of those people in mind while performing their duties. This may have been due to his understanding of the traditional role of the Ali`i as the providers and protectors of their people. Kahanamoku’s vision of leadership still revolved around the traditional values of mana and aloha which had been demonstrated to him as a young boy by his ali`i relatives. Not understanding the differences in the traditional values of his people and the political values of capitalistic America when he assumed office Kahanamoku also naively assumed that those he dealt with were honorable persons. He could not have been more wrong and he quickly realized the repercussions of his misplaced trust. One of those individuals he instinctively trusted and who created the greatest amount of turmoil for the new sheriff was, ironically, the old sheriff.

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43 Lillian Peterson, “Affidavit on Rose and Duke’s Administrations,” DKC, Box 3, File 58, HSA.
Charles Rose, whom Kahanamoku defeated in the 1934 Democratic primary election in a very close race, understood the realities of politics and shrewdly positioned himself to gain the favor of his vanquisher after his defeat by the legendary swimmer. Rose, had promised to help Kahanamoku in law enforcement matters and actually gave longer speeches at the campaign rallies than did Kahanamoku. Rose endeared himself to Kahanamoku and earned the trust of the rookie politician. Kahanamoku struggling against the mounting criticism regarding his lack of experience in police work, made an understandable, if unfortunate, mistake. After his election to the office of sheriff, Kahanamoku rewarded Rose’s faithfulness by naming the former sheriff to the position of Chief Deputy Sheriff.

Kahanamoku’s lack of experience quickly became evident. Upon taking office he failed to realize the corruption embedded in the department he inherited from Rose. By placing Rose in the position of his right hand man and allowing him “to continue to run the office and jail in his own way,” Kahanamoku did not realize that he would be allowing the “sleaze” to continue to grow and spread. As sheriff Rose had, as the Honolulu media noted, “nepotism down to a fine point. He gave jobs to as many of his relatives as he could find room for on the payroll.” That included procurement of a job for his son who Rose put in charge of the county prison. Kahanamoku failed to realize that “a politician has no friends, but only hangers-on who hope to benefit from what he can do for them.” Kahanamoku, initially believing that Rose truly had his and the people’s best interests at heart, kept all of Rose’s cronies in place.44

44 Clipping from an untitled article, DKC, box 7, file 105, HSA.
Unfortunately for Kahanamoku, the county attorney conducted an investigation of conditions at the prison. The official report “disclosed sordid and unsavory conditions at the prison—laziness, drunkenness, and adultery on the part of both prisoners and jailors.”⁴⁵ One of the prison matrons, Lillian Peterson detailed conditions at the jail during both Rose’s and Duke Kahanamoku’s administration. Mrs. Peterson cited changes occurring for the worse when Charlie Rose Jr. took over management of the jail which housed both male and female inmates. The six-page document she produced revealed the alleged discrimination of “kanaka” employees, drunken parties hosted by the Roses which kept prisoners awake all hours of the night, guards having sex in the jail yard with one another, and lies covering up the sordid behavior while those reporting incidences were reprimanded. Most damning of all were Mrs. Peterson’s allegations of the younger Rose’s multiple affairs with prisoners while his wife was away. Warden Rose expressed to one young female inmate who he had brought to his house on the prison property that “his wife was stale and he wanted a new lover.”⁴⁶

Evidently, Rose Jr. had chosen the inmate to be that lover.⁴⁷ Both Roses gave misleading information to their boss, Sheriff Kahanamoku, regarding the actual incidents at the jail. Kahanamoku even allowed the Roses to fire a number of employees who were critical of the prison management on trumped up charges or violations of rules that were

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⁴⁵ Ibid.
⁴⁶ Peterson, “Affidavit.”
⁴⁷ Ibid.
only applied to certain employees. These fired employees usually were of native Hawaiian descent.\(^48\)

Kahanamoku seemed to blindly trust the Roses. He followed their advice in firing the individuals they recommended to be terminated or suspended. One of these was a jail matron named Amy Kalima whom Rose Jr. recommended dismissing at the end of her vacation on August 3, 1935. In his recommendation letter to Kahanamoku, Rose Jr. accused Mrs. Kalima of six violations. Interestingly, he placed the most heinous violation in the middle of the charges sandwiched between such minor violations as allowing female inmates to write and deliver letters to male inmates at the jail, and allowing female inmates to iron shirts passed over the fence by male inmates. Charge number four, however, claimed that Kalima allowed two male inmates to enter the female jail and “make love to inmates Annie Gonsalves and Mary Enoke.”\(^49\)

Kahanamoku acted upon Rose Jr.’s recommendation and fired Mrs. Kalima. The sheriff also planned to terminate Mrs. Peterson as well at the end of her vacation for the same violations. However, as the affidavit of Mrs. Peterson claimed and the county attorney’s investigation proved, Rose Jr. was the one having sex with inmates not the other prisoners. He had been seen in the engaging in intercourse with inmate Annie Gonsalves “by the matron’s bathroom window,” an act observed by Mrs. Peterson and a guard named A.T. Spencer. Mrs. Peterson noted that she made numerous reports of Rose’s misdeeds to Sheriff Kahanamoku. Others also wrote Kahanamoku to inform him

\(^{48}\) Letter from Charles H. Rose Jr., To Hon. Duke P. Kahanamoku, “Recommendation for Dismissal,” DKC, Box 3, File 57, HSA.

\(^{49}\) Ibid.
of the alleged indiscretions of Rose Jr. and Mrs. McKenzie, one of his favored matron employees at the jail.\textsuperscript{50}

Inmate Lucy Keau sent a letter on July 13, 1935, complaining that Rose Jr. had Annie Gonsalves, “an inmate prisoner to work over at his house” in order to take sexual advantage of her. Keau also accused Chief Rose Sr. of witnessing, “Mrs. McKenzie hitting me on the head with my pair of sandals.”\textsuperscript{51} Keau volunteered to testify against the Roses but both she and Mrs. Peterson’s complaints had apparently been disregarded at the insistence of Rose Sr. and Rose Jr. on the basis that they were nothing more than the disgruntled musings of an unhappy employee and a convicted felon.\textsuperscript{52}

Kahanamoku’s misplaced trust in the Roses became clear when the newspapers learned of the scandalous acts taking place at the jail under Kahanamoku’s watch. For the first time, Kahanamoku’s integrity faced a challenge in Hawai‘i. Even when the rest of the world questioned Kahanamoku’s status as an amateur the Hawaiian people and media had stood behind their champion and made declarations exalting his innocence of the charges of accepting money for competing. Now Kahanamoku had nowhere to hide. His integrity questioned in his homeland for the first time, Kahanamoku realized that the realities of American politics were worlds removed from his understanding of leadership and Hawaiian values.

Ironically, the inexperience of Kahanamoku in politics played in his favor. Even though his integrity became an issue, the media noted that “when Duke went into politics,

\textsuperscript{50} Peterson, “Affidavit.”
\textsuperscript{51} Letter From Lucy Keau, To Whom It May Concern, 13 July 1935, DKC, Box 3 file 58, HSA.
\textsuperscript{52} Peterson, “Affidavit.”
and ran for and was elected to public office, he got out of his depth.” The newspapers claimed that “it wasn’t Duke’s fault, particularly, except that, as head of the department, he is responsible to the public for the acts and conduct of his subordinates.” While excusing Kahanamoku in part due to his naiveté, the media also questioned whether Kahanamoku would be able to remain “clean, decent and honest, as he has always been,” since “he has been soiled by the filth of others.” The Honolulu Star-Bulletin commented that “there are clean politicians, many of them, but even they have to come into contact with the dirty politicians—and he who touches pitch is likely to be defiled.”

Finally grasping the reality the situation, Kahanamoku immediately called for a complete investigation and promised to fire any employees found guilty of the charges listed in Mrs. Peterson’s affidavit. To his credit, Kahanamoku followed through with his promise and fired Charlie Rose, Jr., Charlie Rose, Sr., and a large number of the deputies the Rose’s had appointed to work at the jail. Displaying a severe lack of penance over their misdeeds both Charlie Rose, Jr. and guard Albert K. Chow “indicated their intention to apply for a three week vacation with pay, despite a ruling which forbids such payment to discharged employees.”

Another finding of the investigations into the sheriff’s office uncovered another practice which had been going on for years that proved to be another ethical sword directed at Kahanamoku’s administration. Evidently it had become common practice for deputies to serve legal papers outside of their jobs and be able to “pocket the fee” as a

53 Clipping from an untitled article, DKC, Box 7, File 105, HSA.
54 “Duke Rejects Precinct Club Jail Demands,” DKC, Box 7, File 105, Clippings 1930-36, HSA.
means of supplementing their salaries. The Honolulu Chief of Police, William Gabrielson, attempted to capitalize on this issue along with the jailhouse scandal to push for the elimination of the sheriff’s position. Gabrielson claimed that the fee pocketed by the deputies for serving legal papers meant “a loss of revenue to the government.” In a direct attack upon Kahanamoku, Gabrielson told news reporters that the office of sheriff involved “an unnecessary waste of government funds” and that he believed “the police could run the department far more economically” than Kahanamoku had done. “As far as I’m concerned, the city and county sheriff’s office has been non-existent” the police chief stated.

Kahanamoku found some defenders. The Hawaii Hochi, a Japanese language newspaper with an English language section, opposed Gabrielson and others who joined in the attack on the sheriff’s office. The editors saw the attack as “a proposal to deprive the voters of their last remaining control over any branch of our law enforcement agencies.” The Hawaii Hochi argued that “the sheriff forms the last safeguard of civil rights safety against a blundering, autocratic, inefficient and brutal cossack machine which flouts its arrogance and defies the people to whom it should be responsible.”

Comparing the Hawaiian government to Mussolini’s fascist dictatorship in Italy, which continually swallowed up elected offices, the paper noted that the issue of “whether or not Duke Kahanamoku is a good sheriff is not material to the issue. Certainly he could

55 “Claim Clerk, Sheriff Both Overstaffed,” Newspaper article, DKC, Box 7 File 105, Clippings 1930-1936, HSA.
56 “Police Chief Wants To Run Sheriff’s Job,” Newspaper article, DKC, Box 7 File 105, Clippings 1930-1936, HSA.
not be a worse sheriff that the person who fills the position of chief of police!” Noting that the police department was undergoing its own scandals involving falsification of records, brutality and the subterfuge of evidence, the Hochi argued that at least if the people do not like Kahanamoku “they can easily get rid of him at the next election by voting for somebody else.” The newspaper noted that with the “chief of police and the police commission they have nothing to say.” As appointed officials, the police had no responsibility to the electorate because of what the paper referred to as the time when “Hawaii went haywire over the Massie case [and] decided to ‘take the police out of politics.’”

Kahanamoku’s entrance into the world of politics did not come without its tribulations. Regardless of the legendary status of the Olympic champion, his first term as sheriff was anything but a smooth transition from one career to another. Kahanamoku gained valuable lessons about political friendships and loyalties, personnel management, and the differences between American governmental standards and his traditional Hawaiian values. These valuable insights would serve him well as he prepared to establish his own administration and prepare for the re-election. Kahanamoku would need this gained understanding as during his first term he did not make many political friends but seemed to create many enemies.

58 Ibid, p.2.
The call for the abolishment of the sheriff’s position eventually died down but the
damage to Kahanamoku’s reputation allowed contenders to believe that he was
vulnerable, and for the 1936 election once again opponents rose up and attacked
Kahanamoku.

In the aftermath of the dismissals of many deputies, even some of Kahanamoku’s
bastions of political strength applied political pressure to the sheriff to rehire a guard
discharged who had no direct involvement in the jail investigation. Kahanamoku readily
admitted that the jailer, not implicated in the scandal, had been dismissed only ten days
after being hired. The sheriff, quickly becoming a wily veteran due to the scandal
surrounding his office, obviously realized that something was amiss with the new hire.
Nevertheless, he faced the first instances of Democratic precinct clubs and officials
warning Kahanamoku of repercussions in the next election if their will was denied.
Kahanamoku wisely realized that with his personal integrity on the line it was not time to
play political games and stood not on the advice of others but on what his gut feeling
was. In the lead up to the 1936 election Kahanamoku took leadership of his office and
endeavored to create his own legacy.
Rather than accept others hires or recommendations for deputy positions Kahanamoku turned to people he trusted when he refilled positions in his office. Interestingly the pools of candidates that Kahanamoku drew from were family and former athletes. However, the primary common denominator in those he hired were their past experiences in sport. Kahanamoku hired his younger brother Louis Kahanamoku and his cousin Leon Sterling, Jr. both of whom were fellow surfers and members of the *Hui Nalu*, the surfing club that Kahanamoku had helped found in 1908. Louis Kahanamoku also was an accomplished multi-sport athlete who played in the Hawaiian semi-pro football leagues.¹ The other significant hire that Kahanamoku would make would be Lang Akana, a local Chinese-Hawaiian baseball player whom sport historian Joel Franks noted “doubled as a singer capable of earning the nickname of ‘the Hawaiian nightingale.’”² Akana had signed a contract with the Pacific Coast League’s (PCL) Portland Beavers in 1914. However, players on the Beaver’s team boycotted the signing. The white players justified their objections claiming that “Akana’s skin was darker than Jack Johnson’s, the African-American heavyweight champion who challenged white supremacy.” Akana would have been the first “oriental” to break the color barrier in baseball. As *Portland Oregonian* writer Roscoe Fawcett reported “no ballplayer blending half portions of poi and chop suey ever before has embellished a professional diamond.” Portland owner Walter McCreadie bowed to the pressure and released Akana from the roster even though

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he “condemned his players’ and Organized baseball’s racist posture.”³ Akana’s history of racist treatment through sport yet his ability to maintain a higher moral ground attracted Kahanamoku’s respect. Kahanamoku understood that in the wake of the jail scandal he needed to surround himself with people who he believed were above reproach ethically. Kahanamoku had always believed that sport had developed many of the values of trust, fairness, and excellence which permeated his life, so it made sense to him to search for those who shared those experiences for positions in his administration.⁴

Rather than allow the scandal to bog him down and field defensive questions about the issues, Kahanamoku began to campaign for changes that affected his job. He began by asking the board of supervisors for “a new vehicle to transport the dead under the care of his office.” As head of the coroner’s office Kahanamoku had been using an abandoned patrol wagon to transport the poor and indigent dead to the morgue and then from there to cemeteries. For most of the political elite in Honolulu this would have been an extremely low matter on their agendas as it dealt with an issue related to the indigent and illiterate population of the islands, and even more directly to the dead, who had no voting rights. Kahanamoku, speaking up for those unable to speak for themselves, argued that “when a discarded ‘Black Maria’ pulls up in front of a poor home to remove the loves [sic] ones just passed into the dark shadows of death, it is an affront to decency.” He believed that the poor were not “devoid of feelings” or “unresentful when confronted with brusqueness or when their personal affairs are handled indifferently and

³ Ibid, 33-34.
casually.” In fact, Kahanamoku argued, “the poor man’s feelings are as easily disturbed or hurt as the rich man’s.”

Kahanamoku’s resolve to stand up for the poor by asking for a new coroner’s vehicle represented the first time in essence where he began to truly deal with political issues head on. It marked the beginning of his career as a proponent of changes for those who had no power to speak for themselves. He moved from the coroner’s wagon to his career long quest to build a new jail for more humane treatment of prisoners - - a goal he never achieved while in office. Kahanamoku became the hero of the poor and oppressed, one of the few publicly elected officials who would fight their underdog battles.

This new role as champion of the common folk did not end his older relationships with the rich and powerful. Not only did he appeal to the less fortunate and forgotten, he also continued to be Hawai’i’s best known resident and a friend to the elite around the world. When celebrities came to Hawai’i, they always met with the new sheriff. Babe Ruth, Charlie Chaplin, Douglas Fairbanks, John Ford, Amelia Earhart, Shirley Temple, Robert L. Ripley and Jack Dempsey were just a few of the myriad of visitors who visited with Kahanamoku in Hawai’i.

5 “Decent Treatment For The Dead,” Hawaii Hochi undated article found in Duke Kahanamoku Collection M-434, hereafter referred to as DKC, , Box 7 File 105 “Clippings 1930-1936, Hawaii State Archives, Honolulu, hereafter referred to as HSA.

6 Duke Kahanamoku, “Political Campaign Speech at Aliiolani School,” 31 August 1938, DKC, Box 2 File 36, HSA.

Kahanamoku proved a master at the public relations game. In a photo opportunity promoting the former heavyweight-boxing champion Dempsey, Kahanamoku met him with a “warrant charging him with ‘breach of promise’ for failing to arrive last week as promised.”8 Dempsey’s ship had been delayed in San Francisco for a week due to adverse weather, and upon arrival, Kahanamoku playfully handcuffed the “Manassa Mauler,” adding a “heavy chain and coconuts to his regular cuffs,” so that Dempsey could not get away.9 Kahanamoku was able to look past politically charged issues surrounding these celebrities and welcome them on their own merit as human beings. Dempsey provided a great example of this as he had demonstrated his racist leanings by refusing to fight any black challengers during his career. This stance had created a furor surrounding Jesse Owens in 1936 when on an Olympic team victory parade in New York City, Owens and Dempsey rode together in the front car of the parade. As they traveled through Harlem, sport historian William Baker noted, “blacks simply refused to applaud Owens at Dempsey’s side.”10 Kahanamoku refused to engage in these issues when greeting his guests. Kahanamoku constantly gained press for his meetings with these famous dignitaries, both in Hawai’i and on the mainland. His popularity and notoriety soared. As a result, his pleas for the poor were often lost in the glamour of the Hollywood crowd’s visits, giving rise to new charges leveled against him in his re-election campaign in 1936.

8 “Here At Last, Ex-Champion Arrested,” The Honolulu Advertiser, 13 December 1939, p. 3.
Kahanamoku fought legislative efforts to abolish his position from the *haole* dominated Governmental Reform Committee, a privately financed group, which made recommendations to the territory’s governing bodies. In the election of 1936, Kahanamoku also found himself once again challenged by other candidates. Out of the numerous opponents, the one true contender in the 1936 election turned out to be Herman V. Clark, himself a former athlete. Clark, Kahanamoku’s Republican challenger, had been a very well known basketball player in Hawai`i. Sport historian Joel Franks noted that Clark had actually traveled to the U.S. mainland on a team known as the Hawaiian All Stars in the early 1920s. Clark represented the same type of integrity and celebrity as Kahanamoku, only on a much lower scale in terms of notoriety.

The true challenge for Kahanamoku in this election came from within his own party. Ironically, the main opposition came not from his Democratic opponent William K. Ellis, who had qualifications as a former Hilo police officer, but from an appointed official in Hawai`i’s governmental structure. Unbeknownst to most people in Hawai`i at the time, Captain Edward E. Walker held the position of “High Sheriff” and “denounced Duke as not being a ‘good Democrat.’” The “High Sheriff” position was a purely ceremonial position appointed by the governor with no set job description or responsibilities.

Walker challenged Kahanamoku’s stands on New Deal legislation, the lynchpin of American Democratic politics in the 1930s. The High Sheriff also called into question

12 “Hiring The Help,” Newspaper article, DKC, Box 7 File 105 “Clippings 1930-1936,” HSA.
Kahanamoku’s integrity by speaking out on the scandals at the jail. Walker also questioned the fiscal responsibilities of Kahanamoku’s office charging that the books did not match actual expenditures. Kahanamoku recognized the threat that Walker posed and even went to the military to find out more about Walker’s past. Kahanamoku also inquired as to what the military’s position was regarding what Kahanamoku viewed as libelous attacks.\footnote{Report on E.E. Walker, DKC, Box 2, File 35 “Election 1936,” HSA.}

Kahanamoku’s investigations uncovered the fact that E.E. Walker had been a captain in the U.S. Army and had retired in Honolulu “under the provisions of Section 24B, National Defense Act, by the operation of a class ‘B’ Board.” While this seemed innocuous enough, further research showed that this section established “two classes of officers in the regular Army.” Class A included those “considered fit to be retained in the service,” while Class B, the category into which Walker fell, were “those officers who should not be retained either through moral, mental, physical, or professional reasons or disability.” In Walker’s case, Kahanamoku discovered that the reason he had retired as a Class B officer had to do with moral deficiency. Sometime around 1928 Walker had been “accused of embezzlement and misappropriation of funds of the Officers’ Club” at Fort Benning, Georgia. Walker faced a general court-martial. Due to “the confused condition of the Club’s records of receipts and disbursements, the court was unable to bring in a verdict of ‘Guilty,’” on the embezzlement and misappropriation charges. However, the court found him “guilty of neglect of duty” and sentenced him to “reduction in ‘files’ in his relative rank of Captains [sic] in the Regular Army.”
Ironically, Walker had been directly responsible for the club’s bookkeeping and accounts which were a mess and resulted in his retirement as a Class B officer, yet he chose failure of financial oversight as one of the issues on which he challenged Kahanamoku.14

Kahanamoku took the matter up with Colonel James A. Ulio, the Chief of Staff of the General Staff Corps at Fort Shaftner, in Hawai‘i, inquiring as to whether the Army could intervene in Walker’s accusations against his character. Ulio responded to Kahanamoku that the War Department position required that when an officer’s “activities consist of expressing his opinions to his friends, neighbors, and other citizens of the community” that the officer has the “same rights as any other citizen.” Ulio commented, “This right should not be denied him simply because he is an officer in the Army.” However, the Colonel counseled Kahanamoku that if Walker had defamed his character then “the civil laws and civil courts provide you ample remedy if such endeavors can be proven.” Since the Army had decided that “from all angles it appears clear that it would be unwise and improper” for them “to take any action in this case,” Kahanamoku had to decide how he would approach the blatant attacks.15

Amazingly, Kahanamoku kept his response out of the newspapers, and dealt with it by emphasizing his integrity and opening up the books of the jail and his office to all who wished to see them. He never brought Walker or his accusations into the public discussion, choosing instead to counter the negative attacks through assurance of his

14 Ibid.
15 Letter From Colonel James A. Ulio To Sheriff Duke Kahanamoku, 24 September 1936, DKC, Box 2 File 35 “Election 1936,” HSA.
honor. He asked voters to “give your vote to the man who has given his life to Hawaii.”\textsuperscript{16} In campaign speeches he reminded voters that “I have been representing Hawaii all over the world for the past 25 years. You know my reputation in sports. It has been clear and a credit to you all.” Referring to the scandals, Kahanamoku assured the public that “my office and the C-C [city-county] jail are conducted by a staff of men who have served you many years, why change? The books and records are open to the public at all times. We have nothing to hide.”\textsuperscript{17}

Kahanamoku also recognized the various cultures that made up his island home and appealed to the sense of injustice and unfairness that they had felt because of plantation labor systems, racial prejudice and, more recently, the Massie trial. As a result, Kahanamoku bought advertising space in all of the local ethnic newspapers asking for their votes to retain him as sheriff. The advertisements varied slightly from community to community, yet the overarching plea revolved around trust and identity. Kahanamoku’s advertisements ran in not only the two \textit{haole} dominated papers but also in Japanese language papers such as \textit{Nippu Jiji}, and \textit{Hawaii Hochi}, Chinese language papers such as \textit{New China News} and \textit{The Weekly Hawaii Shimpo}, and Hawaiian language papers such as \textit{KaWai Ola o oha} and \textit{The Makaainana}.\textsuperscript{18} The power of Kahanamoku’s popularity and his emergence as the defender of the poor and destitute vaulted Kahanamoku above the scandals and personal attacks. Kahanamoku won enough votes

\textsuperscript{17} “Notes for a Campaign Speech” found in \textit{Duke Kahanamoku 1936 Appointment Book}, DKC, Box 2 File 35 “Election 1936,” HSA.
\textsuperscript{18} “Campaign Advertisements,”DKC, Box 1.14, Bishop Museum, Honolulu, Hawai‘i, hereafter referred to as BMA.
in the primary election to declare him the winner outright, making a vote in the general election unnecessary. Kahanamoku had weathered the storms of 1935, learned that he needed to develop his own personal agenda based upon his traditional Hawaiian values and overcome nasty political and personal attacks upon his character.

His victory in the 1936 election lifted him above being merely a sport hero who held an office in government. It gave validity to his previous election and established the sense that the people of Hawai`i trusted him. One Honolulu paper surmised, “People don’t vote for Duke because he’s a Democrat - - if he is - - but because he’s Duke and they all know and like him. And they’ll probably continue to do so, no matter what ticket he runs on or who is his opponent.”

Kahanamoku never promised victory in his campaigns nor did he make any promises for things out of his control. With ha`aha`a (to be humble, modest, unpretentious, and unassuming) and `olu`olu (to be pleasant, nice, amiable or satisfied) Kahanamoku promised to do his best to serve his people. These two Hawaiian values are very similar in nature are highly respected in traditional Hawaiian culture. Hawaiian psychologist Dr. William Rezentes III observed that “Hawaiians who are ha`aha`a and `olu`olu are easily seen to be able to interconnect with others, their `ohana [family], the `āina [land or earth], and Ke Akua [God ], and be able to work toward lōkahi [unity, harmony].” While Hawaiians familiar with traditional culture would recognize these values, Kahanamoku explained the sense for those more familiar with American cultural

19 “There’ll Be Familiar Faces Again At Honolulu Hale,” Honolulu Advertiser, 5 October 1936, p. 1.
20 “Hiring The Help,” Newspaper article, DKC, Box 7 File 105 “Clippings 1930-1936,” HSA.
values and sports when he explained, “I am a man of few words . . . when I was representing Hawaii against the best swimmers in the world. I never predicted that I would win any particular race - - but I think I won my share.” Tying these thoughts into the elections Kahanamoku concluded, “It is the same with the present race for the sheriff's office.”

Kahanamoku demonstrated his unassuming nature by the fact that he spent as much money in thank you ads after the election as he did in seeking the office itself. Kahanamoku’s message once again remained simple. Beginning with “ALOHA TO ALL and THANKS TO ALL MY FRIENDS,” Kahanamoku expressed his understanding of the honor of election by the people. In 1936, he also sent a clear message utilizing his personal approach to the office by offering, “if at any time you are disturbed by things that seem to happen at the jail or office, please see me. I’m sure things can be straightened out to your satisfaction.”

This sense of familiarity and openness with his constituents led to increased popularity and trust in Sheriff Kahanamoku. Hawaiians of all ethnic, political, and social backgrounds felt a connection with Kahanamoku and his re-election in 1936 signaled a

22 “Duke Kahanamoku Asks Sheriff Re-election on Basis of Present Record,” Newspaper article, DKC, Box 7 File 105 “Clippings 1930-1936,” HSA.
24 “Duke Kahanamoku Thank You Advertisement,” New China News, 8 October 1936, p. 3; “Thank You Ad,” The Honolulu Advertiser, 5 October 1936, p. 5; “Thank You Ad,” Nippu Jiji, 6 October 1936, p. 3. There are subtle differences in wording in each of the ethnically based papers. For instance, in the Japanese and Chinese newspapers Kahanamoku used the word “disturbed” when mentioning the jail and in the white press the word was changed to “distracted.” Whether this is a typographical error is unclear and unknowable, but in studying the ads it appears that while the basic template exists, subtle modification were made in the ads for each paper. Another example is that the ad in the New China Press is the only one to add the words “seem to happen” when referring to events at the jail. In other papers it is “have happened.”
renewed pride in the people of Hawai`i regarding their sporting hero. A world-renowned athlete, actor, and symbol of Hawai`i, he was also their sheriff; approachable, sincere and still “The Duke.”

Kahanamoku’s election in 1936 opened the door for the swimmer turned sheriff to ascend into legendary status as the people of Hawai`i realized the importance of the man who belonged not only to them but also to the world. Three events demonstrate this move, a song, a hula dance and a statue. Famous Hawaiian compose and singer Sol Bright decided in 1936 to write a song dedicated to the Islands favorite son entitled simply enough Duke Kahanamoku. The lyrics of the song describe Kahanamoku as being awarded a golden medal from “old Father Neptune,” and being named the “king of swimmers of the sea, mermaid beauties keep him company.” Bright tied the legend of Kahanamoku to that of great legends of the past by writing “King Kamehameha conquer’d the island group, Duke Kahanamoku he simply conquer’d all the waters.” Bright’s song finishes with a chorus which claimed “Duke Kahanamoku the pride of old Hawai`i surfing on a nalu [wave] appearing like a manu [bird] you would think a moment he wore a feather garment.”

Bright’s imagery of a feather garment alluded to the type of robes that royalty wore in old Hawai`i and connected Kahanamoku to the great legends of the past.

At the same time that Bright’s song was released a hula dance depicting Kahanamoku’s reign as the “King of all Swimmers” had debuted in 1936. As Skip Littlefield, a reporter for the Santa Cruz Sentinel, explained “the story of Hawaiian

25 Sol Bright, Duke Kahanamoku, 1936, Lyrics found in Earl Maikahikinapāmaikalā Tenn, Personal Collection, Honolulu, Hawai`i.
history for ages was maintained through the medium of song and dance hulas.” The Honolulu Girls’ Glee Club had formed in Honolulu “for the purpose in mind of studying and maintaining for posterity this rich colorful past of Hawaii.” In 1936, on a tour of the mainland United States, the glee club performed a new entry into the history of the Hawaiian Islands, a group hula honoring “the mighty Duke rising from the surf of Waikiki to a position of world renown.”

The *Santa Cruz Sentinel* noted that “as the history of King Kamehameha and Queen Liliuokalani has been preserved for posterity through the medium of song and hula,” that due to the “Duke Kahanamoku Hula” performed by the Glee Club, “modern Hawaii has given the celebrated Duke Kahanamoku, greatest swimmer of all time . . . a place with the ‘Islands Immortals.’”

Another plan to immortalize Kahanamoku developed under the guise of a statue in his honor. Theodore (Pump) Searle, the president of the *Kamaaina Beachcombers Hui* had begun raising money and endorsements for the statue in 1937. The *Kamaaina Beachcombers Hui* had their origins in the *Hui Nalu* from which Kahanamoku “proved to the world that Hawaii could produce champion swimmers.” This *hui* comprised “a group of men who spent their boyhood with Duke P. Kahanamoku splashing about in the salty waves of Waikiki.” Dad Center, Lew Henderson, Pump Searle and many of the original *Hui Nalu* members had formed this club to congregate together and remember the past

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26 Skip Littlefield, “Hawaii Comes To The Beach at Santa Cruz,” *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, August 1936, DKC, Box 7 File 105 “Clippings 1930-1936,” HSA.
28 *Kamaaina* means native born and *Hui* means club in Hawaiian.
while building for the future. Searle enlisted the services of Dr. Robert Tait McKenzie from the University of Pennsylvania to sculpt the statue. McKenzie had met Kahanamoku in 1912 when the swimmer had trained for the Stockholm Olympic Games at Penn under the tutelage of legendary coach George Kistler. During Kahanamoku’s 1912 visit, McKenzie had marveled at the Hawaiian athlete and had taken photographs and measurements as well as made drawings and a model sculpture of the swimmer’s physique. His Diver bronze figure from 1912 was modeled after Kahanamoku. He intended to use these resources to construct the statue. Upon meeting Kahanamoku, McKenzie had declared him “the most perfect athletic specimen he had ever seen.”

McKenzie would have known. While at Penn he had done incredible amounts of research on the human physique. Originally trained as a surgeon McKenzie’s understanding of human anatomy led to an interest in the developing field of physical education in the late 1800s. A former star athlete himself at McGill University in Canada, McKenzie would become one of the foremost authorities and pioneers of athletics and Physical education. McKenzie delivered an official report on “The Place of Physical Education and Athletics in a University” to the International Congress of Physical Education and Sport in Amsterdam in August 1928 in which he advocated for the delivery of a “sound physical education” for every university student.

29 “Joint Circular sent to all Principals Of Honolulu Schools,” 11 May 1938, DKC, Box 4, File 73, HSA.
31 R. Tait McKenzie, “The Place of Physical Education and Athletics In a University,” Official Report delivered to The International Congress Of Physical Education and Sport, found in the R. Tait McKenzie Papers, UPT 50 Box 6 Folder 72. “Letters and Speeches,” University Of Pennsylvania Archives, Philadelphia, PA, hereafter referred to as UPA.
McKenzie found great notoriety not only as a leader in physical education and sport but in the art world. McKenzie began his sculptures with a series of masks showing athlete’s faces during athletic exertion. The four masks demonstrating the expressions of Violent Effort, Breathlessness, Fatigue and Exhaustion were widely hailed as a great triumph of artistic expression. McKenzie continued his sculptural success with other athletic statues, including The Sprinter, The Competitor and The Relay. McKenzie also traveled with Kahanamoku and the U.S. Olympic team to Stockholm for the Olympic Games and competed in the artistic competition at the games, displaying his relief, the Joy Of Effort. During this trip he took many photos of Kahanamoku which are preserved in McKenzie’s personal papers at the University of Pennsylvania Archives. After World War I numerous countries commissioned McKenzie to sculpt “some of the noblest of all war memorials.” McKenzie’s fascination with Kahanamoku continued. McKenzie often used Kahanamoku in composites of great athletic art works. One such example is a photo of a medal picturing a swimming race found in McKenzie’s photo album of works from 1935. The swimmer in the forefront bears a strong resemblance to Kahanamoku as pictured in many of McKenzie’s early sketches of the great swimmer.

McKenzie admired Kahanamoku not only for his athletic physique but also for the “proud carriage, the calm, peaceful Hawaiian dignity of a man who never wished to beat

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33 Andrew J. Kozar, R. Tait McKenzie: The Sculptor of Athletes (Knoxville: University Of Tennessee Press, 1975), 13. McKenzie attended all modern Olympic Games held in his lifetime except the 1904 St. Louis Games as either a participant or an Olympic Committee member.
36 “Photo Album of Works, 1935,” found in the R. Tait McKenzie Papers, UPT 50, , Box 19 Folder 6, UPA.
his competitors in the race by yards.” The *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* reported that the way Kahanamoku would be “content to win out by a scant foot, delighted the doctor.”

McKenzie quickly set to work on the project and finished a miniature model standing twelve inches tall that he sent to Hawaii. The statue depicted a lei-bedecked Kahanamoku in his U.S. Olympic uniform holding a victors wreath in one hand and a torch in another. The base stated simply, “Duke Paoa Kahanamoku, Olympic Champion, Inspiration to the Youth of Hawaii Nei.” Fred W. Leuhring, the chairman of the 1936 U.S. Olympic men’s swimming committee and also a member of the faculty at the University of Pennsylvania, wholeheartedly gave his endorsement of the statue project. Having seen McKenzie’s miniature model he wrote to Searle assuring him that this work “gives promise of being one of the finest things he has done.” Leuhring also suggested that the statue, upon completion, should be unveiled and dedicated in 1940, “at the time the American Olympic team visits the Hawaiian islands en route to the XIIth Olympic Games at Tokyo.”

The Kamaaina Beachcombers Hui had other plans. They agreed that the statue should be unveiled in Hawaii in 1940 when the American team arrived, but the premiere unveiling would be slated for much earlier and not in Hawai`i.

Lew G. Henderson, one of Kahanamoku’s oldest friends who had actually traveled with the young Hawaiian on his first journey to the mainland in 1912, personally brought McKenzie’s miniature to Honolulu for those involved in the drive to approve.

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38 “Kahanamoku Sculpture,” Photo found in the R. Tait McKenzie Papers, UPT 50, McK 37, University Of Pennsylvania Archives, Philadelphia, PA, Box 17 Folder 54.
Henderson, a Penn alumnus, used his ties with the University to arrange for Kahanamoku to train under George Kistler at Penn during that 1912 trip and was a close friend of both McKenzie and Leuhring. They knew that Henderson could be trusted with the sculpture.41

Upon his arrival in Hawaii with the miniature, the Kamaaina Beachcombers Hui announced they hoped to raise the needed $15,000 and have the statue finished in time to unveil it at the 1939 San Francisco World Fair.42 The seven-foot bronze statue would be placed on display at the Hawaiian building on Treasure Island, the site of the fair.43 One other hurdle needed to be cleared, however, for the statue to proceed; the committee sought the kōkua or “cordial indorsement,” and aid of Hawaiian elders. Hawaiian tradition held that the possibility existed for magic or wizardry to blight one’s life if an image was made of them while they were still alive. The Honolulu Advertiser reported that “Duke laughs at any thought of a kahuna being placed upon him by being statued in bronze while still alive.” The paper noted that “Duke shrugs” noting that “a statue of David [Duke Kahanamoku’s brother] Kahanamoku has been resting in the Bishop Museum for the past 15 years without any kahunaism blighting his life.” Regardless of the papers version of Kahanamoku’s reaction to a kahuna, used in the sense of a spell or wizardry being cast upon the individual, it remained important for the community and Kahanamoku to gain the endorsement of the Hawaiian elders.44

42 Ibid.
44 Ibid. The use of the word kahuna in the papers reporting is confusing as according to the Hawaiian dictionary the term kahunu refers to a magician, sorcerer, minister or priest. The newspaper is using the
In April, Seale finally seemed to overcome all obstacles as he secured the approval of the statue from Mrs. Elizabeth Lahilahi Webb, a kahu or honored attendant of Hawaiian traditional values, and one of “the revered Hawaiian women of the community.” In a letter written and signed by Mrs. Webb and published in the all the island newspapers alongside a photo showing her signing the document, she stated that she” heartily endorsed” the statue, because Kahanamoku “is an honest, outstanding Hawaiian boy, now a man, who made sacrifices over a number of years.” Mrs. Webb noted that she had “been thinking this over for a number of days and nights and have come to the conclusion that if this project was not a good and worthy one I would know it.” She could see no reason why not to “commemorate his achievements while he is living.” Pointing out the struggle that her people had faced Mrs. Webb added, “I feel very happy to know there will be one Hawaiian who will not be a forgotten man.”

In his biography on Kahanamoku, Joseph Brennan mentioned this attempt to immortalize Kahanamoku with a statue and reported that Kahanamoku himself dismissed the idea. Brennan emphasized that when Kahanamoku saw the model made by McKenzie that he told everyone, “I’m still alive, thank you. I don’t want a statue of me in public . . . maybe when I’m dead, eh?” It is unclear where Brennan came across this story, whether Kahanamoku retold it with a different slant at a later time, or if it had became a legend told amongst the old gang.

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term as a verb and not a noun as it is properly recognized. The verb as the newspaper incorrectly used the term would need to be paired with another word such as hana, meaning to work. Therefore hana kahuna would be the more proper term for magic or sorcery. Pukui and Elbert, *Hawaiian Dictionary*, 529.


Brennan’s version fits nicely with the image of a humble Kahanamoku that people have idealized. Although the Hawaiian legend displayed humility throughout his life, the evidence from the period does not back up the story of Kahanamoku’s shutting down the process. No newspaper articles mention Kahanamoku’s response. Indeed, Mrs. Webb’s letter stated “I have talked with Duke and know the boy appreciates what we are doing for him, after all he is a Hawaiian for Hawaii nei, so am I and so are you.”  From all sources at the time, it seemed that Kahanamoku welcomed the idea of a statue. He even helped lent his name to organizers in order to raise money.

The fundraising efforts included a two-day swimming meet and carnival named in honor of Kahanamoku at the Waikiki Natatorium. The Kamaaina Beachcombers Hui arranged the “Duke Kahanamoku outdoor swimming meet” and paid $2000 to bring swimmers from the San Francisco Olympic Club to compete. Part of the hope of the Kamaaina’s staging the meet was to expose young Hawaiian swimmers to better competition in order to “revive aquatic interest locally.”  The 1936 Berlin Olympic Games had been the first since before the 1912 Stockholm Games, when Kahanamoku put Hawai’i on the map, in which Hawaiians had failed to medal in swimming. The Honolulu Star-Bulletin commented that “the winged ‘O’ athletes offer just the kind of competition Hawaii needs to build its aquatic game to the peak enjoyed during the days of the Duke, Kealoha boys and Clarence L. (Buster) Crabbe.”  Kahanamoku, “acting as

47 “Plan For Duke’s Statue Indorsed,” p. 2.
a judge during the meet, entered and lost a special ‘fish reeling’ event,” helping to promote the meet.  

While organizers of the meet sought to rebuild the glory of Hawaiian swimming, another purpose of this meet was to raise money to remember past achievements, specifically the “Duke Statue.” When attendance at the first evening of the meet fell far short of expectations with only 2500 people attending, Kahanamoku decided to help in the only way he knew how, to jump in the pool. He announced that on the second day he would swim in a “special 50 yard freestyle exhibition to help close the two night outdoor aquatic carnival in a blaze of glory.” The news that Kahanamoku would swim made the front page of the newspaper that day, thereby increasing both visibility and attendance.

If Kahanamoku had opposed the building of a statue in his honor, it is hard to imagine that he would go to such extremes to help the Kamaaina’s to raise the money for that expressed purpose. It is also hard to imagine why Kahanamoku would have dishonored the work of an old friend, R. Tait McKenzie, whom he had posed for twenty-five years earlier in Philadelphia, when the renowned sculptor had honored him with a model.

It seems clear that as McKenzie and Searle pursued the statue idea that Kahanamoku gave his implicit approval. However, circumstances occurred which prevented the statue from coming to fruition. The first significant blow to the statue effort came in the sudden death of R. Tait McKenzie. On April 28, 1938, the great

50 Ibid.
sculptor died of a heart attack in Philadelphia. This came as a blow to the Kamaaina Beachcombers Hui as they had been arranging for McKenzie to come to Honolulu to produce the bronze sculpture. McKenzie mentioned these plans in a letter dated April 4, 1938, to Lady Aberdeen, the widow of the former Governor-General of Canada for whom McKenzie had served in 1895 as house physician in. “The Honolulu Commission will involve a trip to the islands so we are planning on making it next fall direct from the Mill so that we would not open the house[in Philadelphia] until Christmas,” McKenzie reported to Lady Aberdeen just weeks before his death.

Theodore Searle, upon learning of McKenzie’s death sent a letter of condolence to Mrs. McKenzie explaining the disappointment in not being able to meet Dr. McKenzie on their anticipated trip. Searle also expressed his feelings that “the Duke statue can be completed by some sculptor who has the same feelings toward the Duke as your husband did.”

That sculptor would turn out to be Joe Brown. Brown had modeled for McKenzie’s Invictus in 1934, and had become McKenzie’s protégée while working with

54 Letter From R. Tait McKenzie To Lady Aberdeen, 4 April 1938, McKenzie papers, Box 1, Folder 2, UPA; Also noted in Andrew J. Kozar, R. Tait McKenzie: The Sculptor of Athletes (Knoxville: University Of Tennessee Press, 1975), 37. Kozar stated “although he had begun the Duke Kahanamoku portrait statue (No. 128) in 1938, he had completed nothing more than a sketch prior to his fatal heart attack.” In a footnote, Kozar mentions that this deduction came from a visit he had made at Joe Brown’s studio at Princeton in 1969 where Brown was “working on a Duke Kahanamoku statue similar to the one begun over 30 years ago by McKenzie.” However, newspaper photos clearly prove that McKenzie had completed his miniature model and it had arrived in Honolulu with Lew Henderson in February of 1938, months before McKenzie’s heart attack. Kozar also places the miniature model in the White Collection at the University of Pennsylvania. Upon my inquiries there, I could not locate the physical model. It was not in the R. Tait McKenzie collection (other than in photos). To date no one I have spoken to at the University of Pennsylvania or in Honolulu has knowledge of where the miniature is located.
55 Letter From Theodore Searle to Mrs. R. McKenzie,” 26 May 1938, R. Tait McKenzie Papers, UPT 50, McK 37, , Box 2, Folder 19, “Ethel McKenzie, Correspondence K,” UPA.
the sculptor in the Penn Studio tower. A former professional boxer, Brown became a distinguished sculptor in his own right. As McKenzie biographer Andrew Kozar argued, “if any sculptor has carried on in the McKenzie tradition, it is Brown. The theme of his work overlaps, and in some ways surpasses, McKenzie’s.”

Having worked side by side with McKenzie for seven years, Brown would be the obvious choice to take over the work of the statue. The committee sought out Brown, who agreed to continue the work of his mentor. However, the timetable to finish the work by the World’s Fair did not seem possible due to Brown’s previous commitments at Princeton University, so delays occurred.

It is unclear exactly what transpired that led to the failure to get the statue finished. Fundraising efforts may have fallen short, even though the statue committee tried all sorts of ideas including raising money from schoolchildren in a penny drive. It is also possible that after the death of his dear friend, Dr. McKenzie, that Kahanamoku had misgivings about the statue being done while he still lived. Perhaps that explains the sentiment that seemed to grip Kahanamoku when he related the tale to Joseph Brennan. Regardless of the reasons, the statue was never finished. That did not seem to bother the swimming champion. Throughout the hoopla surrounding efforts to immortalize Kahanamoku in bronze, he remained grounded in his tasks as sheriff. Others helped to remind him that although larger than life he was still a mortal as well. On a trip to California, Oakland Chief of Police Bodie Wallman issued a warrant for

56 Kozar, R. Tait McKenzie, 35.
57 Ibid.
58 “Joint Circular sent to all Principals Of Honolulu Schools,” 11 May 1938, DKC, Box 4, File 73, HSA.
Kahanamoku’s arrest. The charges were “public nuisance.” The chief noted that “Duke had allegedly been causing kids to play hooky from school to keep dates with Duke at the local swimming holes.” Chief Wallman personally served the warrant to the astounded Kahanamoku as he slapped the handcuffs on the Hawaiian sheriff “threw him into a patrol wagon, headed in it full tilt for Alameda airport, sirens full blast.” The arrest was actually a good natured stunt “typical of the good fun Duke had everywhere he went in California.” The Oakland police chief rushed Kahanamoku to the airport where his Hawai‘i clipper was waiting on the runway for Kahanamoku before taking off for Honolulu. The “arrest” made news all over the mainland along with pictures of Kahanamoku in handcuffs.59 He may have been a legend in Honolulu but his fellow law enforcement officers around the country would not let that go to his head. They playfully reminded Kahanamoku that he was also one of them, both humbling him and accepting him into their fold.

Buoyed by the public’s adoration and the acceptance of other law enforcement officials, Kahanamoku decided to run for reelection in 1938 on the Democratic ticket for sheriff. It may have seemed like a fruitless task to run against someone who had recently been immortalized in song and hula, made national news wherever he went, and had groups attempting to raise a statue in his honor, but one brave soul attempted it.

Jesse Uluihi challenged Kahanamoku in the primary election in 1938. Unfortunately for Uluihi, the lack of experience which opponents used against Kahanamoku in the past elections had become a moot point due to his four years of

successfully running the office. In addition, the scandals of his first administration had been eradicated and Kahanamoku’s popularity skyrocketed to legendary status. During the campaign, Uluihi himself “admitted there was nothing wrong with the present sheriff except ‘the swimmer of international fame should be with the tourist bureau.’”\textsuperscript{60}

Kahanamoku had very little to say in his 1938 campaign speeches. Copies of his speeches kept in his papers at the Hawaii State Archives all basically communicated the same simple message:

“Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen. I am here asking your votes for re-election as your sheriff for the City and County of Honolulu. You were kind enough to elect me outright in the last primary. It was my proudest moment. Mahalo and Goodnight.”\textsuperscript{61}

Kahanamoku’s simple message and overpowering popularity proved too much for Uluihi to overcome as Kahanamoku tallied 28,168 votes to his opponents 7,017, once again winning the office outright in the primary. Kahanamoku had scaled great heights and established himself as a popular hero. While questions abounded at the start of his political career in 1934, by 1938 people seemed to have great confidence in their sheriff.

The statue committee had positioned Kahanamoku as an American hero as well as an island one in telling a story of Kahanamoku in their fund-raising circular to the principals of the schools on Oahu. In the story, they told of Kahanamoku’s first trip to the mainland when he swam in Pittsburgh at the AAU meet. The circular explained that after “Duke was introduced as a Hawaiian and the fastest swimmer in the world,” that Kahanamoku removed his bathrobe and “stood before a great audience, wrapped in an

\textsuperscript{60} “Four Candidates Win Outright,” \textit{Honolulu Star-Bulletin}, 3 October 1938, p. 8
\textsuperscript{61} “1938 Campaign Speeches,” DKC, Box 2 File 36, HSA.
American flag.” The circular argued that the act proved “to the world that Hawaii is an integral part of the United States, [and] the crowd gave him a thunderous applause.”

Unfortunately, the story had no corroboration from the local Pittsburgh papers, which barely reported Kahanamoku’s exploits. However, it became clear that in attempting to raise the money for the statue the committee desired to connect Kahanamoku with the rising sense of American patriotism that had begun to develop in the islands due to the rapid expansion of military bases and personnel.

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62 “Joint Circular sent to all Principals,” DKA, HSA, Box 4, file 73.
As the 1940s approached, the winds of change were blowing through the Hawaiian Islands. While the 1930s had brought Kahanamoku a new career in local politics, and a sense in Hawai`i that the accomplishments of Hawai`i’s favorite son would be immortalized, both Kahanamoku and his beloved islands stood in the path of events that would transform them forever. Some of the changes would be welcomed, some would bring despair, pain and challenge but the ultimate effect would be the need to evolve in order to survive.

The idyllic innocence of Hawai`i and its people had somehow survived the overthrow of the monarchy, the Massie trials and the Americanization processes. The territory evolved slowly through the 1930s. Events of the 1940s would bring explosions of change, forever altering Hawaiian culture and life. The bombing of Pearl Harbor on
December 7, 1941, brought the reality of World War II as well as new conceptions of Hawai`i’s position in the United States.¹

Not only did Duke Kahanamoku experience these changes in his surrounding world, his personal life also went through great changes. Political party affiliation’s, companionship, and love all contributed to major reconstruction of the Hawaiian hero’s life and value system. Kahanamoku never lost sight of the traditional Hawaiian values that he had grown up with, but those values became ever more diluted and Americanized. The radical changes of the 1940s in Hawai`i signified that the end had come to the old ways of life -- for both Kahanamoku and his homeland.

For Kahanamoku this process of change began gradually and innocuously. The first new challenge to Kahanamoku’s life came in the form of companionship. Friends on the mainland had decided that Kahanamoku needed someone to pal around with and decided to send him a puppy. Kahanamoku welcomed the new addition imagining that he could include the puppy into his lifestyle rather easily. The office of sheriff provided Kahanamoku with the perfect profession in terms of its demands. While he managed the office, the position still allowed him ample time to pursue two of his greatest passions, promoting Hawai`i at home and around the world and engaging in athletic activities. Kahanamoku continued to swim, play volleyball, sail, and surf. He worked in a minimum of a few hours every day to pursue these activities. It was common knowledge

among the residents of Honolulu that if you wanted to see Kahanamoku that he would be at Waikiki at 4:00 pm for his daily swim.\(^2\)

The idealistic Kahanamoku envisioned himself surfing through the waves at Waikiki with his new puppy perched contentedly on the end of his board. Reality soon set in, however, when Kahanamoku went to meet his new companion at the boat docks. Carrying a puppy sized lei and a jingle bell collar Kahanamoku whistled for his new puppy, “Tex,” sent to him from old friends Mr. and Mrs. Leslie Henry of Pasadena, California. The *Star-Bulletin* recalled that “like a young elephant from behind a deckhouse leaped Tex – a mighty pedigreed Great Dane!” The nine-month old puppy weighed in at 50 pounds and “eats 14 pounds of food daily: raw beef, milk, eggs.” Unfortunately, the “lei was too small, [and] the swank jingle bell collar wouldn’t even go half around Tex’s fat neck.” Kahanamoku learned that Great Danes do not really enjoy the water much but planned “to persevere with him, [and] make him a better surfboard rider than famed fox terrier Skip.”\(^3\)

Regardless of “Tex’s” feelings for the water, Kahanamoku continued not only to swim and surf regularly but also to assist in the rebuilding of Hawai‘i’s swimming prowess. With no members of the United States Olympic swimming team representing Hawai‘i in Berlin in 1936, many in Hawai‘i believed that steps needed to be taken to remedy this situation. Due to Kahanamoku’s unequaled fame and experience athletic leaders approached him to head up a delegation of Hawaiian swimmers to California. On


June 24 of 1938, Kahanamoku and his charges embarked upon the S.S. Matsonia and left Honolulu. The team consisted of five men and three women swimmers, Kahanamoku, manager William Cox and his wife Jeanette, who acted as the chaperone for the girls, and coach Soichi Sakamoto.  

Sakamoto had been having great success in developing young swimmers on the island of Maui, including the young Kiyoshi “Keo” Nakama. Sakamoto developed rigorous training practices including having athletes swim against the current in irrigation ditches in the sugar cane fields on Maui. He would eventually become the head coach at the University of Hawai‘i and an assistant coach for the U.S. Olympic team from 1952 to 1956. Traveling and working with these young swimmers gave Kahanamoku great joy. While he left most of the coaching to Sakamoto, Kahanamoku’s role as an advisor and mentor was invaluable.  

Due to Kahanamoku’s fame, meet promoters drew crowds who not only wanted to see the competition between the young swimmers but also paid to come and see “the world’s greatest swimmer” perform in exhibitions, as he did at Weymouth Pool in Fresno, California. On the tour Kahanamoku also promoted Hawai‘i and had occasion to meet with old friends. The trip took on the tone of a goodwill ambassador’s journey and press reports followed the team’s exploits.

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4 “List for Hawai‘i’s Swimming Team to California,” Duke Kahanamoku Collection, M-434, hereafter referred to as DKC, Box 4 File, 77, Swimming 1912-1939, Hawai‘i State Archives, Honolulu, hereafter referred to as HSA.
6 “Hawaiian Swimming Carnival,” 7 July 1938, DKC, Box 4 File, 77, Swimming 1912-1939, HSA.
7 Ibid.
Nakama, who competed extremely well in California, profited from Kahanamoku’s exposure as word of their tour spread and inquiries came about a similar visit to Australia. The Australians had hoped to bring both Kahanamoku and the young Nakama “down under” for a series of swimming competitions. The event would bring together the new and old swimming heroes from Hawai`i. In a letter to Paul Wolf at the University of Southern California (USC), who had written Kahanamoku attempting to set up a visit for the USC swim team to come to Hawai`i and compete in exhibitions, Kahanamoku lamented that he could not make the trip to Australia in January of 1939. Kahanamoku notified Wolf that he had sent a cable informing Mr. E.H. Sandell, the Honorable Secretary of the New South Wales Sports Club in Sydney, that although he could not make it Nakama could. Sandell, though disappointed that Kahanamoku would not be accompanying Nakama welcomed the visit of Kahanamoku’s protégé.8

In his letter of introduction for Nakama to Mr. Sandell Kahanamoku predicted that Kiyoshi Nakama would have a “very sensational swimming career.” Kahanamoku also noted that “he is a really swell kid and I certainly will appreciate any courtesies that may be extended to him.”9 After the tour, Sandell wrote back to Kahanamoku explaining that Nakama had “proved to be one of the best swimmers ever to visit Australia . . . and has proved to be a great little sportsman, well liked by everyone.” While praising Nakama, Sandell, who had met Kahanamoku during his 1914-15 visit to Australia, assured the great champion that a visit from Kahanamoku to “our shores again . . . would

8Letter From Duke Kahanamoku To Paul Wolf, 30 November 1938, DKC, Box 4 File, 77, Swimming 1912-1939, HSA.
be very welcome.” While Australians were excited about the new crop of Hawai’i’s swimmers they still had not forgotten the indelible impression that the great Olympic champion had made twenty-four years earlier.  

Nakama would prove Kahanamoku’s predictions true although he like his mentor Kahanamoku also lost opportunities to win Olympic medals due to a World War. Nakama, after sweeping all five freestyle events, also won a sixth title in the 330-yard individual medley at the Australian Nationals in 1939. Unfortunately for Nakama, his peak years in swimming coincided with the cancellation of the 1940 and 1944 Games due to World War II. Nakama matriculated to Ohio State University where he won both individual and team National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) championships in swimming as well as captaining the Buckeye baseball team for two years. The International Swimming Hall of Fame noted that Nakama did compete in the 1940 Pan-American Games, winning five events. From 1940-1945, he won an incredible twenty-seven national swimming titles ranging from 110 yards to 1500 meters. Kahanamoku had been a very perceptive judge of this youngster’s talent.  

Kahanamoku also had an incredible influence on another Hawaiian youngster, Bill Smith, who joined Nakama at Ohio State in the 1940s. Smith who would go on to win gold medals in the 400-meter freestyle and the 800-meter freestyle relay at the 1948

10 Letter From E.H. Sandwell To D. P. Kahanamoku, 26 January 1939, DKC, Box 4 File, 77, Swimming 1912-1939, HSA.
13 “Keo Nakama,” Member of the International Swimming Hall Of Fame, accessed online at: [http://www.ishof.org/75knakama.html](http://www.ishof.org/75knakama.html), on 12 December 2005.
London Olympic Games, remembered that growing up in the 1930s “Duke was our role model.”

Smith recalled that “when I won my gold medals . . . I was able to talk to Duke about my experience. I told him how he had been my role model as a boy, and how watching him at the Natatorium had given me the incentive to think that maybe someday I could be like him.”

Besides inspiring young swimmers, Kahanamoku also took a number of rowers under his wing through the Outrigger Canoe Club. Kahanamoku coached numerous teams in the art of canoe racing. His crews would go undefeated for seven straight seasons in the 1940s. Thad Eckstrand, one of about ten rowers known as “Duke’s boys,” was a member of those teams and remembered that “Duke could get in the water, hook one arm around the canoe and tow it, we had to swim like hell to catch him.” Observing that Kahanamoku was “just like a father to all of us,” Ekstrand commented later “you rarely find someone of his stature anymore who’s got the time energy and the know-how to take a bunch of kids and teach them the important things in life.”

The reason that Kahanamoku could influenced the lives of young swimmers and other athletes whom looked up to the local hero was that by 1938 he understood the responsibilities of his position as sheriff and had placed people in positions of authority that he trusted. As a result, Kahanamoku did not fear scandals which had plagued his early years in office and he could take advantage of the opportunities to work and serve as an advocate for Hawai`i and its young athletes. The hiring of deputies such as his

16 Ibid, 38, 55.
brother Louis, Leon Sterling and Lang Akana, who all believed as well in the power of 
sport to form and mold young people and who could be counted on to perform their 
duties honorably allowed the sheriff to spend time away from the office.\textsuperscript{17}

Trusting his deputies and valuing their positions also meant that he would need to 
stand up for them as well. As Kahanamoku continued to travel more and more his battles 
on behalf of the people of Honolulu and his employees never waned. When an attempt to 
wrest control from the sheriff’s office by the board of supervisors over the hiring of court 
bailiffs arose, Kahanamoku immediately fought it. The supervisors had given the power 
to hire two court bailiffs to the circuit court judges and had set the pay for those positions 
higher than what his deputies were earning.\textsuperscript{18}

Kahanamoku responded in a letter to the board that “under the law this power 
rests with the sheriff.” He also had done his homework and had discovered that the 
judges themselves were in disagreement as to the appropriateness of this action. In a 
gambit which demonstrated his growing understanding of the political realm, 
Kahanamoku went even further asking the board to increase the salaries of his deputies 
since they had already set the pay for the future bailiffs at a higher rate.\textsuperscript{19}

Despite Kahanamoku’s growing political acumen his job responsibilities and 
political battles were a minor part of the real changes ahead for the legendary swimmer. 
In 1940 Kahanamoku made two very significant alterations to his status. He would move 

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.
from the Democratic Party to the Republican Party. Even more significantly, he would leave the rolls of bachelorhood and marry at the age of forty-nine years old.

Kahanamoku had always been a very eligible bachelor and had many love interests, some of whom he believed had the potential for long-term relationships. However, until Nadine Alexander, also known by her stage name Norma Allen, arrived in Honolulu to teach dance in December of 1938, Kahanamoku had not taken the plunge into matrimony.

Nadine Alexander, like Kahanamoku, had traveled all around the world. Her family had been theatrical players and, as a result, she had been to Australia, Mexico, Canada, Europe and even Hawai`i while growing up. She followed her family into the entertainment industry making a career as a dancer after a brief failed marriage. Just out of high school, she had eloped with a graduate of the Harvard dental school who was also a musician and moved to London, England. After a few years of traveling around Europe and competing in ballroom dancing competitions, the couple broke up. Alexander needed to support herself. She decided to continue dancing and to learn to teach as well. By marrying she had given away her opportunities to go to college. As she recalled, “they wouldn’t take married girls at Wellesley.”

While working at Arthur Murray’s dance studio in New York City, Alexander had the opportunity to come to Hawai`i to teach dance at “the Boleyn-Anderson studio at the Royal Hawaiian hotel.” She primarily taught wealthy executives and their families.

including leading Honolulu businessman and supporter of Kahanamoku during his run for sheriff, Walter Dillingham.\textsuperscript{22} As a young girl in Boston, Alexander claimed to have seen a photograph of Kahanamoku in a movie magazine posing with Douglas Fairbanks Sr. and Mary Pickford. Impressed by the “handsome, athletic young Hawaiian” whom the couple had “discovered,” Alexander remembered his name year’s later. Upon arriving in Hawai’i she set out to meet Duke Kahanamoku.\textsuperscript{23}

In 1939, she finally got her wish. After being introduced to all of Kahanamoku’s brothers at different times, she finally told them, “look, I want to meet your brother Duke.” Sam Kahanamoku eventually made the introduction, although it happened when he and Alexander “bumped into Duke.” She related to her interviewer in an oral history for \textit{The Watamull Foundation} in 1986 that when she finally met Kahanamoku who was fifteen years older than she that “my heart went pitty-pat.” She remembered thinking, “oh he is so gorgeous. His stature, his physique, his color, his hair . . . I really was deeply, deeply in love.”\textsuperscript{24}

While Alexander found it to be “love at first sight,” Kahanamoku took the relationship more cautiously, at least according to the future Mrs. Kahanamoku. They dated for a year before getting married in a secret ceremony in Kona on the Big Island.\textsuperscript{25}

Kahanamoku almost lost Miss Alexander toward the end of 1939. While spending Christmas on the Big Island with friends she mulled over a marriage proposal

\textsuperscript{22} Nadine Kahanamoku, “Oral History,” 5.
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid, 10.
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid, 11.
from one of her “dancing pupils” who “was much younger than Duke and very wealthy.”

This young man “begged her to marry him and move to the mainland.” Since Kahanamoku had not yet proposed nor shown any sign of doing so, the conflicted Alexander, who loved Kahanamoku and Hawai‘i but did not know where her future lay with the most eligible bachelor in the islands, “called Duke to wish him a merry Christmas.” During the conversation she also told Kahanamoku about the proposal and he simply told her, “Baby, come home.”

She did and on August 2, 1940, the couple slipped out of Honolulu on an inter-island flight and were married. Kahanamoku wanted the ceremony to be a secret because everyone in Hawai‘i would expect to an invitation to the wedding of “their Duke.” Anyone who had encountered this man had felt an immediate acceptance and attachment. Famous surfer and surf board innovator, Tom Blake, felt it so strongly that he eventually moved to Hawai‘i. Blake recounted, “I was so impressed when I found myself near this champion that I intercepted him in the theatre lobby and asked to shake his hand.” This incidental meeting occurred after a film showing of Olympic highlights at a theater in Detroit, Michigan, in 1920. Blake remembered that Kahanamoku replied “‘sure!’ Smiling and eager to please as always. He held out his big soft paw of a hand, and gave me a firm hearty handshake.” Blake noted that “it made a lasting impression. I felt that somehow he had included an invitation to me to come over to his own Hawaiian islands.”

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26 Ibid.
If the impression that Kahanamoku had on a young stranger in Detroit, Michigan, had such an impact, it is easy to imagine the intimacy that those in Hawai‘i felt toward their hero and sheriff with whom they regularly interacted. Rather than deal with the logistical nightmare of such a large wedding and the inevitable heartbreak of those who would be uninvited, Kahanamoku believed it best to keep his wedding a secret. Unfortunately, the one person whom he and Alexander confided in, his sister Bernice, was so thrilled that she could not contain herself. She told a friend at a local radio station the news. The story broke that the couple had been married as they were on their way to the Moku‘ika‘u Church in the car.\(^{28}\) A small intimate ceremony ensued with the Reverend Stephen Desha presiding. Nadine Alexander Kahanamoku reminisced that “our attendants were Francis I‘i Brown, Duke’s best friend, and Francis’s lady companion, Winona Love, a fine hula dancer and movie star, and Bernice Kahanamoku.”\(^{29}\) Also in attendance were Kahanamoku’s brother Sam, Bernice’s fiancée Gilbert Lee, and Doris Duke, who had come with Sam.\(^{30}\)

Whereas the couple shared their love of travel, dancing and the outdoors, the newlywed Kahanamokus honeymoon underscored the differences between the couple. They stayed at Francis Brown’s vacation home on the waterfront in Keawaiki. Nadine recalled it was “a charming place. Isolated. No Telephone. They had one of those generators as there was no electricity, which was lovely for Duke, but it wasn’t my cup of

\(^{29}\) Ibid.
tea.”31 Duke thoroughly enjoyed his honeymoon as “every morning, before the sun would come up, Francis would throw stones on the roof to wake Duke.” Nadine reflected, “he’d jump up, have a cup of coffee, and the two of them would go out fishing. All day, every day. You’d think they were the honeymooners!”32

As for Nadine, her honeymoon ended up being spent with Winona Love and a bunch of “chickens scurrying around everywhere,” which she remembered did mean “fresh eggs for breakfast.” The drawback to the fresh eggs was “that someone had to climb a coconut palm to get them. The chickens roosted way up in the trees, to stop the mongooses from stealing the eggs!”33 Nadine never elaborated as to whether or not she climbed the tree to get the eggs but it probably is safe to assume that this experience was not the idyllic honeymoon that someone growing up in an elite prep school in the Eastern United States would have imagined when envisioning a honeymoon in Hawai’i. But this was Duke’s reality, his past and his passion. While they both would laugh at the accommodations of “two army cots that didn’t even fit together” for a bed, it was probably far different than the new bride imagined her romantic getaway would be.

Nadine Kahanamoku had grown up with money and had always enjoyed the finer things in life. The best schools, hotels, travel accommodation and friends such as Gertrude Lawrence, The Duke and Duchess of Sutherland, Debbie Reynolds, and Ginger Rogers were integral pieces of her background.34 While Duke also had numerous celebrity friends from his swimming and acting days, his past remained rooted in growing

32 Hall and Ambrose, Memories of Duke, 112-113.
33 Ibid. 110.
up on the beach at Waikiki before it had become a tourist mecca. His pleasures were simpler than his wife’s in many ways, and roughing it without electricity or superior accommodations was not a sacrifice, but fun.

Perhaps due to their age and maturity levels these differences never became major issues with the Kahanamokus. In fact, they seemed to round out the personality of one another. Nadine became much more grounded in the everyday joys of life as she experienced them with Duke. The sheriff also benefited from his new wife’s sense of appropriateness, culture, and civilization. They brought a unique balance to one another that helped both to adjust and adapt to the changing worlds in which they lived. Nadine would be instrumental in helping her husband adjust smoothly to the rapid changes in Hawaiian culture and society while also helping him appreciate the past he had come from. She would be instrumental in Duke’s understanding of the capitalist culture of the mainland U.S. which would engulf the islands in the upcoming decades. She would serve as a key advisor in helping the vaunted champion to make business decisions.

Duke, meanwhile, helped Nadine to ease into a Hawaiian culture that was often hostile to those of an elite *haole* upbringing. She developed the same love for the common people and the simple pleasures of life in Hawai‘i that her husband possessed. In essence, their love had that fulfilling sense which made both of them richer, wiser and more complete.

For Duke Kahanamoku marriage changed him and his perspectives on life. He saw the political and business culture of Honolulu with fresh lenses. Nadine’s influence no doubt had an impact on another major change that Kahanamoku made in 1940. Kahanamoku decided to leave the Democratic Party and align himself with the Republicans. At that time in Hawaiian political history the Democratic Party spoke
primarily for the ethnic voices of Hawai‘i. The poor, the commoners, and the
disenfranchised were represented primarily through the Democrats. The Republicans on
the other hand represented more of the social elites of Hawai‘i and the *haole* business
leaders.\(^{35}\)

It is unclear why Kahanamoku chose to switch parties. He gave many differing
versions of his rationale. In one, he claimed that “I just returned to my old politics.” He
explained that when he was given the job of superintendent at City Hall “the Democrats
were running things down there then and I was a Republican.” Kahanamoku claimed that
“I sort of became a Democrat for a while.”\(^{36}\)

Since the Democrats also terminated his position at City Hall it is hard to
understand why Kahanamoku would have allied himself with the faction which ousted
him when he decided to run for sheriff the very next year - - unless he had some
allegiance to the party platform.\(^{37}\) Kahanamoku also belonged to a political group called
the Jefferson Club, dedicated to upholding the democratic principles of Democratic
founder and former U.S. President Thomas Jefferson. In 1938, the Jefferson Club’s
nominating committee submitted Kahanamoku’s name for the Board of Directors thus
solidifying his alignment with the Democratic Party.\(^{38}\)

\(^{35}\) Michael Haas, *Institutional Racism: The Case of Hawai‘i* (Westport, CT.: Praeger, 1992), 96. For more
information on political battles in Hawai‘i during this time period see, Tom Coffman, *The Island Edge of
America: A Political History of Hawai‘i* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2003; Lawrence H. Fuchs,
23 August 1968, sec. A. p. 3.
\(^{38}\) “The Jefferson Club,” 11 May 1938, DKC, Box 2 File 43, Politics, 1938-1958, HSA.
Kahanamoku gave another reason for the switch during the 1940 election campaign. He claimed that “I am a Republican because it represents all that is good in government. It is the party that has done the most for the people of Hawai`i all down through the years.” This campaign speech delivered on radio station KGO stands out as the most unusual of any Kahanamoku ever gave. It was unique in three major respects. The first abnormality came in its length. Whereas the normal Kahanamoku speech before and after consisted of four or five brief lines delivered both in Hawaiian and English and lasted only about to a minute, this speech contained nearly three pages of fully developed arguments. The second difference in this speech stood out for those arguments. Instead of ignoring attacks as he had in the past Kahanamoku this time challenged his opponents and delivered an answer to the questions regarding his switching parties. He defended the Republican Party and announced that “Republican candidates are bound by only two things. The Republican platform, which they all swear to uphold, and their own consciences.” 39

The third major difference in this speech from other Kahanamoku addresses is the fact that he addressed political issues directly. Kahanamoku quoted one plank of the platform which he avowed, “I am especially interested in.” That plank declared that “an adequate number of public beaches and public parks should be made available for the citizens of this territory on all the islands of the group.” Kahanamoku, in particular, promoted “the development of Waikiki Beach for public use, the start toward accomplishment of which was made at Kuhio Park, should be continued until the Waikiki

Beach area is made available for swimmers and made attractive to citizens and to tourists.” Kahanamoku affirmed that “the people of Hawai`i – all of them – should be able to enjoy the natural beauties of our islands.” Continuing his battle for the poor people of Hawai`i from a new Republican base he surmised that “some people can afford nice beach homes—others cannot,” but assured listeners that the Republican Party will be the one to enact legislation “to improve the public beaches, build better parks and playgrounds.”

Kahanamoku noted that the work already done in improving public beaches had been accomplished through the work of past Republican leaders. Aligning himself with the great Republican leaders of the Territory’s past. Kahanamoku remarked, “There have been many great men—of many different races—in the Republican Party, but because I am a Hawaiian, I often think of it as the party of Prince Kuhio.” Kahanamoku exclaimed, “There was a man for you!! He was a great leader, and because he wanted the very best for his people he chose the Republican Party as his Party.” In this speech Kahanamoku connected himself with Prince Jonah Kuhio Kalanianaole, heir to the royal line of Liliuokalani and the first representative of the Territory in the U.S. Congress.40 Prince Kuhio had been the driving force between the establishment of the Hawaiian Rehabilitation Act which led to the founding of Hawaiian Homestead lands in the 1920s thereby enabling the indigenous people of Hawai`i to hold onto ownership of some of their lands.41

40 Ibid.
It is interesting that in 1940 Kahanamoku allied himself with the memory of Prince Kuhio who early on had understood that in order to survive the Hawaiian people must embrace change. As historian William Beers argued, Kuhio “preached the doctrine of democracy and self government,” urging “all Hawaiians to take pride in their new American citizenship, telling them that the path of development meant adjustment to changing conditions.” Kuhio believed that these adjustments were possible for the Hawaiian if “he were able to hold up his head with pride and point to past achievements with a national hero as a symbol.” For Kuhio that national symbol was Kamehameha. In 1940 Kahanamoku took a page from Kuhio’s book and held the prince up as a source of past achievement and national pride in justifying his move to the Republican ranks.

While Kahanamoku justified his move from the Democratic ranks to the Republican Party through his campaign speeches, citing Prince Kuhio as an inspiration, the true rationale for the switch in affiliation came from his wife’s political orientation. Kahanamoku’s decision came a month after his new marriage. Upon their return to O’ahu the new Mrs. Kahanamoku told reporters, “Duke’s going over to the Republicans is my fault. I’m strong on the GOP. You can blame me.” Most likely, Nadine held the greatest influence and Kahanamoku could look at the situation and develop rationalizations for the move. The stand on public beaches that the Republicans held also would have made the jump much easier for the great swimmer who utilized the beach and parks every day. In respect to long-term changes, it probably had an effect upon the

social contacts that the couple would embrace and potentially led to more marital bliss. However, even though both Nadine and Duke were now committed Republicans this did not lead to agreement on all issues.

Statehood for the territory would be one of the positions upon which they disagreed. Duke embraced the Republican platform’s stance calling for statehood for Hawai‘i. Nadine had a very different perspective and opposed statehood because as she recalled later, “I had a feeling it was going to be overcrowded like it is now. So many cars; bumper to bumper driving. It’s so unpleasant.” Her premonitions of the future of Hawai‘i as a state made her fearful of losing the Hawai‘i of the late 1930s when she believed “it was perfect. Like heaven on earth.” His change in party affiliation and his stance on statehood brought Kahanamoku closer to an understanding of the need to accept an American version of progress. A position which entailed closer ties with the federal government in Washington D.C.

The move ruffled the feathers of the Democratic Party leaders and demonstrated to Kahanamoku how fragile loyalty and politics were in political life. Attacks upon Kahanamoku’s character began almost immediately after he announced his switch. The same Democrats who had championed Kahanamoku’s integrity for the past three elections now decried the sheriff, “attempting to ruin his reputation” and leading “voters to believe that because he has changed his affiliations, he has done something

\[^{44}\] Duke Kahanamoku, “Speech,” 24 September 1940, DKC, Box 2, File 39, HSA.
The ultimate outcome of Kahanamoku’s move had very little political impact, but it did open a window of vulnerability in the 1940 election — a window which Kahanamoku eventually closed tightly. In the primary election Kahanamoku totaled 20,091 votes, over 8,000 fewer than he accumulated in the 1938 election. However, it was more than enough to defeat his Democratic challenger Wilfred P. Richardson who won a respectable 12,143 votes in a losing effort. By “obtaining a majority of the total vote cast for the office” in the primary, according to Hawaiian election rules, Kahanamoku once again gained re-election in the primary.

Demonstrating that he could cross over in party affiliation and still win re-election at the primary election proved to many that Kahanamoku had risen to a level above party politics. People realized that in all probability Kahanamoku would hold the office of sheriff until he decided to relinquish it. Kahanamoku’s character had withstood attacks from both Democrats and Republicans in four elections. As pastor Steven P. Thulon wrote, “conflict builds character, crisis defines it.” These political conflicts had built character in Kahanamoku.

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48 Steven V. Thulon, found online at: http://www.quote-fox.com/QuoteFox/QuoteFox_SearchResults.php?indexpage=temp/index_source_eb984f1f34c3b3f1aa10c8f158860a05_Steven-V-Thulon_1.html, on December 12, 2005. This quote is one of the most frequently used dealing with conflict and character. I have yet to discover who Steven V. Thulon is however. The closest I have come to is that he was a former assistant pastor of the Roseville Seventh Day Adventist Church and editor of the Weimar Institute Bulletin at Weimar College.
The greatest change for both Kahanamoku and Hawaii still waited in the wings. World War II would soon change the Islands irrevocably. The crisis of war would define new elements in Kahanamoku’s character.

December 7, 1941, as President Franklin Delano Roosevelt proclaimed, would be “a date which will live in infamy.”\(^49\) That day would forever change Hawai‘i, its people and Duke Kahanamoku. As the Japanese bombing raid on Pearl Harbor commenced, Kahanamoku and his wife Nadine were in Waikiki at the Outrigger Canoe Club. The day before, the Kahanamokus had sailed from Pearl City, where the Pearl Harbor Yacht Club was located, to Waikiki. Kahanamoku, a life member of the yacht club since 1935, participated in yachting races of all types. This weekend was no different.\(^50\) The schedule of the race had planned to have the yachtsman sail back to Pearl City on December 7. As they were having breakfast in anticipation of the race, Hawai‘i Calls radio personality Webley Edwards broke in on the radio with the announcement that the Japanese were bombing Pearl Harbor. According to Nadine Kahanamoku, her husband went to the phone and made a call. When he came back, he simply told her “come on baby, it’s the real thing.”\(^51\)

The couple went directly to City Hall still unsure of the magnitude of the attack. Honolulu had experienced many practice alerts and nothing seemed any different from those until they heard the “boom, boom” of the guns at Hickam Air Force Base. Duke


Kahanamoku’s responsibilities as sheriff included being in charge of civilian defense in an emergency and so he and Nadine returned to their house where he picked up his gun. Kahanamoku then proceeded to Waikiki where he enlisted citizens and tourists to assist in establishing beachhead defenses in case of an invasion.\textsuperscript{52}

One of the groups of tourists in the hotels on Waikiki that day was a visiting football team from Willamette University in Salem, Oregon. The Bearcats had traveled to Hawai‘i to play against the University of Hawai‘i football team on the day before the attacks. After losing 30-6 to the home team, they were scheduled to ship out that day but because of the attacks, their ship had been canceled. As they were having breakfast that morning at the Moana Hotel an army jeep pulled up, asked them if they were mobilized, and handed them “rifles with bayonets.” Because martial law had been imposed in Honolulu, every able-bodied person was being called upon to help guard the island from what was believed to be an imminent Japanese landing and invasion. Stringing barbed wire along Waikiki Beach the players waited for what they feared would be hand-to-hand combat. Bearcat player Marvin Goodman recalled “that first night on guard was the longest of my life, I could hear what I thought was the enemy in the rustle of the palm trees.” Stranded in a war zone they had not signed up for, the players served amongst Kahanamoku’s civilian defense for two more weeks guarding “Army equipment stored at Punahou High School.” The players made an arrangement to earn “their way home on the \textit{SS Calvin Coolidge}, a liner converted to a hospital ship, by helping out with 125 injured sailors.” The ship finally made it back to San Francisco on Christmas Day after a

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid.
harrowing journey dodging Japanese submarines. Most of the players, “transformed from rah-rah college kids to sober men,” enlisted in the military to serve their country.\(^{53}\)

In a similar way that the attacks on Pearl Harbor changed these college football players, the effects on Hawai`i and on Kahanamoku were just as extreme. The relationship between the mainland United States and Hawai`i took on a new significance. As the Senate Interior and Insular Affairs Commission noted “Pearl Harbor, for all its tragedy, served one grimly useful purpose. It made the United States aware that its western front was not the coast of California, but a group of islands some 2,000 miles southwestward in the Pacific.”\(^{54}\) With the attack on Hawai`i, Americans who never considered the Islands part of the United States proper suddenly decried the attack on “our island outpost.”\(^{55}\) Americans rushed to find out more information on these islands that they had ignored for many years. Rand-McNally reported three-day sales of maps that exceeded their entire sales for September in their New York City store.\(^{56}\) Instead of viewing Hawai`i as a vacation paradise for the rich and elite, Americans now understood that its true role existed as the first line of defense from impending Pacific invasions. In the *New York Times* Anne O’Hare McCormick offered the visual imagery of the Hawaiian Islands as “the stepping-stones between continents.”\(^{57}\)


The fear of the expanded war capabilities of aircraft carriers and the technological
development of planes able to fly farther than ever before accelerated after the attack on
Pearl Harbor and created a sense of unease throughout the mainland. In the Pacific
Northwest, residents of Portland, Oregon, took seriously the threat of invasion and
participated in blackouts and reduction in radio transmissions after the attack. In Seattle,
Washington, during blackouts “people kicked in store windows which failed to darken.”

No Americans faced tougher realities of wartime life than those in Hawai`i. Having already experienced an attack it no longer loomed as a possibility, it existed as a lived reality. Reaction in Hawai`i by government officials was swift and decisive. At midday on December 7, 1941, General Walter Short issued a proclamation of martial law. General Short, assuming the role of Military Governor of the Territory, avowed that “ordinances would be published to control the showing of lights, meetings, censorship, possession of firearms, ammunition, and explosives, ‘and other subjects.’” Hawaiian historian Gavan Daws observed that “nothing like this had been known on American soil since the Civil War, and then only in rebellious or captured southern states.”

Nadine Kahanamoku remembered the blackout restriction and commented, “it was awful, just terrible. Blackout happened the minute the sun went down.” “Duke,” she noted, “being the sheriff at the time, had special privileges. He could ride out at night when nobody else could unless they were in the military.” The blackouts were rigidly

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enforced by the military. Historian DeSoto Brown concluded that “Islanders found out that it was one thing to turn their lights out for 20 minutes or so in a test, and quite another to try to live a normal life in utter darkness with a sentry outside who was ready to shoot out any lights he saw.” Brown demonstrated that “for even minor infractions of the blackout, people got hauled immediately to military court and sentenced.” Convictions resulted in “fines of hundreds of dollars and suspended jail sentences for such things as the faint glow of gas stove burners or a lit cigarette.”

Even car headlights had to be painted black remembered Marjorie Midkiff, a Waikiki resident during the war. After her wedding she and her husband were borrowing her mothers car, a Buick convertible that “wasn’t equipped for blackout.” Her mother kept imploring her, “Now hurry up, hurry up, and go,” so that the car carrying the newlyweds would not receive a violation.

The military government put a halt to all tourist travel and commandeered the hotels on Waikiki Beach for rest and relaxation quarters for its soldiers. Waikiki Beach had barbed wire fencing put up in the sand. Over one million soldiers passed through Hawai’i on their way to the Pacific theater to fight the Japanese. Tent cities were established overnight to house all of the troops and over fifty army bases were established.

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63 Brown, *Hawaii Goes To War*, 140-141.
on O‘ahu alone.\textsuperscript{64} Censorship of all correspondence became the norm.\textsuperscript{65} Getting basic services required a “priority from the military governor!”\textsuperscript{66}

Japanese residents suffered possibly more than others did however. Assumptions abounded that the attack at Pearl Harbor was impossible without the help of Japanese spies in Hawai‘i.\textsuperscript{67} Officials arrested and interned 1441 Japanese residents of Hawai‘i, as well as some Italian and Germans. Desoto Brown established that “many of these were sent to the mainland for their imprisonment.” Discussions surrounding the potential to arrest and intern all island Japanese residents met with the harsh realities of logistics such as the lack of transport to send 150,000 people to the mainland and the hardship of losing the production of a major part of the labor force. Officials believed that with the imposition of martial law the Japanese could be controlled through the military government.\textsuperscript{68}

An integral part of the plan for control resulted in the internment of many Japanese leaders of the community at the Sand Island facility. Hawaiian historian Blane Wagatsuma described how these doctors, lawyers religious leaders and politicians were arrested and forced to live in sub standard tents under harsh conditions for over a year. In February, 1943, they were all dispersed either to Mainland internment camps or to another facility on Hawai‘i at Camp Honouliuli. The belief was that by interning the

\begin{footnotes}
\item[64] Brown, \textit{Hawaii Goes To War}, 122-123.
\item[67] Daws, \textit{Shoal Of Time}, 346.
\item[68] Brown, \textit{Hawaii Goes To War}, 113.
\end{footnotes}
prominent leaders in Hawai`i the mass internment of all Japanese people could be averted.\textsuperscript{69}

Life in Hawai`i was not much better for the Japanese citizens who were not arrested. Japanese residents met great prejudice, especially from the great influx of American soldiers. Helen Kusonoki remembered that her father, who founded the landmark Unique Lunch Room, a popular Hawaiian food restaurant in Waikiki, endured quite a bit of abuse by customers. Seeing that she and her family were Japanese some customers “got pretty mad, so they call us names. It wasn’t too pleasant.” She noted that soldiers would come in to “call us names . . . or they would have a cold drink or something (and) they refuse to pay.” The family would have to call the Military police to come take care of the soldier adding more tension to the situation.\textsuperscript{70}

Fortunately, Mrs. Kusonoki related that not all of the soldiers were mean and that many of the locals were very understanding of the plight the family found themselves in after the attack on Pearl Harbor. One of those locals who frequented the restaurant was Duke Kahanamoku. She recalled that “Duke Kahanamoku and his family, most of his brothers, used to come, too, because (they liked their) Hawaiian food, so they (would) come. They were all nice, too.”\textsuperscript{71}

Kahanamoku had the ability to be a peacemaker in Hawai`i during this turbulent time. He had earned the respect and trust of people from all races in the territory. The sheriff’s position, like all other elected political positions, fell under the authority of the

\textsuperscript{69} Wagatsuma, “Paradise Lost,” 102-103.
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid, 1392.
new military government so the military command now directed Kahanamoku’s responsibilities. Since civilian courts had been abolished under military rule Kahanamoku’s responsibilities included working in tandem with military police and tribunals. This change in procedure would land the famous sheriff in a case before the Supreme Court of the United States regarding the writ of habeas corpus. Lloyd C. Duncan, a civilian shipfitter, worked in the Honolulu shipyard and became embroiled in a dispute with two military sentries in the parking area outside of his work on February 24, 1942. The fight led to his arrest on charges that he violated an order prohibiting “assault on military or naval personnel with intent to resist or hinder them in the discharge of their duty.” Duncan went before a military tribunal which convicted and sentenced him to six months imprisonment.72

These military tribunals replaced civilian courts during martial law and resulted in guilty verdicts in more than ninety-nine per cent of all cases. Legal historians Harry and Jane Scheiber noted that defendants were allowed the right to counsel in the provost courts but judges “frequently told defendants it was neither desirable nor necessary to have a lawyer.” Common wisdom among defendants became that “to appear with counsel virtually guaranteed a harsher sentence than to appear without one and contritely accept the court’s verdict.”73

Duncan filed a writ of habeas corpus in March 1944, in the U.S. District court for the Territory of Hawai`i. District Judge Delbert E. Metzger ruled in favor of Duncan,

determining that “the civilian courts had been open and ‘able to function but for the military orders closing them, and that consequently there was no military necessity for the trial of petitioners by military tribunals rather than regular courts.”\textsuperscript{74}

Duncan’s case would be reversed by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, sending it in 1946 to the U.S. Supreme Court. The high court heard Duncan’s case and ruled 6-2 that Judge Metzger had ruled correctly and that the “military tribunals decision could not stand.” Justice Black wrote the main decision. Black noted “that civilians in Hawai`i are entitled to the Constitutional guarantee of a fair trial to the same extent as those who live in any other part of our country.”\textsuperscript{75} Arguing that the founding fathers of the U.S. established a governmental system which is “clearly the antithesis of total military rule Justice Black concluded by saying that “they were opposed to governments that placed the hands of one man the power to make, interpret and enforce the laws.”\textsuperscript{76}

Law Professor Jon M. Van Dyke claimed that this case “stands as an important beacon of liberty to reassert the values of individual freedom and civilian government which were so blatantly subverted during the period of martial law imposed upon Hawaii in World War II.”\textsuperscript{77} Although Duke Kahanamoku was the named defendant in this landmark case, what exactly was the great swimmer’s role in the dispute?

\textsuperscript{75} Duncan v. Kahanamoku, 327 U.S. 304 (1946), 318.
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid, 322.
\textsuperscript{77} Van Dyke, “Duncan v. Kahanamoku,” 17.
Sheriff Kahanamoku’s office worked with the military police and was involved in the arrest in this case since it fell within their jurisdiction. Procedure during martial law dictated that the sheriff’s office would then turn the defendant over to the military tribunal for trial and sentencing as they did. In actuality, Kahanamoku and his men did nothing wrong in terms of their instructions. However, when Lloyd Duncan went to file a writ of habeas corpus he faced a couple of challenges. The first was the inability for individuals to sue the government due to governmental immunity or the idea from English common law that the King, or government, can do no wrong. This is the primary line of defense in any case involving governmental institutions. Duncan would have to focus his grievance on an individual. U.S. military officers would have been the first choice but bringing litigation against these representatives would create difficult procedural issues. The transfer off the island of persons who brought the proceedings had frustrated two cases already underway to challenge the military rules. It would be easy for military officers or personnel to transfer off the island and once again halt the appeal.78

Duncan needed to name an individual who had standing in the Territory and who held more permanence. Duke Kahanamoku, working under the military government as sheriff, happened to be the most famous resident of Hawaiʻi and had connections to the case. He became the logical choice to name as the sole defendant in the case. The case really had nothing to do with Kahanamoku or his actions, however, he became the representative not only for Hawaiʻi but for the United States military government enacted

78 Scheiber and Scheiber, “Constitutional Liberty,” 355-357.
under martial law. U.S. government attorneys handled Kahanamoku’s representation in the proceedings. It is unclear how Kahanamoku actually felt regarding the military tribunals. In his papers, there is no mention regarding this trial or any of the issues involved.\footnote{An examination of the collections of Kahanamoku’s personal papers at both the Bishop Museum and the Hawai‘i State Archives in Honolulu produced no mention of the case. However, it is a prominent case in United States Constitutional law and comes up regularly in any search of Kahanamoku’s name.} This case became a side battle for Kahanamoku during the war and one more way for him to represent his adopted country.

The other battles raged around Kahanamoku as World War II enveloped the Hawaiian community. The influx of haole soldiers and contractors overwhelmed the island infrastructure and led to massive changes in economic development. The tourist industry that had catered to wealthy Americans with money to spend now had to transform itself to meet the needs of military personnel who were in the market for trinkets and cheap souvenirs from Hawai‘i. Most of these newcomers were “single men between the ages of twenty and thirty-five.”\footnote{Dr. Clarence Lewis Hodge, “Tourists In Denim,” in \textit{Hawai‘i Chronicles III: World War Two in Hawai‘i From The Pages Of Paradise Of The Pacific}, ed. Bob Dye, (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2000), 85.} Parents of young girls in Hawai‘i felt threatened by the influx that raised the ratio of men to women in Hawai‘i to estimates which ranged as high as five hundred to one.\footnote{Olive Mowat, “Five Hundred Men To A Girl,” in \textit{Hawai‘i Chronicles III}, 306-309.} Prostitution boomed in the territory. Kahanamoku and other law enforcement officials establish a red light district that included between twenty to twenty-five hotels. Hawaiian historian DeSoto Brown explained that lines winding around blocks allowed the men to pay “$3 to $5 for up to four minutes of presumed pleasure; if he failed to get satisfaction, he’d receive a raincheck for a later date.” Girls engaged in the business “earned about $25,000 a year...
and their madams as much as $150,000.”

Keeping the peace required developing new sets of standards and procedures in order to adjust to the rapidly changing island demographic and economic pressures.

Kahanamoku also had to take on completely new responsibilities related to the war. The needs of civilian defense became so immense in Hawai‘i that the military government established a separate office to deal with all of the various tasks. In the dispersal of responsibilities, Kahanamoku ended up in charge of the Mortuary and Burials Division of the Territorial Office Of Civilian Defense (OCD). In this role, he participated in “Joint Army and OCD Maneuvers” on numerous occasions. These maneuvers would simulate various responses to potential invasions and attacks on the island in scenarios “as complete and realistic as possible.”

In one of the maneuvers, Kahanamoku arranged for Girl Scout troops to serve as victims to simulate civilian casualties. These maneuvers happened throughout the streets of Honolulu and required extensive coordination of resources and personnel. They would typically last for three days and if people did not know a drill was being performed they might assume that war had once again reared its ugly head on the city.

Along with the increasingly busy demands on his position, Kahanamoku took a leadership role in the community, not through speeches and lofty visions but through humbly stepping up and doing whatever tasks needed doing. Whether that involved making lunches for troops and volunteers in the aftermath of Pearl Harbor, attending the

82 Brown, *Hawaii Goes To War*, 135.
83 Letter From G. M. Collins To Sheriff Duke Kahanamoku From Territorial Office Of Civilian Defense, 13 September 1943, DKC, Box 3 File, 56, Civil Defense, HSA.
84 Ibid.
injured, or speaking to groups in the community, Kahanamoku pitched in. These acts rarely landed the great swimmer in the limelight but rather demonstrated the true character of a servant leader. No task was below his status and no need too great.

Kahanamoku spoke to one such group at Central Intermediate School. He encouraged the students to continue serving in their effort to help win the war. He did this not by highlighting his achievements but instead by noting the achievements of the service groups already operating in the school. Writing a letter to Kahanamoku on behalf of the student body Bertha Leong noted that “all the students were proud to have their services mentioned and will accomplish more and more, because a true 100% Hawaiian inspired us.”

For these students Kahanamoku bridged the gap of leadership. As a pure Hawaiian he gave validity to the value of the war effort for Hawai`i. The principal for the school, John Luiz, noted that the purpose of the program intended to develop “the underlying theme of unselfish service to our fellowmen and our Country.” Kahanamoku exemplified these themes in his everyday life.

Sheriff Kahanamoku’s personal appeal and calm demeanor gave confidence to the electorate now living under military rule. The unsung statistics of efficiency that he never earned credit for speak to the leadership that he exhibited behind the scenes. Although we can never be certain of the realities of incidents, the fact that reported rapes actually decreased during the war in Hawai`i despite the fears of local parents and the extreme clash of cultures brought about by military growth speaks volumes to the work.

85 Letter From Bertha Leong To Duke Kahanamoku, 16 April 1943, DKC, Box 1 File, 12, Correspondence 1940-1949, HSA.
86 Letter From John C. Luiz To Duke Kahanamoku, 17 April 1943, DKC, Box 1 File, 12, Correspondence 1940-1949, HSA.
of his office.\textsuperscript{87} As the Civilian Defense officer in charge of morgues and burials working with only four freezer compartments in the outdated morgue at the Queen’s hospital he performed miracles in coordinating both military and civilian autopsies and burials, especially in the wake of over 3000 dead in the attack on Pearl Harbor alone.\textsuperscript{88} Kahanamoku helped to push for the establishment of proper burial grounds for those soldiers and the eventual establishment of the National Cemetery of The Pacific at Punchbowl Crater.\textsuperscript{89}

While changes in Kahanamoku’s marital status, political affiliation and job requirements due to the influence of World War II would alter Kahanamoku and his native homeland dramatically, some things such as the unselfish desire to serve his people never wavered. This attitude helped further another constant of this period, Kahanamoku’s re-election as sheriff. In 1942, many in Honolulu questioned the necessity for electing officials who basically had no standing or power due to the military government’s takeover of all decisions in the Territory. In the \textit{Paradise of the Pacific} Tim Warren wrote “we are not living under constitutional government in Hawai`i. We are living under military government. Justice is administered by martial law. Nearly every territorial officer is a figurehead of some sort.” Warren asked “why have elections?”\textsuperscript{90}

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\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{87} Brown, \textit{Hawaii Goes To War}, 135.
  \item \textsuperscript{88} Duke Kahanamoku, “Report to Mayor and Board of Supervisors,” 31 December 1947, DKC, Box 2 File, 54, Misc. Duties and Reports, HSA.
  \item \textsuperscript{90} Tim Warren, “Elections—and War,” in \textit{Hawai`i Chronicles III}, 63-64.
\end{itemize}
Regardless of Warren’s and other’s objections, Hawai`i did hold elections in 1942. Kahanamoku ran unopposed for the very first time, guaranteeing his re-election.\(^{91}\) Kahanamoku did not have complete control of his office. It had now fallen under jurisdiction of the military government, and in some ways he had become a figurehead, but the people continued to trust him as their representative.

The greatest impact of the war years on Hawai`i and on Kahanamoku may have been the reality that for the first time in their history self-rule in any fashion did not exist. Political candidates even had to have their radio speeches approved by military censors. Kahanamoku’s traditional habit of giving his speeches in Hawaiian first and English second halted. Military censors blacked out the Hawaiian sections of his speeches and he could not deliver any part of his speeches in his native language.\(^{92}\) At least when the monarchy was overthrown the government remained in the hands of citizens of Hawai`i acting, however unjustly it may have been, as the Republic of Hawai`i. Even annexation to the U.S. allowed for a legislative body elected by Hawaiian citizens to determine law and influence the future of the Islands. With the takeover of Hawai`i by the military government, all Hawaiians tasted the complete loss of autonomy for the first time. They also experienced the greatest influx of American culture in their history through the influence of the military, construction companies, and defense workers. As a result, American methods of business and politics became more deeply impressed on the citizens of Hawai`i and upon Kahanamoku. More than any other event or influence World War II was the greatest Americanization process the Island’s and the sheriff ever

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\(^{92}\) Duke Kahanamoku Speech, September 1942, DKC, Box 2, File 39, HSA.
experienced. Neither would fully recover from the loss of their indigenous culture in the wartime tidal wave of American influence and power. During World War Two the innocence and colorful culture of Hawai`i’s past experienced its greatest dilution and alteration. The effects would soon become apparent even in Hawai`i’s supreme hero, Duke Kahanamoku.
The changes in Kahanamoku’s life in the 1940s increased his desire to capitalize on his fame. While Kahanamoku made attempts at using his fame for financial gain prior to the 1940s, his focus had primarily been on bringing honor and prestige to his people in a manner reminiscent of the traditional role of the ancient *ali`i*. The decades after the war would see a change in his approach. Kahanamoku never completely abandoned his traditional Hawaiian values nor his desire to represent Hawai`i. However, understanding the elements of progress, change and evolution occurring in the islands during and after World War II, Kahanamoku also recognized that the old days of pseudo-Hawaiian national identity were dying. Through the influences of his wife, Nadine, and friends such as radio and television personality Arthur Godfrey, Hawai`i promoter Edwin Leterman, and business executive Joseph Rosenthal, Kahanamoku began to learn how to cash in on his fame. Over the next few decades, Kahanamoku would attempt to navigate the seas of commercial development, marketing, and promotion. Unfortunately, the world’s greatest waterman struggled to understand the complex currents at work in these seas.

Kahanamoku had successfully navigated the competitive world of amateur athletics and politics due to his wonderful rapport and personal appeal. It had become difficult by the 1940s to find anyone critical of this great champion. He exhibited the
qualities of humility, trustworthiness, and regal stature while at the same time maintaining an aura of approachability, warmth and compassion for others. These same qualities made him an ideal personality for marketing products. In the 1940s Kahanamoku would begin diving into ventures as varied as clothing lines, tourism promotion, hotel development, movies, swim fins, sporting goods and surfboards.

People had always capitalized on Kahanamoku’s name. Hawai`i had obviously prospered from Kahanamoku’s feats in swimming, surfing, acting and all-around representation as Hawai`i’s unofficial ambassador. Others had used Kahanamoku’s name in attempts to identify themselves with the great champion. These associations had their roots all the way back to 1911 when the first issue of Alexander Hume Ford’s *The Mid-Pacific Magazine* used Kahanamoku to grace the cover and Ford published an article on surfing written by the young Hawaiian Duke Paoa.¹

Others made their associations without the consent of the great champion. Ford published another article in his magazine in 1914 that seemed extremely dubious. Guy N. Rothwell wrote an article entitled “Surfing and Sharking,” describing his experiences at these two sports in which he partook while in Honolulu. After relating the sport of surf-riding both on a board and in an outrigger canoe Rothwell then expressed his excitement at sharking. He and his his boat crew towed a dead horse out near the Pearl Harbor buoy where they anchored the carcass after spearing it a number of times to release the animal’s blood. Rothwell noted that the bait attracted two sharks who attacked the carcass and were then harpooned and eventually brought near the boat.

While describing most of his fellow sharkers as “natives” Rothwell ended his article with a tale which cast Kahanamoku in a different light. Giving validity to his own participation in this act of seeming brutality, he introduced Duke Kahanamoku as one of the natives. Rothwell reminded his readers that this native had “demonstrated to everyone’s satisfaction at the Stockholm games that he is the best there is in the swimming line.” In the next sentence Rothwell then immediately placed Kahanamoku in the role of a savage.²

Using the champion as both a tool of validation and a cleansing agent for his own civility, Rothwell told his readers that “as soon as the beast rolled into right position, Duke Kahanamoku . . . drove the gleaming lance again and again into the beast’s vitals, and amid a frantic lashing of the waters this ugly denizen of the deep rolled on his back and his soul, if he ever had one, departed.”³

While this tale spoke of adventure in the exotic South Seas with a world famous Olympic champion who is an actual native of this far away part of the world, it is improbable that it occurred as Rothwell described. While Rothwell no doubt experienced this sharking adventure, Kahanamoku’s traditional Hawaiian values would probably have precluded his participation in this adventure. Hawaiian cultural tradition placed great value in their `aumākua. Mary Kawena Pukui and Samuel H. Elbert define `aumākua as

³ Ibid.
“family or personal gods, deified ancestors who might assume the shape of sharks, owls, hawks” or other animals. Duke Kahanamoku’s `aumakua was the manō, or shark.

Hawaiian cultural scholar George Hu`eu Sanford Kanahele demonstrated the close “partnership” between the `aumakua and `ohana (family), describing it as an “a close-working family alliance.” Kanahele explained “on the one hand the `aumākua protect, warn, counsel, heal, forgive, avenge, discipline, and administer, while on the other hand, the `ohana members do good deeds, propitiate the `aumākua, heed their warnings, offer nourishment, and pay homage to them.”

Throughout his life tales were told of the protection afforded Kahanamoku due to his manō `aumakua. His father had even credited his success in swimming to “Duke’s ancestral links to the spirit world” and the “Kahanamoku’s chief high god.” The elder Kahanamoku told champion swimmer Ruth Wayne Stacker that “he had a direct promise from the chief shark of Honolulu Harbor and Pu`uloa that in Duke’s two favorite distances he never would be defeated.”

While the great shark’s promise did not completely come true the sense of protection and reverence for the shark permeated Kahanamoku’s ease with the sea. Given Kahanamoku’s connection to the shark as his `aumakua it is extremely doubtful that he would ever have treated this symbol of his personal and family god with such

4 Mary Kawena Pukui and Samuel H. Elbert, Hawaiian Dictionary (Honolulu: University of Hawai`i Press, 1986), 32. `Aumakua is used in the singular sense while aumākua is the plural.
7 Stacker, “Unknown Title.”
brutality. The sensational tale used Kahanamoku, the symbol of the Hawaiian Islands to the world, into the story to add credibility to the account. Interestingly, a very similar tale, sans Kahanamoku, appeared in the same magazine in June of 1911. Written by H.F. Alexander, the story told of Hawaiian methods of shark hunting using a dead horse as bait. H.F. Alexander was none other than the magazine’s publisher Alexander Hume Ford with a minor rearrangement of initials and names of the author.  

While Ford may have been one of the first to use the name of Kahanamoku for profit and promotion as well as to add the taste of the exotic life of a “safe” native, others would follow. Sport cards, newspapers, the Hawaiian tourist bureau, politicians, meet promoters and Hollywood all benefited from the name and legend of Duke Kahanamoku, except the great Hawaiian himself. Even the great protectors of athletic amateurism, the A.A.U. reaped profits from Kahanamoku’s performances. It had become common practice for the amateur body to schedule post Olympic swimming and track meets throughout Europe to raise money to pay for the athletes travel expenses to the Games themselves. In 1936, when Jesse Owens declined to compete in meets scheduled for Stockholm and other European cities in which the American Olympic Committee (AOC) and the A.A.U. had contracted out, Avery Brundage announced that Owens amateur standing had been revoked. Kahanamoku often competed in these post-Olympic tours in which the athletes received no compensation while the A.A.U. reaped all profits.

10 “Kahanamoku Sets New World’s Mark,” New York Times, 6 September 1920, p. 11. This meet held in Paris occurred after the 1920 Antwerp Games and demonstrates the A.A.U.’s use of athletes in post-Olympic competitions to raise money.
Kahanamoku also received no compensation from sport card companies such as Sport Kings who sold his likeness on their cards in the 1920s and 1930s.\textsuperscript{11}

Kahanamoku’s prowess in swimming and surfing, though legendary, never allowed him to make the kind of money that he saw others attain through their athletic abilities since he had always competed as an “amateur.” While Hawaiian culture revered traditional values such as *aloha, mana*, and respect for their `aumakua, American culture arguably revered money and prowess in business more than sportsmanship, family or honor. Kahanamoku constantly found himself wedged between these very differing sets of values. Although he would become more comfortable with American capitalism after World War II he struggle with the sense of disconnection between the past and future of Hawai`i and his own life.

In the world of business, Kahanamoku ran across a species of shark that had no respect for the great swimmer. While no one could consider his business life an abject failure, it definitely did not measure up with the rest of his accomplishments. Kahanamoku’s personality and the lingering traditional Hawaiian values that he embodied conflicted with the American business climate. Although he attempted to use his public persona as a means to cash in on the expanding American consumer culture, he never truly succeeded.

Kahanamoku signed his first contract to use his name with a local Hawaiian company named Branfleet. Founded by George Brangier and Nat Norfleet, Jr. in 1936,

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\textsuperscript{11} Duke Kahanamoku Card, *Sport Kings Chewing Gum*, Card #20, 1933, in author’s personal collection.
\end{flushright}
Branfleet went into the production of Aloha wear. They began selling Aloha shirts made of kabe crepes. Brangier, a Frenchman, had met Kahanamoku in Los Angeles while both were acting in the 1927 movie *The Roughriders*. Brangier asked Kahanamoku to teach him how to surf. The Hawaiian legend agreed. Brangier moved to Hawai`i in 1928. He later returned to the Islands after serving his French military obligations. He opened a men’s clothing shop and established himself in the world of Hawaiian clothing, eventually founding Branfleet.

In 1937 Branfleet signed Duke Kahanamoku to a five-year contract allowing them to use the noted champion’s name on their sportswear. The shirt tag stated, “this is designed by Duke Kahanamoku, World’s Champion swimmer, and is made in the Hawaiian Islands.” Kahanamoku’s name recognition allowed Branfleet to be the first Hawaiian company “to supply sportswear to the U.S. mainland on a large scale.” The agreement allowed Kahanamoku to make 35 cents per dozen shorts sold and $1.00 per dozen for shirts sold. Since a dozen shirts typically sold for an average of $12.00 wholesale, Kahanamoku’s take ended up being less than 10% of the sales. In 1939, Branfleet advanced Kahanamoku $330 on commissions to be paid back on sales of shirts. The agreement stated that 90% of Kahanamoku’s commissions would go toward paying

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13 Ibid.
14 “Branfleet Contract,” 1937, Duke Kahanamoku Collection M-434, hereafter referred to as DKC, , Box 1, File 1, Miscellaneous Enterprises, Hawai`i State Archives, Honolulu, hereafter referred to as HSA.
15 Ibid.
off the advance until the sum was paid in full.\textsuperscript{17} With both their “Kahala Sportswear” and “Duke Kahanamoku Beachwear” lines, under the Branfleet label, Brangier and Norfleet would eventually rename their company Kahala to avoid confusion.\textsuperscript{18} Considering that the aloha wear industry and Branfleet were relative newcomers to the mainland marketplace this contract represented a reasonably fair deal for Kahanamoku. However, due to the novelty and youth of the industry the company never approached the great success that they had envisioned at the start of the contract. World War Two also interrupted production and created great consternation regarding the future of the aloha wear industry, thus frustrating Branfleet and Kahanamoku’s hopes.\textsuperscript{19}

Through the encouragement of his wife and a clearer understanding of business opportunities Kahanamoku continued in the 1940s to attempt to profit from his notoriety. Athletes had been cashing in on endorsements for many years before Kahanamoku entered the fray. Johnny Weissmuller had done advertisements and been a spokesman for BVD (Bradley, Voorhies and Day) swimwear since his retirement in 1929.\textsuperscript{20} Other athletes promoted tobacco products, such as football’s Cliff Montgomery and the 1934 baseball world champions, the St. Louis Cardinals. In a Camel cigarette advertisement in the \textit{Honolulu Advertiser} Frank Frisch, the Cardinals player-manager, avowed that “21 out of 23 of the Cardinals prefer Camels.”\textsuperscript{21}

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\textsuperscript{17} Letter to Duke Kahanamoku Regarding Advance, 17 November 1939, DKC, Box 1, File 1, Miscellaneous Enterprises, HSA. \\
\textsuperscript{18} Hope, \textit{The Aloha Shirt}, 23-24. \\
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid, 31. \\
\textsuperscript{20} Johnny Weissmuller, Jr., \textit{Tarzan: My Father} (Toronto: ECW Press, 2002), 46. \\
\end{flushleft}
Kahanamoku needed to find a product that he could endorse. Tobacco advertisers, the largest of sport endorsers in that era were out of the question as Kahanamoku had never smoked and disliked the habit. Advertisers in turn needed to have a product that would place Kahanamoku into a unique position to endorse their products due to the continuing racist attitudes prevalent in the United States. As a dark-skinned Hawaiian, Kahanamoku could not act as the spokesperson for just any product and gain acceptance in the broader American culture. Products had to have a tie to swimming, surfing or Hawai`i for Kahanamoku to truly have a chance at an endorsement in order to overcome inherent racist attitudes. Aloha shirts definitely fit the bill, but Kahanamoku looked to diversify into other products as well.

One such product pitched to Kahanamoku looked promising. Owen Churchill, a fellow Emerald Bay Yacht Club member from California and old friend of Kahanamoku, had designed and was marketing swim fins. The two had numerous connections including being U.S. Olympic teammates on the 1932 Los Angeles squad. Churchill won a gold medal in the Olympic eight-meter yacht race in 1932, and represented the U.S. again at the Berlin Olympics in 1936.\(^22\) Churchill had sent Kahanamoku a couple of pairs of his new “Swim-Fins” in the fall of 1940 and Kahanamoku immediately tried them.\(^23\)

Churchill, while a great yachtsman, swam very poorly. Inspired by Tahitian natives he observed diving for pearls with woven leaves attached to their feet Churchill

\(^23\) Duke Kahanamoku, “Letter To Owen Churchill,” 27 September 1940, DKC, Box 1, File 9, Swim Fins, Owen Churchill, HSA.
used vulcanized rubber to replicate the propulsion assistance the crude fins provided. Kahanamoku reported to Churchill that “you have found something that the swimming public will take to it like ducks.” Commenting that his wife watched him and told him he “went like a streak,” Kahanamoku elaborated: “with these swim fins it would work out swell . . . spear fishing, kids down at the harbor diving for coins, etc.”

Churchill had asked Kahanamoku for advice as to the “best firm in town to sell” the fins. Nadine Kahanamoku’s influence exhibited itself in the great swimmer’s response to Churchill. For the first time Kahanamoku put himself forward in a potential business venture asking Churchill, “why not my taking the exclusive agent for the Territory of Hawai‘i, and maybe Australia and Japan.”

The ensuing exchanges between Churchill and Kahanamoku would demonstrate the inexperience of the great swimmer in business transactions and resulted in not only the disintegration of the business opportunity but also the straining of a friendship. Churchill immediately replied to Kahanamoku and offered the sheriff a different deal. Instead of giving Kahanamoku the exclusive agency that he had asked for, Churchill arranged for a retail shop, Hawaiian Marine Sales, to sell the fins and also asked Kahanamoku for a suggestion as to a “outstanding sporting goods store in Honolulu [to] handle our fins.” The reason behind this Churchill informed Kahanamoku, was that he had planned to do the sales himself and “had made no provision for a distributor to sell to

25 Letter From Duke Kahanamoku to Owen Churchill, 27 September 1940, HSA.
26 Ibid.
the stores,” and as such “cannot give any exclusive agencies.” The deal Churchill offered Kahanamoku, however, was the opportunity to sell the fins himself for $4.75 of the $6.75 retail price, “transportation prepaid, which allows you a profit of $2.00 per pair.”

Churchill sent Kahanamoku “1 dozen assorted size ‘SWIM FINS’” to sell along with folders where Kahanamoku could insert his own name and address and mail them to his friends and business associates in the islands. The retail stores would be able to sell the fins when Kahanamoku was not available as “the stores would always be open.” Churchill added that “with your reputation as a champion swimmer, and your social and business standing in the Islands, you will sell most of the fins anyway and get the cream of the business.”

Failing to hear back from Kahanamoku, Churchill sent a letter dated October 28, 1940, again inquiring as to a recommendation for a sporting goods store to “build up a good business in Honolulu during the winter months” in order to “keep his business somewhat uniform throughout the year.” Business slowed down in Los Angeles in the winter and so Churchill viewed Honolulu as a prime opportunity to drive sales during slow times as any good businessperson would. Churchill also noted that a sales agent from New York City had made inquiries about gaining the agency for the “rubber feet to wear while swimming, that make one swim much faster.” Churchill told Kahanamoku

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27 Letter From Owen Churchill To Duke Kahanamoku, 1 October 1940, DKC, Box 1, File 9, Swim Fins, Owen Churchill, HSA.
that he had informed the agent “that for the present, we have made other arrangements,”
but implored the swimmer, “please let me hear from you, as early as possible.”

Churchill’s request for a speedy reply went unmet by Kahanamoku. The Olympic
yachting champion sent another letter on December 16. Obviously frustrated by
Kahanamoku’s negligence in responding, Churchill queried, “I have been wondering why
I have not heard anything at all from you.” Churchill commented that “I had thought by
this time you would have sold all of these [the first dozen], and ordered at least several
dozen more, as they have proved so popular here.” Churchill then informed
Kahanamoku of the news that his company had “appointed B.F. Schoen, Ltd., our
exclusive Sales Agents for our fins for the Territory of Hawai‘i.” Citing their “facilities
for thoroughly covering the Territory, with their traveling salesmen,” Churchill explained
that Schoen would be contacting him and would “quote you prices for any future
business.”

It appeared that Kahanamoku had either been upset by Churchill’s first response
or else never devoted much energy to the endeavor. However, the news of the
appointment of exclusive agents for the Territory infuriated Kahanamoku. In a letter
written on January 14, 1941, Kahanamoku finally responded to Churchill noting the work
he had put into promoting the swim fins. Kahanamoku claimed to have been derailed by
numerous issues, all of which were, at best, dubious. Kahanamoku told Churchill that his
plan for advertising the fins was to go through the schools that had swim tanks.

28 Letter From Owen Churchill To Duke Kahanamoku, 28 October 1940, DKC, Box 1, File 9, Swim Fins,
Owen Churchill, HSA.
29 Letter From Owen Churchill To Duke Kahanamoku, 16 December 1940, DKC, Box 1, File 9, Swim
Fins, Owen Churchill, HSA. 
Kahanamoku explained that the University of Hawai‘i and Punahou Academy tanks
“were dry, having been drained out for cleaning purposes.” Kahanamoku then mentioned
that the “kids who were to assist in demonstrating the finds [sic] were away from school
on vacation.” The sheriff also cited his re-election as being an impediment as “we were
also in the middle of a political campaign.”

It appears from these excuses that Kahanamoku put very little effort into the swim
fin opportunity. While it is not unlikely that the pools were both closed for cleaning, it is
hard to imagine that they were closed for three months or that the students meant to
demonstrate were also on break in the fall for three months. In addition, by the time
Kahanamoku received the fins the first week of October, his re-election campaign had
ended. He had been re-elected outright in the primary held on October 5, 1940.

Kahanamoku did not seem to understand Churchill’s intention to help him secure
the majority of the sales through his personal contacts while having a backup retail outlet
for those unable to reach him directly. Instead of finding a local sporting goods store in
Honolulu to carry the fins, Kahanamoku spoke directly to agents for sporting good lines
such as “E.O. Hall and Son, local agents for the Spalding line.” Kahanamoku reported
that “naturally, they were very much interested and anxious to handle the fins but they
wanted to be exclusive agents.” Not understanding the relationships of agents and
individual sporting goods stores Kahanamoku failed to provide Churchill with the simple
name of a store able to carry the fins. All of these issues created formidable stumbling

30 Letter From Duke Kahanamoku To Owen Churchill, 14 January 1941, DKC, Box 1, File 9, Swim Fins,
Owen Churchill, HSA.
blocks. Still, Kahanamoku should have communicated the attempts he made in a timely manner to Churchill to keep alive the prospect of an equitable outcome for both parties.32

The tone of the letter that Kahanamoku sent to Churchill implied that the champion remained miffed over the denial of the exclusive agency of the fins, despite his lack of business infrastructure or experience to accomplish such an endeavor. Kahanamoku asserted that “upon receiving your letter of December 16, 1940, I immediately abandoned any idea of continuing plans for advancing the fins.” Kahanamoku quoted from one of Churchill’s earlier letters, the statement “we cannot give any exclusive agencies” in opposition to the news that an exclusive agent had been appointed in the December 16 letter. Kahanamoku concluded rather bitterly, “I therefore feel that since Schoen, Ltd., have been appointed exclusive agents for this country that they should do the ‘pushing’ and advertising of your fin.”33

When he sent the letter Kahanamoku had sold only five pairs of fins in three months, demonstrating the lack of effort that the sheriff had put into the endeavor. Churchill seemed to want to keep the sales of the fins as much as possible within Kahanamoku’s realm without the need to introduce an intermediary distributor. From the correspondence, Churchill viewed this as an arrangement that he and an old friend could handle amicably and both profit from without huge changes in business organization. However, Kahanamoku’s failure to communicate in a timely manner forced Churchill to explore other options in the Territory. With little business background, Kahanamoku

33 Ibid.
failed to comprehend what his old friend offered him and became disgruntled at not attaining the exclusive agency.

The cold tone of Kahanamoku’s January letter and benediction reflected the change he felt in their relationship. In his initial September letter to Churchill Kahanamoku closed by saying, “My wife joins me in sending you our thanks and aloha nui,” along with a “P.S. My aloha to all the fellows out there.” In this final letter Kahanamoku merely ended with “Respectfully, Duke P. Kahanamoku.” No further interactions between Churchill and Kahanamoku could be found in any archives or personal correspondence, adding credence to the notion that the relationship simply died with this interaction. Churchill did use Kahanamoku’s name on brochures for his fins as one “of the many Coaches and Champions who use Swim-Fins,” including Fred Cady, Paul Wolf and Johnny Weissmuller. However, no monetary compensation accrued from that endorsement.

Churchill went on to a long and productive career marketing his invention. While selling only 946 pairs of the fins in 1940, his first year of production, Churchill sold tens of thousands to Allied forces during World War II. Many of the fins went to Hawai‘i where Kahanamoku held deep ties to military leaders and might have profited greatly from the transactions. The Churchill fins became very popular, especially among body surfers and boogie boarders, and remain so today. Unfortunately for Kahanamoku, he

34 To date the author has examined Duke Kahanamoku collections in the Hawai‘i State Archives and the Bishop Museum, both in Honolulu, as well as the assorted collections of Earl Maikahikinapamaikala Tenn caretaker of Nadine and Duke Kahanamoku collections, and the Owen Churchill Collection at the Smithsonian National Museum of American History, Washington D.C.
35 “Swim-Fins Brochure,” DKC, Box 1, File 9, Swim Fins, Owen Churchill, HSA.
could not see the potential of the fins and ended up making only ten dollars from the venture.\(^{37}\)

While the Churchill deal promised some valuable income, other companies sought out the great champion’s endorsement without compensation offers. The Esterbrook Pen Corporation of Camden, New Jersey represented a classic example. Charles W. Applegate from Esterbrook sent Kahanamoku a letter asking him to sign a prewritten statement of endorsement for the company’s writing utensils in exchange for a one-pen set valued at $3.50.\(^{38}\)

With minimal gains from endorsement opportunities entering into the 1940s the advent of war would completely short circuit Kahanamoku’s efforts to profit from his fame. Pearl Harbor and American involvement in World War II would focus Kahanamoku’s efforts more on winning the war and less on trying to make money under martial law. His five-year contract with Kahala ended in 1942 in the midst of the war. The Aloha shirt industry faced extreme challenges in Hawai`i during the war. Aloha shirt historian Dale Hope noted that due to the inability to import fabrics or export their products, manufacturing slowed dramatically. Hope explained that “Kahala sewed camouflage on military uniforms” to survive the rough times.\(^{39}\) Both Kahanamoku and Kahala agreed to allow the contract to lapse in the face of more pressing issues.\(^{40}\)

\(^{37}\) Letter From Duke Kahanamoku To Owen Churchill, 14 January 1941.
\(^{38}\) Letter From Chas. W. Applegate To Duke Kahanamoku, 19 January 1940, DKC, Box 1, File 1, Miscellaneous Enterprises, HSA.
\(^{40}\) Ibid, 128-129.
Outside of the clothing and endorsement, Kahanamoku made some money through renting properties that he owned in Waikiki. The newlywed Kahanamokus needed a larger house to live in than the small place near Diamond Head that Duke rented. As a wedding present tobacco heiress Doris Duke gave the Kahanamokus $5000 to buy a house at Black Point near Duke’s estate, the elaborate Shangri-la. The agreement stipulated that they pay her back in monthly installments without interest. As a result of Doris Duke’s largess the Kahanamokus were able to continue to rent out the houses that Kahanamoku owned in Waikiki rather than move into that crowded area. It is unclear how many properties that Kahanamoku had bought or been given but he received rent checks for properties at four different addresses on Ala Moana Boulevard. The addresses are all on the same block and seemingly are all next to each other, numbering 1833, 1835, 1837, and 1847 Ala Moana Boulevard. Kahanamoku made gross income on the properties of $675 in 1943, a high of $745 in 1944, and $720 in both 1945 and 1946.

The properties also created a few issues for the sheriff. In 1944, it was discovered that he had been charging more for his houses that what was allowed under the rent controls implemented during military government rule. Kahanamoku had been charging $38 per month, $8 over the maximum rent charges allowed. In May of 1944 after the discovery of his illegal practice, Kahanamoku’s rent control level was set at minimum levels. Kahanamoku requested a hearing from the Rent Commission Board on May 16.

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41 Earl Maikahikina-pamaikala Tenn, interview by author, written notes, Honolulu, HI, 20 May 2004.
42 Hall and Ambrose, Memories Of Duke, 113.
1944, to raise his rent ceiling to the maximum level.\textsuperscript{44} The Board on June 6, 1944, granted Kahanamoku the rent maximum at $30 per month.\textsuperscript{45}

Kahanamoku would have a few more headaches regarding the property. In 1949 he received numerous letters informing him that his property taxes were significantly delinquent. Kahanamoku owed $199.13 for back property taxes on his house at 1847 Ala Moana Blvd. The letter also informed Kahanamoku that his property taxes for that property were $88.45 every quarter.\textsuperscript{46} It is unclear what precipitated the failure to pay the taxes, but it is clear that Kahanamoku’s bookkeeping skills were not among his greatest gifts. Kahanamoku did seem to treat his renters well however as he kept one Mr. Joseph Lovell, for at least 13 years.\textsuperscript{47}

When World War II finally ended it brought about a sudden economic change in Hawai‘i. The government packed up many military bases and the vast population of soldiers, airmen, and sailors left the islands for home. Hawai‘i, which lived under a military government and martial law for five years, had remade itself into an economy driven not by exports and tourism but instead by military spending. With the military scaling back operations the Islands would need to once again regroup and redevelop previous economic and governmental practices. For the first few years after the war, as

\textsuperscript{44} Duke Kahanamoku, “Request For Rent Control Increase,” 16 May 1944, DKC, Box 1, File 8, Rentals: Ala Moana Blvd, HSA.

\textsuperscript{45} “Decree of Rent Control Maximum Level Awarded To Duke P. Kahanamoku,” 6 June 1944, DKC, Box 1, File 8, Rentals: Ala Moana Blvd, HSA.

\textsuperscript{46} “Payment Due of Back Taxes, to Duke P. Kahanamoku,” 1949, DKC, Box 1, File 8, Rentals: Ala Moana Blvd, HSA.

\textsuperscript{47} Lovell began renting in April of 1944 and records show him still paying rent to Kahanamoku in February of 1957. Records of Rent, DKC, Box 1, File 8, Rentals: Ala Moana Blvd, HSA.
Hawai`i and the rest of the world dealt with the aftermath of the devastation, the economy struggled. Toward the end of the 1940s though a significant change began to occur.\footnote{Brown, \textit{Hawai`i Goes to War}, 153.}

One of the positive developments for the Hawaiian economy resulting from World War II was the increase of development and the increased marketability of the Islands and their unique culture for commercial purposes. The war had opened up Hawai`i to the mainland middle and lower classes, if not physically at least symbolically.

As soldiers made their way home from the Pacific their memories of the warm waters and tropical beauty of Hawai`i would be one positive aspect of the war experience. The gifts and trinkets, which they brought home from this far off paradise made the exotic land seem much closer to the average mainland American. As Hawaiian historian Dale Hope demonstrated, “available in the military post exchanges, shirts with Hawaiian and Polynesian design motifs provided popular proof that a GI had been to Hawaii.” Hope argued that “far from bringing about the demise of Aloha shirts, World War II and its servicemen in the Pacific helped spread the shirts’ popularity back on the mainland.”\footnote{Hope, \textit{The Aloha Shirt}, 32.}

This new dispersal of Hawaiian culture into the broader American culture also brought about the distortion and dilution of Hawaiian traditions and the growth of a new Island identity. The Aloha shirt represents an intriguing example of this process. The chief advocate of the aloha shirt was none other than Mr. Hawai`i, Duke Kahanamoku.

Aloha shirts have very little connection to traditional Hawaiian society. Even though some scholars maintain that they trace their lineage back to the \textit{kapa} cloths made
and worn by ancient Hawaiians.\textsuperscript{50} While some patterns and symbols of old Hawai`i have made their way into the Aloha shirt designs, the Aloha shirt actually represents the melting pot of cultures that Hawai`i became in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. While the Aloha shirt did not even make its debut until the 1930s, historians DeSoto Brown and Linda Arthur note “the roots of the Aloha shirt . . . are diverse. Influences of Hawai`i’s many racial groups are found in both the cut of clothing and, more significantly, in the motifs.”\textsuperscript{51}

In reality the Aloha shirt is a western style shirt with motifs from Japan, Korea, Hawai`i, Tahiti, China and a host of other cultures. The Aloha shirt represents an Americanized garment adopting bits and pieces of various cultural traditions while endorsing none of them. A Japanese kimono was not accepted wear in American culture, especially after World War II, other than for someone of Japanese ancestry in a traditional event. However, a shirt made out of similar cloth and designs and marketed as an Aloha shirt could be worn anywhere and by anyone in the United States.

The Aloha shirt helped to break down traditional cultural barriers and distinctions for Americans in attempting to deal with the diversity of the Territory. At the same time, for those in the Territory, it became a symbol of separateness and uniqueness that set Hawai`i apart from mainland Americans. Hawaiian politicians in the 1940s enacted legislation which allowed the Aloha shirt to become acceptable in the dress code of the governmental and business communities in Honolulu. The City-County attorney for Honolulu, Wilford D. Godbold, argued in 1947, “it’s silly to go through all the

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid, 1-2.
discomfort of wearing a coat just because some Frenchman back in 1700 invented the
 cravat.” Kahanamoku himself championed the move saying, “let’s be more comfortable.
 We just wear a tie because everybody else does.” The sheriff noted, “before the war, I
got the Royal Hawaiian Hotel interested in long-sleeve sport shirts for dances there. But
the idea was dropped before anyone tried it out.”

Kahanamoku’s role in the development of the Aloha shirt is well documented by
those who have studied the history of the industry. In 1950, noted Aloha shirt designer
Francis Delpech wrote in the Paradise of the Pacific, “lest we forget, it was the men who
started the Hawaiian fashions.” Delpech continued to single out one man above the
others, Duke Kahanamoku. On hot summer days “long before the Second World War,”
Delpech observed, “little boys and some men, used to let their shirt tails hang out.”
Arguing that “the sight of an ordinary shirt tail flapping in the breeze, while cool, is not
aesthetic,” Delpech contended that “it occurred to Duke Kahanamoku that it would be a
good idea to make a shirt with the tails already cut off, to hang outside the trousers.”

Kahanamoku also originated a design for shorts that would remain popular
throughout the 1960s. Kahala’s “Duke Swim Trunks” were advertised as “the old stand-
by of malihinis and kamaainas alike . . . ‘the trunks with the Hawaiian emblem.’”
In actuality, these shorts were truly an old stand-by as their history preceded that of
Kahanamoku’s contract with Branfleet. Kahanamoku had given the design for the shorts

52 Hope, The Aloha Shirt, 42-44.
54 “King-Smith Advertisement,” The Honolulu Advertiser, 11 October 1939, p. 3.
to Linn’s clothing makers of Honolulu sometime during the interwar years. The solid-colored trunks had a simple stripe up the sides with an embroidered patch “using a design based upon the Hawaiian crest first used by Hawaiian royalty in the 1800s.”

Kahanamoku did not profit at all from the Linn-made shorts. When Kahala took the design and sold the short Kahanamoku made only 3 cents per pair from the $1.95 retail price of the very popular garment that had his name embroidered below the crest. The shirts designed and sold by Kahala also resembled the short design. They were plain, solid colored shirts with the same crest emblem and Kahanamoku’s name at the bottom of the emblem sewn onto the pocket of the shirt. Of course, Kahala added the local touch with the names of its “native colors: Waikiki sand, palm maize, Mokapu blue and lava brown.”

In these prewar years, Kahanamoku still held to Hawaiian royal tradition even in the design of these “Hawaiian” shirts and shorts. Decorating them with the royal crest helped him hold on to the disappearing Hawaiian history of his ancestors.

The Duke Kahanamoku line by Kahala established a bridge between the past and future. Kahanamoku’s next foray into the Aloha wear industry exhibited the loss of that connection and displayed the move into the new Americanized version of Hawai`i for Kahanamoku and the Territory. Rather than signing with a local Hawaiian manufacturer of Aloha shirts, Kahanamoku, influenced by Elmer G. Leterman, went in a new direction. The New York insurance salesman turned Hawai`i resident “took Duke under his wing

57 “King-Smith Advertisement,” p. 3. According to the advertisement the retail price for the Duke Shorts was $1.95 per pair. Since Kahanamoku’s contract called for him to receive 35¢ per dozen sold his profit on any pair of shorts sold in stores equaled just under 3¢ a pair.
58 “King-Smith Advertisement,” p. 3.
and determined to get him an Aloha shirt contract with a large mainland manufacturer."\(^{59}\)

Leterman helped Kahanamoku sign a contract with Cisco Casuals on September 1, 1949. The deal gave the famous Hawaiian 3.5% of the net shipping’s of Cisco’s Kahanamoku brand of sportswear. In the process however, Kahanamoku also sold all rights to the use of his name to Cisco Casuals. Kahanamoku and Cisco would renew this contract annually for twelve years.\(^{60}\)

The Cisco Casuals line eliminated the Hawaiian crest and highlighted Kahanamoku as their sales image. Cisco paid for trips for Kahanamoku to the mainland, often with his wife, to promote the clothing line. Leterman and Joseph Rosenthal from Cisco arranged for a January 1950 trip to New York City to introduce the new line of clothing characterized by rich colors and patterns.\(^{61}\) One reporter wrote, “Duke is in town this week in connection with the promotion of a Hawaiian shirt which he designs. They really don’t need anyone to speak for them, as they do their own shouting.”\(^{62}\) Kahanamoku’s presence brought added attention to the shirts and boosted sales immediately. Leterman also arranged for Kahanamoku to join leading American broadcaster Arthur Godfrey on his radio and television programs to promote the shirts as well, prompting numerous letters to Kahanamoku inquiring about where to find the shirts.\(^{63}\) In April of 1950 Leterman announced that the clothing line of “shirts and swim shorts has hit the $250,000 mark.” Leterman fully believed that sales would top $1

\(^{59}\) Hope, *The Aloha Shirt*, 122.
\(^{60}\) “Cisco Contract,” 1 September 1949, DKC, Box 1, File 2, Aloha Shirts: Cisco Casuals, HSA.
\(^{63}\) Letter From John W. Schaefer To Duke Kahanamoku, 30 January 1950, DKC, Box 1, File 4, Inquiries, HSA.
million by the end of the year.\textsuperscript{64} Prospects were high and Kahanamoku worked hard to promote the line, as Cisco asked. Sales continued to grow yet Kahanamoku’s earnings seemed meager. His royalty check received in April of 1952 amounted to only $1,072.81, literally a drop in the bucket for the millions that he brought to the company.\textsuperscript{65}

Kahanamoku began to understand the inequitable agreement he had madewith Cisco. He demonstrated his new wisdom in another venture in 1951. Dr. Sanford Rollins wrote a book which he asked Kahanamoku to endorse for him. Rollins wrote to see if the Kahanamokus could secure statements for the holiday release of the book from their friends the “[Walter] Winchell’s, [Arthur] Godfrey’s and [Len] Lyon’s” for the jacket of the book.\textsuperscript{66}

Rollins had entered the army in 1940 and ended up stationed in Hawai‘i. He noted that he “managed to get caught driving through Hickam field around 8:00 o’clock the morning of December 7, 1941. I escaped unscathed but my roommate became the first casualty of the war.” Transferred to Waikiki, Rollins remained there through the duration of the war. As he proudly claimed, “I fought the “Battle of Waikiki.”\textsuperscript{67} While fighting this battle Rollins made the acquaintance of Duke Kahanamoku and a soldier named Arthur Godfrey, who would later become one of American radio and television’s most famous broadcasters and a major booster of Hawai‘i.\textsuperscript{68}

\textsuperscript{64} Ibid,
\textsuperscript{65} Royalties Receipt From Joseph Rosenthal, April 1952, DKC, Box 1, File 2, Aloha Shirts: Cisco Casuals, HSA.
\textsuperscript{66} Letter From Sanford Rollins To Duke and Nadine Kahanamoku, 7 November 1951, DKC, Box 1, File 1, Miscellaneous Enterprises, HSA.
\textsuperscript{67} Sanford Rollins, \textit{Honolulu Hayride} (Culver City, CA: Murray and Gee, 1952), Back jacket cover.
As Rollins spent time in Waikiki, he studied and fell in love with the local culture. Rollins eventually developed the idea of *Honolulu Hayride*. The story centered on a fictional bus driver for the Honolulu Rapid Transit Company, Eddie Kahuna. Rollins explained in a letter to Nadine and Duke that he gave the name Kahuna to Eddie because it meant a priest or a curse in Hawaiian, and “Eddie is both a devil and an angel.” The story used imaginary characters but was based, according to Rollins, on actual events.\(^{69}\)

Rollins dedicated the book to both “Duke Kahanamoku, who represents with dignity a gracious and a hospitable race” and “Arthur Godfrey who through his love of the Islands has transmitted to us their imitable charms.”\(^{70}\) Kahanamoku would be the only real living character in the book. In the story, daredevil Eddie finds himself on the “‘Island of Suspension’ on trial for his ‘Earthly Sins’ as a bus driver in traffic congested Honolulu.” As Eddie is suspended between “Bus Drivers’ Heaven” and “Bus Drivers’ Hell,” Sheriff Kahanamoku is summoned before the tribunal of former royals, gods and goddesses, including King Kamehameha I, to testify concerning Kahuna’s behavior.\(^{71}\) Kamehameha apologized to “Duke Kahanamoku, perennial sheriff of Honolulu” for interrupting his “volleyball game down at the Outrigger,” and had the sheriff verify the charges of “contributing to the delinquency of a minor” brought against Kahuna. Kahanamoku, positioned as the upholder of Hawaiian virtue and moral character, implicates Kahuna before the council. Using humor to describe Hawaiian culture from Sanford’s perspective, *Honolulu Hayride* enjoyed great success and furthered the

\(^{69}\) Letter From Sanford Rollins To Duke and Nadine Kahanamoku, 7 November 1951, HSA.


\(^{71}\) Ibid, Front jacket cover.
reputation and legend of Kahanamoku. However, it is unclear if it affected his financial standing.

Kahanamoku responded to Rollin’s request and told the writer that for his endorsement he would need 10% of all gross profits from the book. Kahanamoku informed Rollins, “this applies to all of my deals, including the Aloha shirt agreement I have with Cisco, and was induced to do so because of several very embarrassing ventures.” Whether Kahanamoku ever received anything from the book sales or not is unknown. None of the people who Rollins asked the Kahanamokus to secure endorsements from for the book jacket did so, and others appeared on the published work when it was released. Kahanamoku’s demands may have also come too late as the book was set to be released in time for the Christmas season and by the time Kahanamoku responded to the author on December 10 it would have already been on its way to stores throughout the country. Once again the delay by Kahanamoku in his response may have cost him significant amounts of income.

Whether Kahanamoku’s mention of his Cisco contract being at 10% of the gross was wishful thinking or not is also unascertainable. Based upon the royalties that Kahanamoku received it appears unlikely that Kahanamoku and Cisco ever came to that agreement in any of their future contracts. It appears that Cisco kept the contract at 3.5% of the net shippings. For example, in June of 1954 Kahanamoku received a check from Cisco for the amount of $165 for royalties. He turned the check over to Martha’s Lei

\[72\] Ibid, 104-106.
\[73\] Letter From Duke Kahanamoku To Sanford Rollins, 10 December 1951, DKC, Box 1, File 1, Miscellaneous Enterprises, HSA.
Stand to pay his bill for *leis* which he gave to visitors to the Islands whom he welcomed. Kahanamoku always greeted visitors with expensive flower *leis* which he paid for himself and never got reimbursed for, even when they were for official city business.  

While the press wildly estimated Kahanamoku’s success with Cisco and most people believed that the swimming legend’s deal made him fabulously rich, the reality was far different. Dale Hope noted that an article in *Gentlemen’s Quarterly* in 1960 “indicated that Duke had been earning ‘$30,000-$35,000 a year’ in royalties.” The *Honolulu Advertiser* supposedly corrected this information, reporting that he had actually received about $100,000 in royalties from the shirt venture over an eight-year period, or some $12,500 a year. In 1961 Kahanamoku reported that “he received $1,000 to $1,200 a month when the venture began in 1949,” but that was short lived and that “sometimes I don’t get anything. Last month I only got $11.”

The lack of profits for Kahanamoku could not be blamed on Kahanamoku’s lack of effort in promotion. If there was anything that Kahanamoku could do well in the business world it was promote. He had been Hawai‘i’s greatest promoter for decades. He had boosted sales for Cisco for twelve years. In 1954, Kahanamoku made another trip to the mainland as a promotion for Cisco. This time however, Cisco did not pick up the bill for the trip. Instead, through Kahanamoku’s contacts in Hawai‘i Dole Pineapple arranged for payment of the trip. Dole and Pick-n-Pay Supermarkets, Ltd., with stores in

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74 Receipt from Martha’s Lei Stand, 14 June 1954, DKC, Box 1, File 2, Aloha shirts: Cisco Casuals, HSA. The receipt shows payment with Cisco Check # 5750 for $165.00.
the midwestern United States, had planned a huge promotion in Cleveland, Ohio called “A Honolulu of a Sale.” Pick -n- Pay wanted “to have an all-out Hawaiian-style promotion featuring Island products and doing a high-level, exciting job of informing Cleveland people all about Hawaii.” They contacted Dole to find out if Kahanamoku would be available to “fly to Cleveland – meet the Governor of Ohio and the Mayor of Cleveland.” Pick -n- Pay, to sweeten the deal also arranged for Kahanamoku to appear on the Arthur Godfrey Show in New York City and meet with President Eisenhower in Washington.”

Kahanamoku informed Cisco of the potential trip as they had been attempting to put together a promotional tour to Houston for the sheriff. When Cisco learned that Pick -n- Pay would pick up the tab for the venture and that Kahanamoku would be on television with Godfrey as well as garnering an appearance with President Eisenhower, they immediately told Kahanamoku to “forget about the Houston trip entirely.”

Rosenthal advised Kahanamoku that since he had already planned to be on the mainland for the Shriners convention at Atlantic City in June that Cisco “would very much like to have you accept their [Dole Pineapple] proposition.”

Pick -n-Pay paid Kahanamoku $100 per day for the four days of his trip as well as picking up all of his expenses. The grocery store chain was extremely pleased with the

78 Letter From J.R. ten Bosch To Duke Kahanamoku, 17 March 1954, DKC, Box 1, File 7, Pick-n-Pay Promotion, HSA.
79 Letter From Joseph Rosenthal To Duke Kahanamoku, 23 March 1954, DKC, Box 1, File 2, Aloha shirts: Cisco Casuals, HSA.
promotion.\(^{80}\) In an article for *Super Market Merchandising*, an industry journal, Stanley Arnold, Vice President of Sales for Pick-n-Pay Supermarkets, outlined the recipe for the successful event. Noting that they “were delighted that the duke [sic] would come,” Arnold pointed out the ultimate goal for Pick-n-Pay, stating “One day Hawai‘i will be a State, and folks will remember that Pick-n-Pay celebrated the event first.” With 50,000 orchid leis to tie the event in with Mothers’ Day plus the appearance of the “genuine Duke Kahanamoku” Pick-n-Pay treated their visitor like the royal they thought he was.\(^ {81}\)

The event succeeded not only Pick-n-Pay but for Cisco as well. The publicity generated from Kahanamoku’s appearance on the Arthur Godfrey television program sold more aloha wear. More than any other single event, Kahanamoku’s appearances on the Godfrey show elicited the most interest in the Aloha shirts. The number of people who wrote to the sheriff asking for more information about the Aloha shirts he wore and talked about on the program with Godfrey was remarkable. Even more amazingly, Kahanamoku personally responded to all of these people.\(^ {82}\)

Some of the letter-writers were old friends from the 1910s or 1920s who wished to reconnect with the great swimmer who had befriended them. Palmer Rawley, a swimmer on George Kistler’s University of Pennsylvania team that Kahanamoku trained with in preparation for the 1912 Stockholm Games wrote to Kahanamoku after the

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\(^{80}\) Letter From H.C. Connelly To Duke Kahanamoku, 19 April 1954, DKC, Box 1, File 7, Pick-n-Pay Promotion, HSA.

\(^{81}\) Stanley Arnold, “A Honolulu Of A Sale,” *Super Market Merchandising* (Reprinted From Nov-Dec 1954 and Jan-Feb 1955 issues), DKC, Box 1, File 7, Pick-n-Pay Promotion, HSA.

\(^{82}\) Letters inquiring about the shirts related to Kahanamoku’s appearances on Godfrey’s shows confirm that assertion as evidenced through letters in Kahanamoku’s correspondence at the Hawai‘i State Archives.
Others were average American citizens who had very little understanding of Kahanamoku or his Hawaiian history but were intrigued by the notion of this exotic land. One in particular stood out and demonstrated that regardless of all his exploits Kahanamoku retained a strong sense of humor. In this correspondence, Ronald Harold Patridge from Bartlesville, Oklahoma, wrote Kahanamoku. “May it please your Majesty,” the letter began. Utilizing broken King James English, Patridge asked for free shirts or shorts. “The whereabouts in the United States does not want to be known to the writer provide he preferably can find one directly from the DUKE KAHANAMOKU shop on the Honolulu,” Patridge cryptically contended. “Hoping that thee can supply with one of the writers pattern coice directly from thee in Honolulu, may the writer beg to remain, Faithfully yours,” the Oklahoman concluded.

In true Kahanamoku spirit, the great swimmer replied in a letter using Pidgin English, “More better you write Engleesh leta.” Kahanamoku continued, “suppose you like ‘for free’ Kahanamoku shirt and auau clothes, more better you store go buy some, this time plenty got. No too dear, maybe $6.00 one.” Kahanamoku informed Patridge, “too bad you too late, no more free kind, all give already. Kahanamoku store no more in Honolulu. Maybe bye and bye get one. If I get I speak you. Thank you so much for nice leta only too sorry no more.”

83 Letter From Palmer B. Rawley To Duke Kahanamoku, 12 July 1954, DKC, Box 1, File 14, Correspondence 1954, HSA.
84 Letter From Ronald Harold Patridge To Duke Kahanamoku, 30 May 1954, DKC, Box 1, File 4, Inquiries, HSA.
85 Letter From Duke Kahanamoku To Ronald H. Patridge, 4 June 1954, DKC, Box 1, File 4, Inquiries, HSA.
In dealing with the multitudes of people asking for shirts, Kahanamoku usually graciously referred them to Joseph Rosenthal in New York for further information but apparently in this case he decided to have a little fun. Kahanamoku’s reliance upon Rosenthal is clear not only in the responses to inquiries about aloha wear but also in all areas of his business life. Throughout the rest of the 1950s all of Kahanamoku’s business opportunities went through Rosenthal and Cisco and his royalties continued to decline. Kahanamoku even had to have friends such as Henry Nakamura, the owner of Honolulu Harry’s Waikiki, a club in Chicago sign statements for Cisco. Kahanamoku had autographed a photo for Nakamura and the club owner had to sign a statement that he would not use it for commercial purposes and the photo could only be displayed in his private office.  

Kahanamoku did find other opportunities to make extra money during the decade when old friends came through Hawai‘i and signed him on to do work in films they were shooting in the Islands. John Wayne, the other Duke, offered his Hawaiian friend two opportunities, one in *Wake of the Red Witch* (1948), and the other in *Big Jim McLain* (1952). Director John Ford also gave Kahanamoku a role in the Oscar-winning film *Mister Roberts* (1955). For his part as Ua Naka, a Hawaiian chief, in *Wake of the Red Witch* Kahanamoku earned $500 a week, the screen actor’s guild minimum contract for a free lance actor. 

86 “Henry Nakamura Consent Statement,” DKC, Box 1, File 2, Aloha Shirts: Cisco Casuals, HSA.
88 “Republic Pictures Contract,” 22 July 1948, DKC, Box 1, File 1 Miscellaneous Enterprises, HSA.
Besides his Hollywood pals, other mainland friends also rallied around Kahanamoku. Arthur Godfrey stood up for the Hawaiian, arguing that Hawai`i should “give Duke $25,000 a year and a car and require him to do nothing but appear at the proper places.” Godfrey claimed “it’s a shame that he has to be the front man for a restaurant just so he can get enough money to eat.” The irony of the calls for help for Kahanamoku from mainland friends is that while many of them were quite wealthy they did little to assist the former Champion’s fortunes. Small parts in movies and blistering attacks on Hawaiian bureaucracy did not help Kahanamoku’s situation in the long term. It seemed that none of his friends provided him with what he really needed, guidance, assistance and solid partnership in business endeavors.

Kahanamoku’s traditional Hawaiian upbringing limited his understanding of American business dealings. While Godfrey stood up for his dear friend in newspaper articles, he never brought Kahanamoku in on any of his many business deals, which had made the television personality a very wealthy man. Godfrey had invested great sums in resort development in Florida, yet never coordinated on similar projects in Hawai`i where he could really give assistance to his good friend Duke Kahanamoku. Godfrey never invited Kahanamoku to invest in the multiple corporations that the television personality started - - endeavors which earned Godfrey millions of dollars. Godfrey, who made a career out of Hawaiian cultural symbols such as the ukulele, hula dancing and championing Waikiki, never stepped forward to bring Kahanamoku into his business ventures to help the swimmer earn a living from marketing Hawaiian culture.

While Kahanamoku could have used more direct help Godfrey did offer Kahanamoku advice that the swimmer heeded. After Godfrey’s visit to Hawai’i in 1961, Kahanamoku chose not to renew his Cisco contract. Perhaps Godfrey helped Kahanamoku realize that he was not reaping what he could through the sales of Aloha wear. Instead of renewing the contract as he had for twelve years Kahanamoku returned to the fold of the Hawaiian company with which he originally began Kahala. Kahanamoku also returned to his Hawaiian roots in collaborating with Kimo McVay on a couple of business proposals including opening a restaurant and lounge in the International Marketplace in Waikiki. The pair decided to name the restaurant Duke Kahanamoku’s to capitalize on the name of Hawai`i’s best known resident.\textsuperscript{90}

Unfortunately, Kahanamoku could not be freed from Cisco as easily as he had thought. In signing with Cisco in 1949, Kahanamoku gave them the rights to his name. Kahanamoku and McVay soon realized that Cisco did not intend to release their rights to Kahanamoku’s name. It took until 1964 when Cisco finally agreed to sell the rights back to Kimo McVay for $15,000 that Kahanamoku would be freed from the American corporation.\textsuperscript{91}

Kahanamoku enjoyed promoting Hawai`i and his clothing line. The advertising gigs allowed him to spend time with new and old friends. The business side of the endeavor did not engage the legendary Hawaiian’s interest nearly as much and consequently he never really had great success in his business activities. Kahanamoku


\textsuperscript{91} Kimo McVey, “Letter To Duke and Nadya Kahanamoku,”
struggled to understand the American system of business and trusted that others had the same levels of integrity that he had been raised to have. His partners profited greatly from Kahanamoku’s name particularly Cisco Casuals. Other ventures failed due to Kahanamoku’s lack of business experience such as the swim – fin’s. Kahanamoku would also try to invest in stocks and hotel development as well. In his personal papers at the Hawai‘i State Archives there are five dividend checks, two for 78¢ and three for 50¢ from Thompson Products out of Cleveland, Ohio, demonstrating that his investments in stock were far from lucrative. He also held stock in other companies as well but these also never panned out for the Olympic champion.92

After frustrating business relationships in the 1940s and 1950s when he tried to compete in the growing American consumer culture, the 1960s would witness Kahanamoku retreating to his Hawaiian roots and connections. A new chapter in Kahanamoku’s life was about to begin. Kahala and Kimo McVey offered Kahanamoku the chance to do what he loved, promote his new State of Hawai‘i by being Duke Kahanamoku. However, Kahanamoku would also have a great role in developing what the State of Hawai‘i would become.

92 Stock Certificate for Waikiki Lau Yee Chai, October 1955, DKC, Box 1, Folder 1, HSA.; Stock Certificate, Radio Honolulu Ltd., 12 April 1955, DKC, Box 1, Folder 1, HSA.; Checks for stock dividends from Thompson Products in Cleveland, Ohio, 1950, DKC, Box 1, Folder 10, HSA.;
CHAPTER 13

A NEW FUTURE FOR HAWAI`I: ASSIMILATION
STUGGLES

While Kahanamoku struggled in business ventures during the postwar years, he retained his ability to represent Hawai`i at home and abroad. Kahanamoku continued to run for sheriff and won re-election every time. He also was named to many commissions, honored with numerous awards and spoke out in favor of Hawaiian statehood. Kahanamoku epitomized the Hawaiian Island’s relationship with U.S. during the postwar period. He had been adopted by the United States to represent the nation’s Olympic teams for more than two decades. He had adapted his career and become a respected political figure and a loyal leader during wartime. In addition, he had tailored Hawaiian cultural fashions through the guise of Aloha shirts to make them suitable for the American palate. At the same time he embodied Hawai`i and its people. The 1940s and 1950s saw Kahanamoku and Hawaiian culture assimilate into American culture in ways beyond consumerism.

The most obvious example of Kahanamoku’s assimilation was his marriage to a mainland haole girl, a fact not lost on his wife Nadine. She recalled that there were instances when she knew that local women viewed her with suspicion and even hostility for winning away “their Duke.” Even Winona Love, Francis Brown’s lover with whom Nadine spent most of her honeymoon at the Brown’s house on the Big Island, sent vibes
of displeasure that Nadine picked up. Nadine remembered that “Winona I think resented me because I was a haole girl. She was polite and nice, but I did not feel accepted.”¹ Nadine remarked, “Oh, what I went through with the Hawaiians!” Reflecting on the older Hawaiian women in Honolulu who were protective of “their Duke,” she laughingly commented, “I don’t think they approved of him marrying a haole.”²

Kahanamoku’s marriage also naturally led the couple into closer associations with friends who were from backgrounds they shared. Entertainers from New York and Hollywood became the chosen guests of the couple when they traveled to the mainland or when those friends came to Honolulu. The Kahanamoku’s attended “dinner engagements, cocktail party[s]” and other social events within elite circles of Honolulu. News stories and photographs of the Kahanamokus often moved in these days from the sports pages into the society section of the newspaper.³ Nadine loved these events. Duke enjoyed them when she attended but confessed to his wife, “I don’t know I don’t have much fun without you being with me.”⁴

Many of the old Waikiki gang seemed to lose touch with Kahanamoku as he moved in new social circles. Kahanamoku remained in contact with his old pals through his work as sheriff or swimming and playing volleyball at the Outrigger Club. He would often have lunch with old friends such as “Tough Bill” but many of the Kahanamokus

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⁴ Letter from Duke Kahanamoku to Nadine Kahanamoku, 5 August 1947, Duke Kahanamoku Collection M-434, hereafter referred to as DKC, Box 1, File 12, Correspondence 1940-1949, Hawai`i State Archives, Honolulu, hereafter referred to as HSA.
social encounters together focused on time spent with mainland friends or transplants to Hawai`i. Arthur Godfrey, the mainland broadcasting celebrity, became Kahanamoku’s closest friend during this period. Godfrey would become Hawai`i’s biggest booster and would have his friend Duke Kahanamoku on his programs whenever possible. Godfrey would even broadcast from Waikiki Beach in the late 1950s and early 1960s - - with help from Kahanamoku. The two men regularly corresponded with each other and Kahanamoku gave the famous ukulele-playing red-head the nickname of Mino`aka, the smiling one.

The associations with haole friends such as Godfrey did not isolate Kahanamoku from the needs and concerns of his people, however. Kahanamoku had always believed in a sense of belonging or community. Whether it was his “gang” at Waikiki, the Hui Nalu or the United States Olympic team, Kahanamoku always seemed to develop a sense of camaraderie and mission revolving around those loosely knit organizations. In many ways the 1940s and 1950s demonstrate a further progression of community involvement in the life of Kahanamoku. During this time period, however, the organizations he joined were typically traditional mainland American institutions. While some of the influence from his participation in these organizations can be traced to his time spent in Los Angeles in the 1920s, Kahanamoku seemed during these later decades to actively

5 Letter from Duke Kahanamoku To Nadine Kahanamoku, 6 May 1947, DKC, Box 1, File 12, Correspondence 1940-1949, HSA.
6 Letter from Ed Carlson to Duke Kahanamoku, 23 July 1959, DKC, Box 2, File 51, HSA.
participate in this new larger community of the United States a change which he accepted as the way of the future.

Kahanamoku joined the Shriners during his years in Los Angeles but it was not until the 1940s and 1950s that he regularly attended national conventions.\(^8\) While always a very devout man and a faithful member of the Episcopalian Church, Kahanamoku continued to develop leadership roles in mainland religious organizations as well - - as did his wife.\(^9\) In addition, Kahanamoku also joined the Rotary Club and gained appointments to numerous charitable and governmental committees. It seemed clear, however, that rather than trying to become more “American,” Kahanamoku’s motivation continued to be giving to his community, which coincidentally grew into a larger sphere with deeper American roots.

As Hawaiian scholar George Hu`eu Sanford Kanahele noted, “in Hawaiian society the willingness to give was all-important” and was tied to “generosity and hospitality.”\(^10\) For Kahanamoku giving meant of his time, money, and effort to help build a stronger community for Hawai`i and its people. That path reasonably led him to assimilate into powerful American organizations to make sure that Hawai`i had representation. Kahanamoku believed that only through these associations with powerful people and organizations, would positive and dynamic change occur for his people. He attempted to use these new friends who seemed to have a genuine love for Hawai`i but

\(^8\) Masonic Temple Award and Letter, 1956, DKC, Box 2, File 25, HSA
\(^9\) Letter From Bob Ferris To Duke Kahanamoku, 27 July 1954, DKC, Box 1, File 14, Correspondence 1954., HSA.
also an astute understanding of American power structures for connections not only in business but in furthering the position of his beloved Islands. Arthur Godfrey probably epitomized this type of relationship as clearly as any other in Kahanamoku’s life.\textsuperscript{11}

Kahanamoku seemed at ease in speaking freely with Godfrey about Hawaiian concerns and issues. In a 1953 letter to Godfrey he declared “we are crossing our fingers in high hopes that one of our boys, the Hon. Samuel Wilder King, be appointed Governor of Hawaii.” Wilder had been elected as the Territorial representative for Congress numerous times and was a close friend of Kahanamoku’s. “Should this materialize it would be signal enough for every Hawaiian to rejoice, because it would be the very first time since 1898 (55 years ago), when a Polynesian Native Hawaiian is selected for the high post,” Kahanamoku noted. He explained that “to us, we feel that this is ‘full recognition’ of our citizenship in this our Great Country.” In a rare glimpse of personal reflection Kahanamoku expressed some of his own pent up frustration and experience: “up to this point it has been a case of ‘you [Hawaiians] can go so far and then stop’ while everybody else was being given consideration.”\textsuperscript{12}

Kahanamoku also asked Godfrey’s advice in attempts to get his younger brother Louis Kahanamoku, who had worked for him as a deputy, “a position as the United States Marshall for the District of Hawai`i.” The sheriff confided that “I do not know where to turn for the proper push to get him in, and I naturally turn to you knowing that

\textsuperscript{11} Michael Haas, \textit{Institutional Racism: The Case Of Hawai`i} (Westport, CT.: Praeger, 1992), 49-73. Haas demonstrates that various ethnic groups used a multitude of methods to attempt to combat institutional racism. Assimilation, decolonization, aloha theory and integration are a few of those theoretical designs to attempt to explain what he describes as “the changing discourse of ethnicity and race in Hawai`i.”

\textsuperscript{12} Letter From Duke Kahanamoku To Mr. Arthur Godfrey, 10 February 1953, DKC, Box 2, File 51, Arthur Godfrey, HSA.
you will gladly help if you can.” Kahanamoku acknowledged that Godfrey knew “the proper channels for this type of Washington merry-go-round.”

Even during his political struggles in battling for a new jail for Honolulu Kahanamoku turned to help Godfrey for help. Kahanamoku had pushed for a former U.S. immigration building, “the so-called Sand Island Site,” which he believed that “with some minor changes it can be converted into a very desirable jail.” Kahanamoku reported to Godfrey that after he announced his plans, “the papers have been pushing that it be used for the New Territorial Prison, which if granted would hi-jack it away from us, as ours is a Municipal Jail.” Kahanamoku’s plan to fight included a plea for Godfrey’s assistance to apply “early pressure to the Federal Government.”

Kahanamoku understood that Godfrey had strong connections in Washington and was much more than just a radio and television broadcaster. In fact, Godfrey’s name had been brought up in discussions as a potential candidate for the position of Assistant Secretary of the Navy. While that position never materialized Godfrey’s voice was regarded as the most trusted by the American people. Indeed, there were reports that Godfrey had been called upon by the President Eisenhower to record public service announcements which would be aired in the advent of a nuclear holocaust or other disaster to assuage the people that all would be all right.

13 Ibid.
14 Letter From Duke Kahanamoku To Mr. Arthur Godfrey, 2 February 1954, DKC, , Box 2, File 51, Arthur Godfrey, HSA.
15 Letter From Duke Kahanamoku To Mr. Arthur Godfrey, 10 February 1953, DKC.
While his relationship with Godfrey allowed him an opportunity to vent on issues of prejudice in Hawai`i or other concerns affecting his constituents, the residents of Hawai`i very seldom were allowed access into this private world. What they saw was their hero cavorting with elite mainland friends, signing contracts with mainland promoters, and aligning himself with those seeking statehood and full immersion into American culture.

Duke Kahanamoku, one of the original founders of the *Hui Nalu*, a club meant to offer inclusion to those left on the outside, had finally gained membership to every exclusive club on the islands and many on the mainland. He had access to presidents, royalty, business leaders, and celebrities. He hawked his shirts on mainland television and radio programs and stay with celebrities such as Bing Crosby and John Ford on his way home from business trips to the mainland.17

Kahanamoku publicly championed all things American, helping to establish Punchbowl National Cemetery for U.S. military veterans in Honolulu as well as playing a key role in the raising of funds for the U.S.S. Arizona Memorial. In 1953, the Governor of Hawai`i appointed Kahanamoku as a charter member of The Pacific War Memorial Commission. Kahanamoku enlisted the assistance of other athletes to promote the memorials. In 1960, He wrote to Willie Mays asking for the San Francisco Giants’ help. The Giants were scheduled to be in Honolulu to play a couple of baseball games en route to Japan for an exhibition series. Since the Hawai`i legislature had “officially adopted” the Giants as Hawai`i’s team, Kahanamoku utilized his personal friendship with the “Say

17 Letter From Duke Kahanamoku to John Ford, 10 June 1955, DKC, Box 1 Folder 15, HSA.
Hey Kid,” inquiring if Mays and some of his teammates could take an hour of their time to make a public appearance and “say a few words on behalf of the U.S.S. Arizona Memorial.” Noting that a “formal invitation” would be extended to Mays, Kahanamoku explained “I did want to contact you personally and let you know how deeply I feel about the U.S.S. Arizona Memorial and how sincerely I urge you to help us in this most worthy cause at a time when we urgently need your help.”

While Kahanamoku sought out the influence of other great athletes, he found himself favored by American leaders to promote their causes as well. President Dwight Eisenhower and Vice-President Richard Nixon named Kahanamoku to the Eisenhower-Nixon Sports Committee. Ironically this appointment happened just prior to both Eisenhower and Kahanamoku, two heroes known for their vitality, suffering heart attacks. Kahanamoku was also an honored dignitary at U. S. military displays of new weapon systems. A 1961 military film shows Kahanamoku arriving at the O‘ahu test site for the first missile shoot of the Nike-Hercules missile along with other VIPs.

In 1957 Kahanamoku’s life would even be featured on the American television classic This Is Your Life, hosted by Ralph Edwards. The program, which billed itself as “a show for all America,” set out to connect Kahanamoku to mainstream mainlanders. In a historical piece reflecting his childhood Ralph Edwards gave a brief history of the abdication of the throne of Liliuokalani culminating in the celebration of “the American

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18 Letter From Duke Kahanamoku To Willie Mays, 8 September 1960, DKC, Box 2, File 46, Pacific War Memorial Commission, HSA.
20 “First Nike-Hercules missile shoot by the Hawai‘i National Guard Dillingham Airstrip, Oahu, Hawai‘i,” 8 October 1961, Moving Images, Record group 111, NWDNM(m) 111-LC-45191, National Archives, College Park, Md.
flag being raised over Honolulu in 1898.” Kahanamoku’s sister Bernice shared how their father taught her brother to swim in the old-fashioned Hawaiian way. She told how the elder Duke tossed his four-year-old son Duke Paoa out of the outrigger canoe and let him sink or swim. Duke Kahanamoku related that “there was a lot of splashing around, but I made it.” The story, while true, lent itself to establishing the pluck and courage that Americans identified with their athletic heroes. Bernice also commented that the whole family had become American citizens in 1900 communicating clearly that though they are Hawaiians they are Americans just the same.  

Playing upon the theme of American loyalty the majority of the program focused upon Kahanamoku’s Olympic achievements. Edwards incorrectly stated that Kahanamoku had participated in five Olympic Games for the United States giving him credit for participating in the 1928 Amsterdam Games when he in actuality did not make the team due to an illness. However, each of the other games were highlighted with a fellow U.S. team member coming on stage to share a story. Breaststroke champion Mike “Turk” McDermott shared about Kahanamoku’s amazing sleeping abilities and how he found the Hawaiian asleep under the stands just in time to make his first preliminary race in 1912. Distance swimming star Ludy Langer from the 1920 games, whom Kahanamoku called Dutch, shared how Kahanamoku would always swim just fast enough to win, putting on a burst of speed at the end. And Johnny Weissmuller came out and warmly shared how Kahanamoku helped him to win the gold medal in Paris, thereby dethroning the two-time defending Olympic champion. Weissmuller explained that 

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Kahanamoku trained with him for those Olympics and that “this big lug gave me all the confidence in the world.” Weissmuller noted that Kahanamoku would watch over us in training and “would force me to get back into the pool and keep working harder.” “He was like a big brother to all of us boys, he looked out for us all” Weissmuller recalled. Once again playing on the patriotic theme of the show Weissmuller remarked that Kahanamoku “never worried about himself, all he wanted was to make sure that the U.S. came in one, two, three at the Olympic Games.” Kahanamoku simply replied, “that’s right. And we did!”

Besides the Olympics The program also highlighted Kahanamoku’s role as a loving husband, family member, and friend. It also established him as a selfless hero as well. Edwards brought back three members of the crew of the Thelma whom Kahanamoku had rescued on his surfboard when it sank in 1925 at Newport Beach, California. Interestingly though the stage was set up to look like Waikiki and Edwards himself wore an aloha shirt to host the program the tone of the program had little to do with Hawaiian culture. Granted everyone wore aloha wear and Kahanamoku’s brothers and sisters sang Hawaiian songs in the background so that Duke could dance a little hula, but it was still Americana with some Hawaiian seasoning added for flavor. In passing, Edwards mentioned that Kahanamoku was regarded as the father of modern surfing at the end of the show, but no mention of his surfing exploits were ever espoused. There were plenty of film clips of what we would assume are Kahanamoku swimming in Olympic competition but none of him on a surf board. Duke’s brothers Sam and David

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22 Ibid.
Kahanamoku, also members of the 1924 Paris Olympic team, were acknowledged but remained in the background on the set. When Lang Akana came out for a brief moment he and Kahanamoku conversed in Hawaiian prompting Edwards to joke, “I hope you said something good, for the sake of our Prell sponsors.” Clearly the program established Kahanamoku as an American hero who happened to be a dark-skinned Hawaiian. As Edwards concluded the show he elaborated that “if a shining example of a true sportsman lives anywhere in the world it lives in your heart, this is your life Duke Kahanamoku.”

Edward’s wildly popular show established Kahanamoku as an American star. Other television executives attempted to do the same. In the 1950s numerous script possibilities were brought to the attention of Kahanamoku. One early script given to him in 1952 came from a writer who had just come to Honolulu named Jack Walklin. Walklin envisioned a show composed of vignettes which told a story of both the old and new Hawai‘i described by Kahanamoku. The proposed show entitled “Back and Beyond with Duke Kahanamoku” would highlight the moral character of the great champion. Walklin commented that he envisioned Kahanamoku reaching “the millions of under priveleged [sic] and discriminated against populations” and boosting their morale.

Walklin proposed a story that looked at “the old days, the new days. The hard times, the good times. The Greats and Near Greats he has Known. The little people. Impressions gathered from them all. Their trials and victories.” Noting that the show could have “Tie-Ins” with products like Duke Kahanamoku clothing Walklin proposed that

23 Ibid.
24 Jack Walklin, “Back and Beyond with Duke Kahanamoku,” 23 November 1952, DKC, Box 2, File 49, HSA.
Kahanamoku would be made “the epitome of adventure and masculine prowess.”

25 Kahanamoku seemed to like the idea and the parts of the script that Walklin wrote but for reasons unknown it never came to fruition. Potential clues to its failure though may be seen in another potential production which came before Kahanamoku six years later.

Frank Walton, friend of Kahanamoku’s who worked in the office of the Chief of Police in Los Angeles wrote Kahanamoku in 1958 to inform him of a potential project that he could arrange with a television producer. Walton spoke with the producer about a “Dragnet” style television program set in Hawai`i. Apparently Walton had arranged for the Los Angeles Police Department’s (LAPD) to receive $100 for every episode of Dragnet produced in exchange for their technical advice. Walton envisioned a line in the credits for the Hawai`i show stating “Technical advice from the office of Duke Kahanamoku, Sheriff, Honolulu, T.H.” He told Kahanamoku “the series . . .would feature the Islands, their beauty and their music, with an undercurrent of the high adventure and drama that take place with law enforcement.”26

Kahanamoku responded to Walton explaining that his office did no “apprehension duties” and that the show may suffer as far as “the interesting things now being shown” on television police shows.27 This seemingly did not detract from the television producers excitement. Belden TV Productions in Hollywood negotiated wonderful terms for Kahanamoku through Walton. Whereas the LAPD received $100 per episode Belden offered Kahanamoku $250 for each film in the series whether he appeared in the show or

25 Letter From Jack Walklin to Duke Kahanamoku, 23 November 1952, DKC, Box 2 File 49, HSA.
26 Letter From Frank Walton to Duke Kahanamoku, 15 April 1958, DKC, Box 2, File 50, HSA.
27 Letter From Duke Kahanamoku to Frank Walton, 5 June 1958, DKC, Box 2, File 50, HSA.
not. In addition the company offered “a minimum of $250.00 for each day, or part thereof, in which his services are required during the shooting of each film.” These were extremely favorable terms for Kahanamoku. However, his contract with Cisco created an obstacle. He would need to get approval from Cisco for the use of his name and character in the films. This would be a deal breaker. Kahanamoku wrote to a Mr. Harry Bron explaining that “for the present I cannot accept your offer.” Kahanamoku claimed that he had other proposals which were “much more attractive to me.” This apparently was a means for Kahanamoku to save face as it is clear that there were no other proposals and once again Cisco had crushed the deal with their exclusivity agreement on Kahanamoku’s name. In retrospect it could have possible been the same case with the series proposed by Walklin earlier in the decade. Regardless, Kahanamoku walked away from a lucrative contract and Hollywood would have to wait for ten years before cashing in on a police drama set in Hawai’i, when in 1968, Hawai’i Five-0 made the start of its twelve year run on television.

Television understood the impact of Kahanamoku as not only a Hawaiian star but a symbol for Americans as a whole. Unfortunately Kahanamoku would not have the opportunity outside of guest appearances on Arthur Godfrey, Ed Sullivan, and Ralph Edwards’ shows to demonstrate his American nature. Not everyone believed that Kahanamoku truly represented American culture however and he found himself excluded

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28 Letter From G. Carleton Brown to Frank Walton, 20 August 1958, DKC, Box 2, File 50, HSA.
29 Letter From Duke Kahanamoku to Frank Walton, 11 September 1958, DKC, Box 2, File 50, HSA.
30 Letter From Duke Kahanamoku To Harry Bron, 31 October 1958, DKC, Box 2, File 50, HSA.
at times. Ironically by the very organization he first represented as an American to the world, the USOC.

In 1956, Kahanamoku went to the Melbourne Olympic Games as the official guest of the Australian Olympic Federation. Numerous requests were made to Avery Brundage, the president of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) at the time and a former United States Olympic teammate of Kahanamoku from the 1912 Stockholm Games, to honor the former champion in some manner. When Brundage, the IOC, and the United States Olympic Committee (USOC) failed to demonstrate any interest in the project, the Australian officials gladly welcomed Kahanamoku to their fold. They paid for his and Nadine’s passage aboard the S.S. Mariposa to Melbourne and back, their lodging at the Majestic Hotel from November 19 to December 10, as well as providing tickets to all venues. Even though the U.S. team had trained in Hawai`i en route to the Games, Kahanamoku offered an opportunity to be a guest of his own nation’s team. Even those who had asked Kahanamoku to be a part of their sport commission, the President and vice president of the U.S. took no interest in the Hawaiian champion. The White House sent Jesse Owens, Bob Mathias and other sporting stars to represent the U.S. in Melbourne but neglected to offer a position to Kahanamoku. As an Australian guest, Kahanamoku officially represented the Territory of Hawai`i rather than the United States. Governor Samuel Wilder King appointed Kahanamoku as his official delegate to the Olympics. The Hawaiian Visitors Bureau, through the work of “Howdy” Reynolds

32 W.T.J. Uren, Letter From W.T.J. Uren To Mr. Kahanamoku, 29 August 1956, DKC, Box 3, File 70, Olympics 1956, HSA.
and Bill Cogswell, provided “10,000 ilima paper leis with the Visitors Bureau tag for distribution by Duke Kahanamoku and the actual participants from Hawai‘i in the Olympic games.”

Ironically, Kahanamoku went to these games as Hawai‘i’s representative after he represented both his island homeland and the United States four times as a competitor. Avery Brundage, the IOC, the White House, and the USOC seemed unconcerned about the slight even with the topic of statehood for Hawai‘i looming as a strong factor in contemporary political discussions.

Kahanamoku and Brundage never became close associates. Brundage’s “aura of impersonality,” as sport historian Allan Guttmann described the IOC president’s interpersonal skills, may have played a part in that development. Lord Porritt, an IOC associate of Brundage’s for many years, explained, “I knew him [Brundage] very well, but I never got close to him. I liked him and trusted him, but I could never call him a friend.” If it was difficult for those who worked with Brundage regularly and who held a mutual trust to get close with the IOC leader, then those whom Brundage viewed with the least bit of suspicion had no chance of engaging the “apostle of amateurism” in friendship. Kahanamoku’s frequent battles with the Amateur Athletic Association (AAU) over his amateur status surely aroused Brundage’s suspicions.

Brundage fiercely upheld the standards of amateurism. Kahanamoku’s constant flirtations with professionalism irked his former teammate from 1912. Brundage railed

34 “Howdy” Reynolds, Letter From Howdy Reynolds To Mr. Duncan McBryde, 11 October 1956, DKC, Box 3, File 70, Olympics 1956, HSA. According the Pukui and Elbert the ilima is a “native shrub bearing yellow, orange, greenish or dull red flowers. It was “designated in 1923 by the Territorial Legislature as the flower of O‘ahu.” Pukui and Elbert, Hawaiian Dictionary, 98.


36 Ibid, 110.
against skiers who earned money from teaching their sport and deemed them professionals, even banning Austrian skier Karl Schranz for accepting money to appear in ski manufacturer’s advertisements.\textsuperscript{37}

There is no doubt that he would have considered Kahanamoku in the same category in regards to his surfing, beach boy, swimming, and film exploits. Brundage asserted that “the amateur plays for the sake of play, for the love of it, as the etymology of ‘amateur implies, while professionals are those who have some other motive, usually materialistic. There are those who compete ‘for the love of the game itself without the thought of reward or payment of any kind,’ and they are free men; the others are ‘employees’ and ‘entertainers.’” Brundage believed that these “entertainers” were professionals and that “there is no place for them in the Olympic Games.”\textsuperscript{38} In Brundage’s view Kahanamoku may not have breached the letter of the law on amateurism but he certainly broke the spirit of the rules. Brundage, a wealthy, self-made, white businessman never experienced the racial struggles that Kahanamoku did in attempting to earn a living while maintaining his amateur standing and therefore could never empathize with the Hawaiian’s plight.\textsuperscript{39}

Kahanamoku’s friendship with Jim Thorpe may have also served as a wedge between the two former teammates. Thorpe was Brundage’s “nemesis” and had defeated the University of Chicago athlete in the Olympic decathlon at the 1912 Games to become

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\textsuperscript{38} “The Olympic Story,” Chapter II, pp. 4-6, in the Avery Brundage Collection, microfilm, Special Collections, Boxes 330-331, the Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA,

\textsuperscript{39} Guttman, \textit{The Games Must Go On}, 29.
hailed as “the greatest athlete in the world,” only to have his medals stripped due to charges of professionalism.\textsuperscript{40} Brundage biographer Guttmann noted that “Brundage was extremely upset when his opponents cheated.”\textsuperscript{41} Brundage never seemed to forgive or understand Thorpe’s indiscretions. In 1971, arguing in a letter the question of whether an athlete could be a professional in one sport and an amateur in another, Brundage still brought up the ghost of Thorpe’s unfair victory inquiring, “what about professional basketball and football players who want to compete in track and field?”\textsuperscript{42}

Brundage doggedly believed that Thorpe had committed the greatest sin that an Olympian could and that it had directly affected Brundage as a competitor. Kahanamoku held a very different view of the events and believed that Thorpe had been wrongly disgraced and the one man powerful enough to right the wrong was Avery Brundage. This disagreement of itself may explain the lack of communication between the two Olympians.\textsuperscript{43}

Remarkably, in neither Kahanamoku’s nor Brundage’s papers can any correspondence between the two former 1912 Olympians be found.\textsuperscript{44} Since both began their Olympic careers traveling on the Red Star Line’s \textit{U.S.S. Finland} on June 14, 1912, en route to Stockholm, and continued in Olympic and amateur sport circles for many

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid, 117, 27.
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid, 30.
\textsuperscript{42} Letter From Avery Brundage To Lord David Burghley, 19 May 1971, Avery Brundage Collection, microfilm, Box 55, Special Collections, the Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA.
\textsuperscript{44} In the personal papers of Duke Kahanamoku at the Hawai’i State Archives and the Bishop Museum in Honolulu, as well as the Avery Brundage Collection on microfilm at the Pennsylvania State University, no correspondence between the two men could be found.
decades, this is certainly odd.\textsuperscript{45} Kahanamoku had served as the Hawaiian AAU president while Brundage headed the national organization in the 1920s. When Kahanamoku was finishing his Olympic career as an athlete in 1932 at Los Angeles Brundage was heading the USOC effort at the Games. Both were also members of an organization named “The U.S. Olympians” that held annual reunions of all former United States Olympic team members.\textsuperscript{46}

Brundage, as the president of the USOC, had “expressed considerable interest in the movement,” and became the Mid-West Group’s (Chicago) first president in 1948. Kahanamoku belonged to the Hawai`i chapter of the organization and traveled to a reunion dinner in 1952 in Philadelphia.\textsuperscript{47} This organization, inspired and founded by Samuel N. Gerson, an Olympic wrestler and teammate of Kahanamoku’s from the 1920 Antwerp Games, would give rise to a larger organization named Olympian International as other countries joined. In 1965, Kahanamoku was elected a vice president of this international organization that, interestingly, was headed by co-honorary president Avery Brundage.\textsuperscript{48} However, in their volumes of papers and collections there is no direct correspondence between the two men and very few indirect references either.\textsuperscript{49}

\textsuperscript{45} “Red Star Line Passenger List,” 14 June 1912, Avery Brundage Collection found in Special Collections at The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA, Box 242.
\textsuperscript{46} Olympic Welcoming Dinner, Program from Eighth Reunion of the Philadelphia Chapter, 13 November 1952, DKC, Box 3, file 68, Olympics, Misc., HSA.
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{48} “Note To Duke Kahanamoku From Samuel N. Gerson,” 7 February 1965, DKC, Box 3, File 68, Olympics Misc., HSA. Gerson wrote Kahanamoku to inform him of his selection while reminding Kahanamoku that Duke had “promised to find a younger man to take your place.”
\textsuperscript{49} There are only a handful of mentions of Brundage or Kahanamoku in their respective papers. It is clear that they were acquaintances but they had nothing at all to do with one another. There seems to be no implicit animosity but the lack of any correspondence or mention seems odd concerning the very similar social and athletic circles the two traveled in.
Brundage stopped over in Hawai‘i on his return from the 1956 Melbourne Games yet there is no evidence that he ever met up with Kahanamoku.\textsuperscript{50} Brundage did have interactions with other Hawaiian AAU leaders including Dr. Richard W. You and Mrs. E. Fullard-Leo yet even in their personal letters these people never mentioned Kahanamoku. Whereas they sent aloha from other members of Hawai‘i’s athletic and business community, no mention of Kahanamoku occurs in any way, shape, or form. If Kahanamoku had not been the most visible symbol of Hawaiian Olympic success and a former teammate of Brundage’s this would not seem so strange. However, given those circumstances it seems that their relationship was strained at best. Given the very different personalities of Brundage and Kahanamoku this would not be hard to imagine.

Brundage became the most powerful person in the Olympic movement when he became president of the IOC. Even those closest to him understood that the surly and driven Brundage considered himself the keeper of the integrity of Olympism. Brundage viewed running the Olympic Games a calling beyond sport, it was a sacred privilege to be upheld in the strictest sense with authority and power. Olympism for Brundage entailed a “religion with universal appeal which incorporates all the basic values of other religions.”\textsuperscript{51}

For Kahanamoku the prime motivation of his life was to live out aloha, to care for people and the world around him with deep compassionate love. Power and authority, or mana, for Kahanamoku resided in how one cared for and honored others and the world

\textsuperscript{50} Avery Brundage, “Return Itinerary 1956 Australian Olympic Games,” Box 109, Avery Brundage Collection found in Special Collections at The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA.
\textsuperscript{51} “Opening Address To The 62\textsuperscript{nd} Session of the I.O.C., Tokyo, October 6, 1964,” \textit{Speeches Of Avery Brundage} (Lausanne: Comité International Olympique, 1968), p. 80.
around them. Intricately connected to humility and generosity *mana* had very little to do with one’s title, position or personal desires. Brundage’s view of power derived from his success as an American businessman and his authoritarian ideals. Being in charge to Brundage meant making sure that things occurred according to his plans.  

Correspondence regarding the possibility of Kahanamoku’s awarding swimming medals at the 1960 Olympic Games in Rome demonstrated these differences. Influential Hawaiian businessman Walter Dillingham’s wife Louise had inquired of John Jewett Garland, an IOC member for the United States, as to the possibility of Kahanamoku’s presenting the medals for the 100-meter and 400-meter relay swimming events in Italy. Garland, an old friend of Kahanamoku’s, investigated the protocols for awarding medals and responded to Mrs. Dillingham in 1959, explaining that it “would be impossible to assure Duke that he could award the medals” for the events. Garland explained that after the 1952 Helsinki Games the IOC had decided that “the President of the International Olympic Committee alone would award the prizes, namely Avery Brundage.”  

The rationale for this move stretched back to the 1936 Berlin Games when Adolph Hitler attempted to use the Games to advance his Nazi idealism. Hitler had been asked by the IOC to refrain from using his position of authority to greet the athletes after the first day or two when it became clear that there were deeper political agendas separate

53 Letter From John Jewett Garland To Mrs. Walter S. Dillingham,” 3 March 1959, DKC, Box 3, File 68, Olympics Misc., HSA.
from the ideals of Olympism that motivated the German leader.\textsuperscript{54} In order to attempt to diffuse potential cold war posturing with the inclusion of the Soviet Union scheduled for 1956 into the Olympic movement the IOC took away any potential for abuse by placing the awarding responsibilities with the IOC President. Sport scholar Alfred E. Senn noted that “the Soviet entry into the Olympic Games also opened a new era of Olympic politics as sport competition became a test of the two rival superpowers and the systems they claimed to represent.” Brundage, a fervent critic of nationalism in the Olympic movement, viewed control of awarding of the medals in the hands of the IOC president as a means of controlling the destructive powers of national politics.\textsuperscript{55}

More telling however, were Garland’s comments regarding Brundage in his explanation. Garland mentioned that the procedure existed that if the IOC president was not at the venue then protocol held for the IOC “member from the winner’s country to award his countryman the prize.” If no IOC member was present then “someone else would be selected. The decision, therefore would lie with Avery Brundage, who” Garland noted, “was an Olympic team mate of the Duke’s in 1912.”\textsuperscript{56} Garland explained that as IOC president “if Avery were there at the time these events were run he could very easily . . . call the Duke from the stands and ask him to make this award.” Garland warned, “I doubt if he would commit himself at this time even if the Duke wrote him directly.”

\textsuperscript{54} William J. Baker, \textit{Sports In The Western World} (Urbana: University of Illinois Press), 256.
\textsuperscript{55} Albert Erich Senn, \textit{Power, Politics, And The Olympic Games} (Champaign: Human Kinetics, 1999), p. 95.
\textsuperscript{56} Letter From Garland To Mrs. Walter S. Dillingham, 3 March 1959, HSA.
Shrewdly extracting himself from any further involvement in the matter and
demonstrating a reluctance to approach Brundage, Garland offered the advice that
Kahanamoku should write Brundage directly, “and not have the matter brought to his
attention by a third party, namely myself.” Garland alluded to Brundage’s temperament
explaining to Mrs. Dillingham that “if you show this letter to the Duke I am sure he will
understand what I means as he undoubtedly knows Avery as well as I.” Garland
concluded by supporting the plan personally as a “wonderful idea,” stating that “I know
nothing could be more popular with the sportsmen all over the world than to see Duke
Kahanamoku award the winning medals for those two races.”

Mrs. Dillingham gave the letter to Kahanamoku. In typical Kahanamoku fashion
the great champion apparently never tried to promote himself for the honor, especially
not directly to Brundage. Kahanamoku’s humility precluded him from asking for such an
honor, and his relationship with Brundage obviously was not stellar.

While the less than overwhelming support for Kahanamoku amid attempts to
honor him exemplified the USOC’s backing of its great former champion from Hawai‘i,
it was not the only place Kahanamoku felt the sting of vocal support without real
substance behind it. Both the Hawaiian government and the U. S. government would
give Kahanamoku less assistance than he needed to fulfill missions they gave him.

Potentially the most frustrating instance of this could be found in his position as
the elected sheriff of Honolulu. Kahanamoku campaigned in his first election in 1934 on
a platform that highlighted his integrity. However, he also clearly explained his desire to

\[57\] Ibid.
work to build a new jail for the outdated one he had to supervise. Unfortunately for Kahanamoku he never was able to campaign in an election without recalling that same dream. The 1940s and 1950s saw Kahanamoku emerge as a sure thing in the election for sheriff. He often ran unopposed in the biennial race. For all of his humility and sportsmanship it must be noted that Kahanamoku remained highly competitive. He did not necessarily want to embarrass anyone in defeat but, make no mistake, he wanted to win.

This competitive drive carried over into his political life. Kahanamoku seemed to relish the sheriff’s race. In the 1940s when he had no opponents to challenge him he would compete against fellow politicians who were also running unopposed. In his personal papers, Kahanamoku kept newspapers with the election results detailing total votes received by precinct. Interestingly, he highlighted his vote tallies with two others running for office, Leonard K. Fong, a fellow Republican running for auditor, and Leon K. Sterling, a Democrat running for clerk. Sterling, a cousin of Kahanamoku’s and his former deputy at the sheriff’s office, Fong, and Kahanamoku were all good friends. It seems that Kahanamoku held his own competition not only counting the total number of votes but also highlighting the precincts he won and lost and what the margin was in comparison to his friends. In 1946 Kahanamoku had come out on top with 31,303 votes compared to Fong’s 30,031 and Sterling’s 29,963.58

This vote tracking, despite the fact that they were not competing for the same office, demonstrated that Kahanamoku relished challenges. However, he never felt a

58 “Kahanamoku Who Didn’t Need It Got 31,303 Votes,” The Honolulu Advertiser, 7 October 1946, p. 3.
need to highlight these competitive urges in public. In a similar way, Kahanamoku displayed his competitive nature in the datebooks that he kept.\(^{59}\) While most of the information in the datebooks is relatively mundane it is remarkable for its detail. Kahanamoku noted when he received letters and from whom, his daily meetings and even his workouts. Kahanamoku’s datebook was more of a record of what happened each day rather than a daily planner looking ahead.

Kahanamoku enjoyed keeping track of his athletic successes in these datebooks as well. Even though they would be merely pick-up type games Kahanamoku noted his wins and losses in volleyball, canoeing, and swimming in his daily trips to the Outrigger Canoe Club. It is not clear whether his vanquished foes ever realized the importance they played in his life but it is clear he kept diligent track of his success and failures. An example recorded on Sunday, February 21, 1943, noted that “11:20 am volleyball. Duke & Sarge vs. Chiswick & Ted Hughes, D & S won three straight games - 3 different sets.” Later that day after “surf/skiing at ‘popular surf,’” Kahanamoku and brother Sargeant once again reportedly battled unknown foes and “won 2 games, lost one.”\(^{60}\)

Kahanamoku continued to record these competitive contests through his datebooks and in tracking election results as he ran unopposed until December of 1955, when his life suddenly changed. Kahanamoku suffered a heart attack. Upon his recovery his doctors informed him that his volleyball career had ended.\(^{61}\) Others saw this health weakness as an opportunity to unseat the sheriff. In 1956 three Democrats and a

\(^{59}\) Duke Kahanamoku, DKC, Box 6, File 98, Datebooks, HSA. A number of Kahanamoku’s datebooks are kept here covering different time periods of his life.

\(^{60}\) Duke Kahanamoku, “Datebook 1943,” 21 February 1943, DKC, Box 6, File 98, Datebooks, HSA.

Republican presented Kahanamoku with what Honolulu papers called “more competition than he’s had since 1940.” Kahanamoku responded to the challengers stating, “the more the merrier, it’s a free country. It’s up to the people.”

Kahanamoku’s successful recovery and constant public appearances sailing on his catamaran allayed any fears the public may have had regarding the sheriff’s ability to perform his duties. The Honolulu Republican also benefited from the added exposure of President Dwight D. Eisenhower’s campaigning shortly after “Ike’s” own heart attack, demonstrating that the ailment could be overcome. If the President of the United States could do it, surely Hawai‘i’s Duke could do it as well. Nadine Kahanamoku made sure that the public observed the connection by informing reporters that “like President Eisenhower, her husband is all set for campaigning.” The people decided. Voters once again made Kahanamoku sheriff again. This time, for the first time since 1936, he had to run not only in the primary but also in the general election.

While Kahanamoku successfully won the battle for the sheriff’s office he ended up losing the political war. During the late 1950s and 1960 Hawaiian politics underwent a revolution in which Democrats wrested political control away from the Republicans. One of the factors in this shift came as a result of stated Republican policies in the platform which were hard to sell to a diverse population such as Hawai‘i’s. The Republican Party became embroiled in Cold War political battles about “how to fight communism.” The Hawai‘i Republican News, a monthly publication which in September

1948 highlighted Duke Kahanamoku by placing his picture on the cover, argued that “the rights of the minority have been overemphasized.” Stating that “a majority opinion is not dependent upon individual rights,” and that “minorities in America are offered opportunities to build up their own majority,” the Republican stance raised questions in a community with numerous minority ethnic groups who experienced the prejudices of the white ruling classes opinions constantly. Solidifying the mistrust of Republicans by the middle and lower classes and ethnic minorities, the chairman of the Territorial Republican central committee, O.P. Soares, argued that “the chief trouble in politics today is a departure from majority rule. Giving in, even partially, to minorities has weakened the republic.”

Ethnic minorities, while still supporting their sheriff and believing that he performed his tasks admirably for the Territory, could not join with their leader’s party’s stance in support of majority rights and the oppression of minorities. As a result, many of them moved to a stronger allegiance with the Democratic Party and its ideals. While this migration had no effect upon his election to office, as evidenced in the 1956 election results, it opened the door for a legislative change in the Territory. This changing of the guard would allow Democratic leaders the opportunity to do something that they could not accomplish through election results, defeating the popular Republican stalwart sheriff through abolishment of his governmental position.

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In 1957 the Honolulu City Charter Commission released plans to “abolish the office of Sheriff.”

Perhaps justification for the abolishment of the position could be seen in the realities that while Kahanamoku traveled on the mainland, to Australia, and in Europe during the 1950s, often for months at a time, his office seemed to run smoothly without his presence. The political reality, however, existed that due to his vast popularity in the islands the only way to get rid of Kahanamoku would be to abolish his position. The City Charter Commission also faced another political reality in that abolishing the position required the approval of voters regarding the planned new city charter. To dump Kahanamoku in the charter would spell doom for its approval without arrangements made to move the revered Hawaiian champion to another position.

Recognizing the allure of Kahanamoku around the world and his status with celebrities and dignitaries, proposals began to be floated in the media as to a potential position as “‘official greeter’ for Honolulu.”

When approached about the potential of the new position by reporters Kahanamoku responded that he “would consider the greeter job if it is offered to him ‘depending on the duties involved.’” However, media reports observed that the “colorful figure and former Olympic swim champion” also “added that he would like to serve one more term as sheriff.” With apparent consent from Kahanamoku, City Charter Commission members finalized their proposals for governmental changes to be enacted in 1961 thus granting Kahanamoku his request to

66 Ibid.
serve one more term as sheriff. Kahanamoku’s still hoped that with those two years in office he might finally accomplish his top priority of building a new jail. In 1955 Kahanamoku had made what newspapers erroneously cited as his “23rd Annual Plea” for “a new city-county jail.” In actuality, it was only his 21st request, as Kahanamoku’s first election occurred in 1934 and not 1932 as The Honolulu Advertiser had reported. 

Regardless, it must have tested Kahanamoku’s resiliency to year after year make the same request only to have his efforts rejected by the mayor and the board.

Unfortunately for Sheriff Kahanamoku, even with the added term of the 1958 election, Democratic leaders thwarted his requests and never approved the construction of a new jail while he remained in office. In what could be seen cynically as cruel vindictiveness after Kahanamoku’s ousting from his position as sheriff Honolulu officials did approve funding for a new jail which was finally built in 1962.

To Kahanamoku’s credit he did not view the timing of events as a snub but rejoiced that the facility actually was built regardless of whether or not it could be attributed to his leadership. Kahanamoku’s wife Nadine remembered that “he was very, very pleased when the new prison was built. He had traveled extensively around the mainland visiting jails, getting ideas.” Indeed, Kahanamoku and other officials from Honolulu traveled in 1959 on a tour of different facilities. They had visited jails in numerous communities including Redwood City, San Jose, Sacramento and Los Angeles,

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71 Hall and Ambrose, Memories of Duke, 107.
72 Ibid.

The jail project however was not the only project in which other officials ignored Kahanamoku’s ideas. The sheriff had also been appointed by Governor William Quinn to sit on the Capitol Site Committee in 1958 in anticipation of Hawai`i’s entrance to the Union as a State. Territorial Planning Office Director Frank Lombardi, personally wrote a note to Kahanamoku in an attempt to heal any rifts that may have occurred due to the selection of the site. Kahanamoku had favored a piece of land, on the Kailua side of the \textit{Pali} (a large cliff separating Honolulu from the windward side of the island where Kailua is located) for construction of the capitol and had lobbied diligently for that site as it held practical utility and historical relevance as an ancient royal property. However, Lombardi decided upon the “Armstrong plan” which encompassed building up a sand bar near Honolulu Harbor that would serve as an island to house the Capitol building. A short bridge spanning the water in the harbor would access the island. The idea was to have the capitol itself symbolize the status of Hawai`i’s role as an island by surrounding

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\begin{itemize}
\item \footnote{Richard M. Stannard, “Famous Honolulan Here For Tips On New Jail,” \textit{Redwood City Tribune}, 25 February 1959, p. 3.}
\item \footnote{Harold Scherwitz, “Sportslights: Kahanamoku Pays Us A Call,” \textit{San Antonio Light}, 6 March 1959, p. 27.}
\end{itemize}
it with views of the water on all sides. Lombardi’s personal note on the letter that he sent to all of the committee members informing them of his recommendation to Governor Quinn simply read, “Duke: I know you like the Pali site but Armstrong will give us a capitol on the water, convenient for most people. It can be terrific and I believe you would be proud of the Armstrong Capitol site.” For Kahanamoku the frustration of the dismissal of his opinions must have added to a sense of powerlessness at the end of his political career.

While Kahanamoku did not gain much political capital in advancing his plans on the local or state level, Hawai`i cashed in on the use of their most famous citizen. Besides Kahanamoku’s notoriety while traveling the mainland looking at ideas for jails and the great publicity the islands received, Hawai`i officials also sought out the Kahanamokus to represent Hawai`i as “Aloha Ambassadors” in 1960 after the Territory had become a State. In this position the couple traveled throughout Asia with two other couples to promote Hawai`i as a tourist and business destination. Each of the men were selected by Governor Quinn to represent “a different race of the Pacific” and were encouraged to “tell of his own life in a democracy.” Along with Duke and Nadine Kahanamoku, the “Aloha Ambassadors” consisted of Chairman Herbert K.H. Lee and his wife Irene Yap and Kazuhisa Abe and his wife Haruko Murakami.

75 “Plans and designs for Hawai`i State Capitol, 1959,” DKC, Box 2, File 45, Capitol Site Committee, HSA.
76 Frank Lombardi, Letter From Frank Lombardi To Duke Kahanamoku, DKC, 13 January 1959, Box 2, File 45, Capitol Site Committee, HSA. The Armstrong site would prove unworkable due to cost and construction factors and another site chosen near Iolani Palace in later years.
77 Aloha Ambassadors Pamphlet, DKC, Box 2, File 44, Aloha Ambassadors, HSA.
Lee, from Chinese ancestry, had been the “President of the Senate in the last Legislature of Hawai‘i before statehood” and had helped draft the state’s new constitution. Abe, a former District Court Judge in the Territory, was a newly elected senator in the new State of Hawai‘i’s first legislature. He had been born in “a small sugar-growing village on the ‘Big Island’ of Hawaii” to parents who were “contract laborers imported from Japan.”

The three couples planned to travel together for eighty days, visiting Japan, Hong Kong, Thailand, Burma, India, South Vietnam, Laos, Singapore, Malaya, Indonesia and the Philippines. Kahanamoku biographer Joseph Brennan stated that the couples traveled at their own expense. However, it is clear from an investigation in Kahanamoku’s personal papers that the trip was financed in a partnership with Pan-American Airlines and the Hawaiian Visitors Bureau. Those entities provided an allotment of funds from which the couples could be reimbursed. This arrangement eventually led to problems. The Kahanamokus probably used some of their own resources for various aspects of the trip.

In fact, this trip created incredible tensions amongst the ambassadors attempting to demonstrate the Islands aloha spirit to Asia. Nadine Kahanamoku recalled that “the sad thing was that here we were, the Aloha Ambassadors, but our personalities all clashed.” Nadine believed of the others that “they were envious of Duke. No matter

78 Ibid.
80 Ibid.
81 “Schedule Of Receipts and Disbursements,” DKC, Box 2, File 44, Aloha Ambassadors, HSA.
where we went when we got off the plane, people would run to Duke instinctively because he was so tall and stately.” Kahanamoku’s wife asserted that “the man who was in charge, the Chinese man whose name I won’t mention, resented this—that they didn’t come running to him and that Duke got all the attention.” Since Lee was the only Chinese man on the trip, it is obvious that Mrs. Kahanamoku referred to him. She contended that Lee was “resentful if we got a taxi that was better than his.” Seething with frustration, Nadine commented, “Oh, that man. He was so insulting. We went to the Taj Mahal; we went to Angkor Wat [Cambodia] – that’s where I had a very bad argument with him.”

Nadine Kahanamoku attempted to justify the ambassadors’ bad behavior by laying the blame on the hot temperatures in the region, stating that “these people just couldn’t stand the heat and it made them so irritable and so nasty and so impossible.” Traveling in May and June in these climates probably would have been warm yet when the intended goal of the group was to “spread love and kindness,” and demonstrate “how we can all get along—Japanese, and Chinese and Hawaiian and haole,” the Aloha Ambassador trip resulted in failure. In fact, the original plan had been to make a similar trip to South America. Nadine recalled that “because we clashed so and we couldn’t get along amicably together, we cancelled the rest of the trip completely.” Everyone headed back to Hawai`i early.

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83 Ibid, 19.
84 Ibid.
Unfortunately, the clashes between the couples continued in Hawaii. Kahanamoku received two letters from Herbert Lee explaining that the sheriff had overspent his allotment by $124.16. Lee expressed frustration with the Kahanamoku’s failure to reimburse the account in letters dated August 20 and September 20, 1960. It is unclear what the expenses were for, but what is clear was Lee’s desire to square the account and close the books for the failed project. Finally, after months of not hearing back from Kahanamoku, Lee wrote another letter to the Olympic hero expressing his resignation that he would get no satisfaction from the Kahanamokus regarding the overspent monies. As a result, he informed Kahanamoku that in order to close the account Lee himself had written a personal check to cover the Kahanamokus unpaid expenses.

It is unclear if the failure to repay the money was an oversight on the part of the Kahanamokus, a miscommunication, or a continuation of the bickering from the trip. However, tensions developed between the couples, especially between the Kahanamokus and the Lees. Hawaiʻi’s Aloha Ambassador program died due to the inability of the couple’s to display the *aloha* spirit that supposedly laid the foundation for peace amongst all peoples in Hawaiʻi.

As the Kahanamokus returned to the Islands they realized that the *aloha* spirit that had failed to materialize with their fellow ambassadors on foreign soil also was developing challenges to its guiding principles at home as well. While the new Honolulu

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85 Letter From Herbert Lee To Duke Kahanamoku, 20 August 1960; DKC, Box 2, File 44, Aloha Ambassadors, HSA.
86 Letter From Herbert Lee To Duke Kahanamoku, 24 January 1961, DKC, Box 2, File 44, Aloha Ambassadors, HSA.
city charter that citizens had approved provided for the possibility for a new position of “official greeter” for Duke Kahanamoku, it did not specify that such a position was guaranteed. Kahanamoku’s sheriff position ended with the former Olympic champion’s future role in public service still in doubt.

In fact, the question of what to do for Duke Kahanamoku became one of the hot political issues of the 1960 campaign for mayor. Citizens began writing letters to the editor of the newspapers asking officials to declare what they would do for Kahanamoku. Columnist Eddie Sherman of The Honolulu Advertiser challenged the Legislature to move forward. “Lawmakers of Hawaii: Duke Kahanamoku has given his life to Hawaii. Now is the time for Hawaii to give a little to the life of Duke Kahanamoku,” Sherman implored. Noting the impact of Kahanamoku on Hawai‘i, Sherman explained that “wherever he travels today, he is still the center of attention” Sherman drew attention to the fact that “in December he’ll be out of a job.” Sherman pleaded with the lawmakers to appoint Kahanamoku as “Hawaii’s roving ambassador of goodwill.”

Whether it was through the influence of people like Sherman and others who spoke up in defense of Kahanamoku or simply re-elected Mayor Neal S. Blaisdell making good on his campaign promises, Blaisdell appointed Duke Kahanamoku as the mayor’s official representative to act as the official greeter of Hawai‘i. The position reportedly paid $12,000 per year. Blaisdell had much in common with Kahanamoku. He was a fellow Republican and a well-known local athlete and coach in Hawai‘i before entering

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the political world. The promise to provide for Kahanamoku had finally been met by a friend and fellow athlete who wanted to honor a promise he had made to the people who had elected him.

Although Kahanamoku had to attain the position of greeter for Honolulu through a lengthy process the former Olympian realized that it was not only local Hawaiian officials who had established barriers that he had to fight against. The U. S. government also gave him tasks without providing the true support he needed. Kahanamoku became actively involved in two major initiatives for the federal government in which the great swimmer’s name became a valuable asset. The first was the Hawaiʻi Citizens’ Committee for the 1960 Registration and Vote Program. The United States hoped that the admission of two new states in 1959, Alaska and Hawaiʻi would help to spur a renewed sense of patriotic zeal and citizen involvement. One of the initiatives to attempt to build this feeling involved a challenge on the part of Hawaiʻi’s voters to turn out in record numbers and demonstrate their understanding of the responsibility of “full fledged citizenship.” The committee set a goal “to obtain 100% registration and vote in the 1960 General Election.” By so doing they believed that Hawaiʻi would “tell our sister states and the world that the people of Hawaiʻi are fulfilling their responsibilities.”

As chairman of the committee Kahanamoku requested that the Governor of Hawaiʻi “issue a friendly challenge to every State in the Union to compete with Hawaiʻi to see which State will obtain the highest percentage of registered voters” in the 1960

89 “Hawaiʻi Can Lead The Way,” 1960, DKC, Box 2, File 47, Register and Vote Committee, HSA.
general election. Kahanamoku hoped that through this form of competition “the eligible citizens of our country will be stimulated” to register and vote and to “demonstrate to the world, in these troubled times, their appreciation for the American way of life under the freedom of the flag.”

Kahanamoku’s efforts did not reach the unrealistic 100% voter registration goals but Hawai’i’s participation did rank among the highest in the nation. In addition, the Hawai’i vote totals for the presidential election in 1960 were sharply contested. After numerous judicial appeals and recounts the final outcome put John F. Kennedy a mere 115 votes ahead of Richard M. Nixon. The recount overturned the initial victory for Richard Nixon by 141 votes. The contested results made no difference in the outcome of the national election due to the small impact of Hawai’i’s three electoral votes but did provide precedents utilized in the disputed 2000 George W. Bush- Albert Gore Presidential election. While Kahanamoku’s name and efforts helped to increase the voting numbers in Hawai’i, the election results demonstrated the reality of the minimal impact the new state of Hawai’i had upon national politics. A greater factor in the presidential election results was the introduction of televised debates. Nixon, who disdained makeup and wardrobe advice, looked pale and sickly next to the younger Kennedy and viewers of the debate gave Kennedy winning marks - - while those listening

90 Letter From Duke Kahanamoku to The Honorable Governor of Hawai’i, DKC, Box 2, File 47, Register and Vote Committee, HSA.
in on radio gave Nixon an edge.\textsuperscript{92} While the get out the vote campaign focused on Hawai`i, there is no evidence that U.S. officials allowed Kahanamoku any funding to promote the event or helped to spread word of the campaign to any other State.

The second arena that Kahanamoku played a major role in assisting federal officials came in his work on the Pacific War Memorial Commission. While Kahanamoku believed passionately in the need to establish a memorial for those soldiers who had given their lives in service to the United States, Congressional support lagged. In his letter to baseball star Willie Mays asking for his support Kahanamoku mentioned that though they had “tried hard” and “raised some money” for the establishment of a “suitable memorial” for the \textit{U.S.S. Arizona}, the committee remained some $200,000 short.\textsuperscript{93}

Kahanamoku explained that the committee had “asked the Congress of the United States to appropriate this money, and four bills were introduced in the last session and went to the Armed Services Committee.” However, Congress adjourned without acting on the bills. Kahanamoku, voicing some cynicism regarding the process, stated “if anything is done about this in Washington, it will not be done until next year.” In the meantime Kahanamoku confided to Mays that the “gallant battleship . . . is rusting and falling apart. As a monument to the brave men who are buried inside the ship, it is a national disgrace.” Nearly twenty years had passed since the sneak attack on Pearl


\textsuperscript{93} Letter From Duke Kahanamoku to Willie Mays, 8 September 1960, DKC, HSA.
Kahanamoku, despite years of effort still saw no real action to remember the sacrifice made by men in his homeland.

Kahanamoku had spent the 1940s and 1950s in endeavors to bring Hawai`i into a closer relationship with the United States. His work culminated in statehood for the Territory. As a world-renowned symbol of the Islands and a respected public official, he had championed the movement for statehood and full-fledged citizenship in the United States. His personal life had been a living portrait of the struggles to assimilate the American cultural values that placed great emphasis on progress, economic status and growth, as well as material accumulations. The process witnessed Kahanamoku building stronger bridges to mainland American culture through social, business, and political interactions. American businessmen, politicians, and celebrities all courted the great champion’s influence in the buildup to establishing statehood for the Territory of Hawai`i.

However, in many ways Kahanamoku’s usefulness to these leaders waned after statehood and Kahanamoku’s services were in less demand. By January of 1961, Kahanamoku had found himself displaced from the position of power and influence that he had held for twenty-six years in the sheriff’s office - - a position now abolished. He landed in an honorary appointment as “official greeter” that paid him significantly less money than his previous job. His endorsement deals with mainland companies such as Cisco Casuals had seen his revenues trickle down to next to nothing. He had encountered great frustration in his efforts to establish new jails, morgues, capitol sites and even war memorials for his homeland. Now that U.S. authorities had gained full control in Hawai`i the figurehead leader of the people saw himself displaced by the very progress
he had endorsed. The world had marched ahead. In many respects, Kahanamoku was left behind as a relic of a history, which was to quickly be rewritten without mention of the great champion’s legacy in the new version.

As Hawai‘i entered into its new status of statehood numerous books were written to celebrate the Island’s new position as the fiftieth state and to inform their new sister citizens of the historical past and roots of this new American tropical paradise. None of these histories included any mention of the man who more than any other had helped to shape and define Hawai‘i’s new role in the republic. The books never mentioned Duke Kahanamoku’s name, not even for his surfing or swimming exploits. A man who had challenged the color lines of American sports over thirty years before Jackie Robinson broke baseball’s color barrier, who existed as the greatest known symbol of Hawai‘i, somehow found himself on the outside looking in as others wrote of Hawai‘i’s history. The leading scholars on Hawai‘i at the time of statehood, Ralph S. Kuykendall, A. Grove Day, and Jan Jabulka, all failed to even mention Duke Kahanamoku in any of their numerous books or articles.94

Kahanamoku did earn a mention in a work entitled The Hawai‘i Book: Story of Our Island Paradise, a collection of scholarly articles, artwork and reprints of historic magazine articles. The book purported to present “a complete picture of the romance and beauty, the history and the charm that are inherent in this land where long seas curl on glistening beaches.” Claiming that Hawai‘i is “where men and women from all races are

proving that the American dream can still be a concrete fact,” the book referred to Duke P. Kahanamoku once in 366 pages.95 An article entitled “More and Better Sports For Waikiki,” written by the Outrigger Canoe Club, posed the question, “Who can forget such names as George ‘Dad’ Center, Duke P. Kahanamoku, Bill Harris, Gay Harris, Buster Crabbe, Marieschen Wehselau, Helen Moses, and Lilian Bowmer?” With no further explanation of who these great athletes were or what their connection to the Outrigger Club was, Duke Kahanamoku became a passing footnote in the new histories of Hawai‘i, the fiftieth State, his beloved homeland.96 Apparently, the portrait of the new Hawaiian version of the American dream would not include Kahanamoku’s efforts in establishing the possibilities for that vision for his people.

CHAPTER 14

THE RETURN TO PARADISE

The promise of progress and assimilation into American culture during the 1940s and 1950s through business, politics, and social relationships culminated in 1959 in statehood for Hawai`i. For Duke Kahanamoku the new Hawai`i that he personally had fought for offered little for one of Hawai`i’s most revered heroes. Finding himself left on the outside of political battles, relying on the mercy of other politicians for his very livelihood, and observing how American commercialism had transformed his ocean paradise of Waikiki into a concrete jungle full of Hawaiiana trinkets, were sad realizations of the future for the great champion.

The greatest blow to the aging Kahanamoku came when his people turned against him. In the 1940s and 1950s it mattered little to the general populace whether Kahanamoku was a Republican or a Democrat. He symbolized Hawai`i and served as an incarnate representation of Hawaiian values and culture. The people stood behind “their Duke” no matter what the circumstances. In 1961 all that would change as Kahanamoku faced harsh criticism from Hawaiians of all ethnic, economic and social groups.

The offensive came first from those who opposed the appointment of Kahanamoku as the “official greeter” of Honolulu. Political opponents understood the popularity of Kahanamoku in the 1950s and realized that in order to abolish the sheriff’s job that he held they had to include in the city charter a provision for a position for the
vaunted legend. With the arrival of statehood the political climate changed abruptly. Residents of Hawai‘i began to see a need for greater integration into the cultural and political processes of mainland American culture. Through those discussions came the realization that no other city or state had a government employee acting as an “official greeter,” so why should Hawai‘i? Why should taxpayer money go to pay the salary of a position that some viewed as ornamental? Some decried Kahanamoku’s job as “looting of the public purse.”

The controversy took on new intensity when *The Honolulu Advertiser* reported the day after the announcement of Kahanamoku’s “official greeter” position that Kahanamoku would be teaming up with Arthur Godfrey in a business deal “that will take advantage of Duke’s reputation and Godfrey’s loot.” The two friends reportedly planned to work with Kahanamoku’s wife, as well as longtime friends Kimo McVay and Robert A. Hoffman on four ventures. The first two were mainly promotional in nature and consisted of an annual “international amateur swim meet” named after the Hawaiian swimming champion and the founding of a “Duke Kahanamoku Boys Club” designed to “encourage and aid local boys in sports, entertainment and business.” Two other proposals took on more capitalistic characteristics and drew fire from opponents. The group proposed to open a “Waikiki restaurant and supper club, to be known as Duke Kahanamoku’s,” and to manufacture and endorse Hawaiian products.”

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Kahanamoku drew criticism for a conflict of interest in holding a city position while venturing out into what many assumed would be wildly profitable endeavors. Many people already wrongly believed that Kahanamoku was rich beyond their wildest imaginations due to reports in *Gentlemen’s Quarterly* magazine and the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* which reported that the sheriff was making $30,000-35,000 a year in royalties for his Cisco Casuals contract.³

Despite the blatant falsity of these reports, Kahanamoku refused to defend himself. Most people who believed in their hero allowed the matter to fade.

Kahanamoku took office on February 1, 1961, as official greeter for the city of Honolulu and quickly moved ahead with his new position. In March, Kahanamoku’s supporters honored the legendary figure. The Sales Executives of Hawai`i (SEH) named Kahanamoku Hawai`i’s best salesman for 1960, an “annual award given to the man the SEH believes has done the best job of selling Hawai`i to the world.” Fittingly, Kahanamoku shared the spotlight that evening with his old friend Walter Dillingham to whom the organization bestowed a special award as “Hawaii’s most enthusiastic salesman and greatest builder of three era’s.” Kahanamoku followed Honolulu police chief Dan Liu, Governor William Quinn, and industrialist Henry Kaiser as the only other winners of the award.⁴

Shortly thereafter Kahanamoku proved why he deserved the award as he led a delegation of Hawaiian officials on a trip of Scandinavia for a promotional tour on Pan-

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American Airways inaugural flight from New York to Oslo, Norway. The airline also stopped in Stockholm, Sweden and Helsinki, Finland. Sweden had always held Kahanamoku in high regard. In 1958, the Stockholm newspaper *Dayens Nyheter* had published a tribute to Kahanamoku entitled, “An Ode to Duke Kahanamoku.”⁵ As Kahanamoku landed in Sweden the people once again remembered the Hawaiian hero from the 1912 Olympics. Stockholm welcomed Kahanamoku showering him with flowers while “the Mayor of Stockholm presented Duke with the key to the city and finally two super enthusiastic girls just lifted the husky Duke onto their shoulders.” Kahanamoku grinned and commented, “just like it was here in 1912.”⁶ At each stop on the tour reporters noted that hundreds of people gathered “to see the Duke and inspect the Pan Am jet, in that order.”⁷ Amazingly, Kahanamoku, a relic from the waters of 1912, co-opted the attention of new technological marvels of the sky.

It seemed that Kahanamoku had weathered the storm regarding his new position. The waters remained relatively calm regarding the issue in the public sphere, but Kahanamoku seemingly still simmered on the inside regarding the battle and what he regarded as his mistreatment in the affair. As he had before, he once again confided in friends on the mainland regarding his feelings, in particular, Arthur Godfrey. When Godfrey visited Kahanamoku in August of 1961 on a vacation in the Islands, Kahanamoku’s simmering anger boiled over into a public debate that demonstrated for the first time that Kahanamoku and his people were not on the same page.

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⁷ Ibid, p. 2.
Upon arriving in Honolulu Godfrey informed reporters that he was “really burned up at the shabby treatment that Duke Kahanamoku is getting” from Hawai`i. Godfrey declared that “Hawai`i should give Duke $25,000 a year and a car and require him to do nothing but appear at only the proper places.” The supposed $12,000 a year salary that politicians had promised in 1960 to Kahanamoku had somehow shrunk to $8,256 a year. Godfrey argued that it was not enough. “It’s a shame that he has to be the front man for a common restaurant just so he can get enough money to eat,” Godfrey complained, referring to the Duke Kahanamoku restaurant and supper club in which Godfrey had reportedly been involved. In reality, Godfrey had no interest in the financial backing of the deal at all. Kimo McVay, his mother Mrs. Kinau Wilder, and Robert Hoffman, among other locals, were the people putting up the front money for the endeavor.

Godfrey expressed his indignation with Hawai`i even though he had taken no financial risks on business dealings with Kahanamoku. “You know what really burns me up is that after he (Duke) dies, Hawai`i will probably go all out in erecting a $100,000 monument,” he blustered. Godfrey argued that “for all the honor that Duke has brought here, he’s got only a trunkful of medals. What good does that do him when he’s hungry?” Criticizing Hawai`i in other areas as well, Godfrey complained that due to all the recent building of sky scrapers in Waikiki, “this place looks just like Pittsburgh.” Exposing the elitist viewpoint of one from a privileged position Godfrey predicted that “fewer and fewer of the ‘quality—top bracket’ tourists will come here and more and

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more of the economy go-now, pay later crowd will be arriving” thus relegating Hawai`i in Godfrey’s estimation to a seedy tourist destination.10

For Hawaiians, Godfrey’s comments were inflammatory. To make things worse Kahanamoku, in an article on the same day, stated that he agreed with Godfrey’s sentiments. Kahanamoku admitted that he believed that “after I spent my life selling Hawai`i without pay,” his homeland had failed to treat him with proper respect. Hailing his friends comments, he noted that “it takes a malihini (newcomer) like Arthur Godfrey to come here, look things over and speak the truth.” Kahanamoku for the first time attempted to set the record straight regarding how much he was earning by elaborating that his semi-monthly take home pay was $262.41 after taxes and that his contract with Cisco had netted him $11 the previous month. Noting he had “given the State millions of dollars worth of free advertising,” Kahanamoku asked “what have I got to show for it? Nothing.”11

The tone of Kahanamoku’s comments belied the deeply felt sense of betrayal that had been building within the Hawaiian legend. The unusual emotional outburst even ended strangely as he told the reporter that he had to spend a year and a half “sitting around here on the beach” before he received his job as official greeter. In actuality, there was a month break between the ending of his sheriff’s position and the start of his greeter’s position, but the comment portrayed the growing frustration that Kahanamoku lived with during the limbo before finally having the greeter’s position become official.12

Kahanamoku’s and Godfrey’s comments displayed the rift that had grown between Kahanamoku and the local people of Hawai`i. While Kahanamoku had been attempting to live a life within the world of the social elites on a budget of a civil servant, he had lost touch with his roots. The people who still existed at the periphery of Hawaiian culture and risked further exclusion due to the rapid growth of development in the islands by newcomers were appalled at the comments by their local hero. The media received numerous letters which scolded Kahanamoku and Godfrey and referred to the former champion as “ungrateful.”

Letters to the editor demonstrated that Kahanamoku’s and Godfrey’s comments dominated local conversations. One Kamaaina, or native born, woman noted that “all I heard at the ladies’ luncheon today was Duke.” She surmised that “wish my husband could lie around at the beach for a year and the City would give him a job at half Duke’s salary. And we could go to cocktail parties and get paid for it.” Demonstrating how far Kahanamoku had fallen in her estimation, she concluded “my husband’s good-looking—and a line dropper and Hawaiian. Maybe Arthur Godfrey will give him a job.” Another writer stated “Duke has hurt every true Hawaiian and all the newcomers.” He continued, “I loved that guy for years until he shot off his mouth and now all the boys at our office think he is commercial. I think he should find a job like us if he is in need of three meals a day.”

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Some people viewed Kahanamoku as “an innocent victim of Arthur Godfrey’s attempt to do some good,” and tried to balance Kahanamoku’s comments with the true works of goodwill he had spread wherever he had gone.16 Judging by the letters to the editor demonstrated that few people held this more egalitarian view of Kahanamoku. Most letter writers believed that the $655 per month that Kahanamoku received should more than cover his expenses. One gentleman compared Kahanamoku’s sacrifices for Hawai’i with that of a veteran in his neighborhood who “gave one arm and one leg for Hawai’i and only gets $197 a month.” The writer challenged Kahanamoku arguing that if “Duke doesn’t like what the State (or City) gives him, let him try working” as his disabled veteran neighbor did.17

Even his benefactor and friend, Honolulu Mayor Neal Blaisdell, chimed in on the subject, putting his own spin on the touchy political subject. Extracting himself from the issue of whether or not Kahanamoku had been unfairly promised $12,000 a year and then given far less the mayor noted that “his office had nothing to do with setting the greeter’s salary.” Civil service graders set public salaries. Blaisdell argued that due to the makeup of Kahanamoku’s pay as greeter he “may be taking home more money now” than he did as sheriff. Noting that Kahanamoku received $286 per month in city-county pension payments his monthly total would be $974, or $26 less than he made as an elected representative. Considering that the pension payment was tax free, Blaisdell drew his

own conclusion that Kahanamoku probably was better off now than as sheriff financially.18

Blaisdell did not stop at a discussion of figures. In a damage control move for his own political safety he argued that “actually the City and County shouldn’t have to pay for this position at all.” Blaisdell played both sides of the argument, admitting that “Duke does a great job of publicizing the entire State of Hawai’i and is a valuable man to the State, so the State Government should pay him.” The mayor suggested that “the Hawai’i Visitor’s Bureau should take over this position and petition the legislature for money to pay the salary.” He also added that given Kahanamoku’s potential restaurant dealings “there is a possibility that Kahanamoku may be involved in a conflict of interest.”19

Blaisdell’s comments probably were accurate in that the state benefited more from the publicity of Kahanamoku than the city and county of Honolulu. However, the city charter had eliminated Kahanamoku’s position and established the greeter’s position in its stead. Blaisdell understood the precarious balancing act he would have to manage to remain true to his friend and yet withstand the mounting pressures against him as the man who continued to have an “ungrateful” employee representing Honolulu. For the mayor, if the state could alleviate the pressure on him that would provide the best solution for both himself and Kahanamoku. Regardless of his reasoning, Kahanamoku felt the sting of the mayor’s comments.

19 Ibid.
Kahanamoku became deeply hurt by the realization that people viewed him as ungrateful, greedy, and in some ways unworthy of the respect he had garnered. Once again, he failed to respond. “It’s like telling people you’re honest,” he argued. Fortunately, for Kahanamoku, an old friend, Alfred A. Apaka, provided a way to save face. In a letter written to *The Honolulu Advertiser* Apaka argued that “I know without asking him [Kahanamoku] that his remark was nothing more than a humorous one.” Apaka cited Kahanamoku’s character over the years and asked the people of Hawai‘i not to turn “their backs on our Duke” who had always exhibited the qualities of gratefulness, “just because of a natural remark made in jest.”

Unfortunately, most people reading Kahanamoku’s remarks found it hard to imagine that they were issued in a humorous or jesting manner. They sensed his frustration and disillusionment. Kahanamoku’s comments no doubt reflected his feelings at the time. He may have regretted his words due to the responses in the letters that chastised him. In retrospect it may have been reasonable for Kahanamoku to have felt a sense of betrayal and of fleecing by others. He had blindly moved ahead and embraced the American mainland consumer culture without fully understanding the ramifications of his dealings. He never truly succeeded in that world and in the process alienated his own culture in ways that allowed people to view him as an ungrateful moneygrabber - - the antithesis of the old Hawaiian leadership tradition.

The public criticism changed Kahanamoku’s behavior. As opposed to the 1940s and 1950s when Kahanamoku pursued statehood and assimilation into American culture, 

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the early 1960s saw Kahanamoku retreat back to his Island homeland. Instead of signing with a mainland clothing manufacturer he chose to reunite with a loyal company, Kahala, who had originally brought the Duke Kahanamoku line into existence. For business partners he turned to local friends such as Kimo McVay. He pursued a quieter life in Hawai`i in which he merely greeted those who came to Hawai`i and lessened his efforts to sell Hawaiian culture to the rest of the American people.

Kahanamoku also retreated into the comfort of his marriage. He and Nadine spent more and more time together. On their twenty-fifth wedding anniversary, Nadine commented that “he’s so cute. Bless his heart!” This response truly demonstrated her love as it came after Kahanamoku admitted that he had not bought his wife anything. The great swimmer who had twice forgotten Christmas, argued that “I don’t know what to get her.” The couple had navigated the waters of marriage successfully even though many did not approve of their union. Nadine remembered that “my father was very understanding but my uncles were stuffy about it as if I had married an Australian aborigine.” The deep love that he shared with Nadine had changed him and his perspectives on life. He saw the political and business culture of Honolulu with new eyes; those of his lovely wife who understood the American mainland influences afflicting Hawai`i more clearly than he did. Nadine’s view of Hawai`i though at times romanticized, was not clouded by the traditional values of Hawaiian culture through

which her husband continued to view the world. Their union reflected the cultural assimilation the Hawaiian Islands underwent during this time as well.  

Kahanamoku never became a clone of Nadine nor she of him. Kahanamoku never completely assimilated into mainstream American culture. Though his wife brought him closer to it. While there were many parts of modern culture which took root in his life the foundations of traditional Hawaiian culture continued to influence him greatly. In the same way native Hawaiian culture never became fully assimilated. The influences of various cultures are still strongly represented in a unique society which draws upon qualities from each of these backgrounds.  

There can be no question, however, that the changes in Hawaiian society from Kahanamoku’s birth in 1890 to the 1960s had been vast and that as he experienced statehood for his homeland, reflections of that past and the changes that had occurred must have confronted Kahanamoku. For the myriad of tourists who now flocked to the islands *aloha* no longer had deep meanings of compassion and love but served merely as a greeting which one learned at commercialized hotel *luaus*. Thanks to the influence of Kahanamoku’s salesmanship a new tradition was born: “no sooner than a visitor arrives here the very first thing he does is get the brightest colored aloha shirt he can buy.”  

This new tradition was predicated not on generosity, which existed as a benchmark of Hawaiian traditional culture, but on consumerism. The new tradition reflected historian

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25 Letter From Duke Kahanamoku To Mr. Charles Sarlow,” 20 May 1954, Duke Kahanamoku Collection, M-434, hereafter referred to as DKC, Box 1 File, 2, Aloha Shirts Cisco Casuals, Hawai`i State Archives, Honolulu, hereafter referred to as HSA.
Gary Cross’s assertion that “modern people, and especially Americans, communicate to others through their goods.”

As Kahanamoku struggled with the ever-changing images of his traditional culture and its re-molding through the powerful influences of American culture in his role as Hawai`i’s official greeter, he began to retrace the steps of his deeply held ali`i heritage. He began to focus on his standards and his perspective seemed to change. Kahanamoku went through with his restaurant endeavor. Duke Kahanamoku’s Supper Club opened on September 1, 1961, to great fanfare. Numerous people wrote wishes for success, including Governor Quinn. The controversy regarding his potential conflicts of interest continued to spin. Speculation swirled as to what Kahanamoku might do next. U.S. Senator Hiram L. Fong suggested that Kahanamoku run as a Republican candidate for the U.S. Congress. Kahanamoku, demonstrating his movement to recapture the forgotten part of his past, declined expressing to people that “I’m happy where I am.”

Kahanamoku’s contentedness of being where he was also provided him an opportunity to begin to reassert the traditional values that had defined him throughout much of his life. Kahanamoku began attending to projects that would give back to the community. He utilized his new business venture to express his generosity, hosting 230 students from the East-West Center, the entire student body of the institution, to a Luau at

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27 Brennan, *Duke*, 230-231
his restaurant-night club in the International Market Place. The invitation allowed students from all areas of the Pacific to celebrate the American Thanksgiving season.\textsuperscript{28}

The U.S. Government had founded the East-West Center in 1960 as an educational and research organization “to strengthen relations and understanding among the peoples and nations of Asia, the Pacific, and the United States.” The center’s stated goals are to “contribute to a peaceful, prosperous, and just Asia Pacific community by serving as a vigorous hub for cooperative research, education, and dialogue on critical issues of common concern to the Asia Pacific region and the United States.”\textsuperscript{29} Chairman of the Friends of the East-West Center Katsuro Miho noted that Kahanamoku’s invitation “is in the best tradition of Duke throughout the years.” Miho elaborated that “he [Kahanamoku] represents the best of the aloha spirit of Hawaii, which is what the East-West Center needs and is trying to make into a reality.”\textsuperscript{30}

Gracious dinner invitations were not the only way that Kahanamoku demonstrated his generosity towards his home community however. He also set out to benefit the “local men and women of Hawaii” as well. Along with friends and supporters Kahanamoku joined an effort to establish the “Duke Kahanamoku Foundation.” A non-profit agency the foundation hoped to “discover many talented young people in Hawai’i who will do honor to his name and achievements.” Catholic Monsignor Charles A. Kekumano, who chaired the foundation stated that “Duke Kahanamoku stands for the

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highest ideals of sportsmanship and symbolizes qualities of citizenship that our young people may well strive to emulate.\textsuperscript{31} With the help of Kekumano and other local leaders the foundation began to raise money to fulfill its goals of providing scholarships for worthy Hawaiian youth.\textsuperscript{32}

In May of 1962 Hawai‘i awakened to the reality of the fragility of their living example of those “highest ideals of sportsmanship” and symbol of Hawaiian citizenship. Their hero, Duke Kahanamoku, underwent brain surgery.\textsuperscript{33} Kahanamoku had been struck by a boom while sailing on his yacht earlier in the month. When he experienced continuing pain he went into see his doctor Maurice D. Silver. Dr. Silver realized that Kahanamoku had a “subdural hematoma — a blood clot on the brain,” and performed surgery immediately. Kahanamoku remained in critical condition for over a week before reports surfaced that “he is not yet out of danger, but for the first time some guarded optimism seems reasonable.”\textsuperscript{34}

Unfortunately, Kahanamoku once again encountered a serious setback. Having been treated numerous times for gastric ulcers dating back to the 1950s the condition recurred during his recovery. It was unclear whether this added complication would be too much for the aging champion to overcome.\textsuperscript{35} Kahanamoku biographer Joseph Brennan noted that “the public reacted with deep concern.” Brennan recalled that

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{31}“Scholarship Fund to Honor Duke,” \textit{The Honolulu Advertiser}, 1 September 1962, sec. A, p. 7.
\item \textsuperscript{35}“Duke Has Setback!” \textit{The Honolulu Advertiser}, 9 June 1962, p. 1.
\end{itemize}
“people spoke in low voices about his condition.”36 One week later Kahanamoku proved his competitive will to beat all odds. Doctors announced that he would be fit enough to return home in about a week.37

For his convalescence Kahanamoku and Nadine went to the home of Milo Marchetti on Kaua`i. Marchetti had made Kahanamoku a director of a planned resort development on Kaua`i in 1961, the Garden Island Hotel. Marchetti personally managed the operations of the hotel and he and his wife relocated to Kaua`i when the structure was built.38 In Kaua`i, Kahanamoku recovered slowly. He longed to get back to the sea. After nearly two weeks of hobbling around with a cane, Kahanamoku convinced Marchetti to accompany him to the water. Kahanamoku argued that “who knows how many days I’ve got left?” He reiterated his personal philosophy, “I say don’t count your chickens — eat them!”39

The brief trip into the water proved to Kahanamoku that his recovery would be long and difficult. The world’s former greatest swimmer collapsed in the surf and nearly drowned - - even with his friend’s assistance. Still he recognized that “this is what I need.” He continued to enlist the services of Marchetti to help him become stronger through daily excursions to the ocean.40

While Kahanamoku came to realize the long road to recovery that he faced after brain surgery, fans and friends recognized that now was the time to honor their hero.

36 Brennan, Duke, 235.
38 “Garden Isle Hotel Planned For Kaua`i,” Hawai`i Philippine News, 22 December 1961, p. 5.
39 Brennan, Duke, 238.
40 Ibid, 238- 239.
People seemed to understand that their legendary figure could be taken from them at a moment’s notice. The acrimonious debate regarding Kahanamoku’s position as greeter began to slowly die down. A rash of tributes quickly followed. The first of these honors came in August of 1962 when Kahanamoku was awarded lifetime memberships in four yacht clubs, the Waikiki, Hawai‘i, Kaneohe and Pacific. In a preview article for the testimonial dinner where Kahanamoku would be honored *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* writer Bill Kwon avowed that this testimonial should have more significance than others before them. Kwon argued, “it should awaken people to the realization that the Duke of today isn’t the Duke of yesterday, the Duke we know so well and take for granted.”

Governor Quinn made his own tribute to Kahanamoku at the testimonial dinner, announcing that he would appoint “Duke an honorary Official Greeter for the State of Hawai‘i and an Ambassador-At-Large for the State.” While the positions were purely honorary and had no monetary compensation for Kahanamoku, it helped to ease the political controversy of Kahanamoku’s status as official greeter for Honolulu by demonstrating the chief executive’s support of Kahanamoku in public relations roles.

Mainland sportsmen also realized that the door of opportunity to honor the swimmer who had conquered the world with both speed and charm was rapidly closing. Kahanamoku made a trip to the mainland in November of 1962. At a Thanksgiving benefit held by “The Old Timers Association” in Greenwich, Connecticut, Kahanamoku joined legendary jockey Eddie Arcaro and magazine sport artist and comic creator of

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Mickey Finn, Lank Leonard, as honorees. The “Old Timers praised Kahanamoku as being “Kanakanui,” or “much man” and equated his swimming style to appear as “a horse galloping through water,” noted Kahanamoku biographer Brennan. The program from the event demonstrated Kahanamoku’s humility as it is filled with autographs from many of those present to honor him. During the trip Kahanamoku also made appearances on the Ed Sullivan Show and at the Lexington Hotel in New York City.

In 1963 the tributes to Kahanamoku continued to roll in as newly elected governor John Burns declared Kahanamoku’s birthday as Duke Kahanamoku Day. Another testimonial dinner was held on the evening before his birthday at the “posh splendor of the Royal Hawaiian Hotel’s Monarch room where white gloved waiters serving [sic] champagne from chilled bottles.” At the event Kahanamoku’s business partner, Mrs. Kinau Wilder, presented the Olympic champion with a “rare old Hawaiian feather cloak,” - - a garment worn by royalty in the old days of the Hawaiian monarchy.

During the dinner Governor John Burns commented that “no words of mine can express the depth of feeling or of inspiration Duke has meant to me. He is an example of the best there is in Hawai‘i. He is the living symbol of all that is great in Polynesia.” The dinner’s $15 per plate fee also served to raise money for the Duke Kahanamoku Foundation to go towards scholarships for Hawai‘i’s future leaders. While Hawaiian news media outlets had always highlighted Kahanamoku’s birthday throughout his long

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43 *Eddie Arcaro-Lank Leonard-Duke Kahanamoku, Old Timers Athletic Association, Program of Events, 20 November 1962, Greenwich, Conn., DKC, Box 3, File 65, Sports Miscellaneous, HSA.*
47 “200 Islanders,” p. 2.
life, after Kahanamoku’s brain surgery public officials made special efforts to hold annual gatherings as either exclusive dinners or large public parties to honor their hero on or near his birth date.

Kahanamoku also continued to travel and to represent Hawai‘i. Even those closest to him did not completely understand the worldwide acclaim that Kahanamoku held. Business partner Kimo McVay expressed his shock at what he witnessed on a trip to the mainland with Kahanamoku. In 1963 the West Coast Surfing Championships had requested Mayor Blaisdell’s office to send Duke Kahanamoku to Huntington Beach, California, to co-host the event with his old rival and friend, Johnny Weissmuller. Blaisdell eagerly jumped at the invitation and appointed McVay to go as Kahanamoku’s assistant. Although McVay had been good friends with Kahanamoku for years and had been in many diverse arenas with him McVay had not previously experienced what he observed on the trip. “Dumbfounded,” he wrote a letter to Honolulu Advertiser sports editor Red McQueen which the editor published in the newspaper. McVay explained that he “witnessed a sight that I will never forget. I saw 30,000 or more teenagers, before any introduction was made, get off their okoles [buttocks], stand and cheer wildly” for “our beloved Duke,” even though, as McVay noted Kahanamoku was “a good 60 years older than most of them.” Describing the “respect and admiration on their faces as they actually saw for the first time in their lives, the legendary ‘Father of Surfing,’” McVay expressed the realization of “how valuable Duke is to Hawai‘i.” McVay declared that “in
Duke we have an ambassador who alone dominates the scene wherever he is, drawing the most favorable and attractive publicity to our entire State.”48

McVay admitted his “naïveté about Duke” before this trip and exclaimed, “just think of it! Here’s a full blooded Hawaiian . . . who can leave our shores and simply by appearing in person anywhere in the world, bring Hawai`i to their attention and do it with little or no advance publicity.” McVay, always a good marketer, commented on the incredible amount of publicity that the trip brought Hawai`i in their travels to Los Angeles, Lake Tahoe, San Francisco, Las Vegas, and Portland, Oregon. On the trip McVay came to understand that “Duke actually is to surfing what Babe Ruth was to baseball.” “To the world, Duke is Hawai`i!!,” McVay marveled. Newspapers, radio and television stations, and even producers on The Steve Allen Show found Kahanamoku engaging and fascinating.49

Not to be outdone by the Californians, Australian Surf Association officials invited Kahanamoku to judge the Australian Surfing Championships in November of 1963. The incredible publicity evidenced by McVay in the mainland United States followed Kahanamoku around the world.50

Back home in Hawai`i Kahanamoku received the Vernon “Red” McQueen Award as Hawai`i’s top sportsmen in 1963, becoming the seventh such honoree, recognized for his “long service in swimming, surfing, canoeing, yachting and other sports” At the

49 Ibid.
McQueen ceremony Mayor Blaisdell lauded Kahanamoku “for all that he has done and is doing for Hawai`i, dating back to 1912.”

The tributes for Kahanamoku and his renewed health had another effect as well, reviving his dreams of business and political success. Mainland manufacturers were not ready to put the former champion to pasture with opportunities still available to cash in on the reverence that the booming surfing culture held for Kahanamoku. Ventura International Plastics in California signed an agreement with Kahanamoku for “worldwide distribution of a new line of surf boards and skate boards bearing his name.” The boards would come in three models all with the full name and image of Kahanamoku on them. The top of the line board would be called the “Duke” model while the other models would be named the “Kahanamoku” and the “Moku.”

The Duke Kahanamoku Corporation also established deals to have Kahanamoku’s name on other items as well including ukeleles, T-shirts, posters, and a music and recording company. Kahanamoku’s popularity in popular culture showed no sign of slowing. He had beaten back death through heart attacks, severe ulcers, and brain surgery, and his fame increased with each episode. Honolulu Advertiser columnist Bob Krauss remembered the magnetism of Kahanamoku and related a story that he had witnessed on a trip to Los Angeles with the great swimmer. Krauss remembered that as they entered the Los Angeles airport terminal Kahanamoku with his white mane of hair and “mahogany face” drew the attention of all in the “bleary eyed” travelers. It was as

51 Ibid; “300 Honor Kahanamoku As Top Sportsmen,” The Honolulu Advertiser, 16 April 1964. Sec. B, p. 6
though “an electric current switched on” in the room Krauss recalled. All heads turned
towards Kahanamoku and instantly the people recognized him and the name “Duke
Kahanamoku” began to be muttered throughout the terminal. Krauss admitted “how they
knew him I have no idea, it had been 40 years since he won an Olympic medal.”
Moments later Krauss understood the popularity of Kahanamoku when “Sophia Loren
walked by and nothing happened.”

If an elderly man could attract more attention than beautiful film star Sophie Loren, in the heart of the movie industry, during the prime of her career, that man carried magical qualities. Kahanamoku in his seventies still had the star appeal to turn heads and make people take notice. Product marketers were not the only ones to notice that quality. As the mid 1960s progressed, aided by legend building tributes, Kahanamoku continued to be a hot commodity in popular culture.

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CHAPTER 15

BACK TO THE SEA: THE DEATH OF THE FIGUREHEAD MONARCH

Tributes honoring Kahanamoku after his brush with death in the 1960s raised a new awareness in younger generations of this legendary figure. He became a known quantity and attracted crowds and attention wherever he went throughout the world. While some sought to sell Kahanamoku’s name on surf boards and other products throughout the nation, others felt his name could demand greater attention nationally as a potential U.S. Congressman. A Honolulu Star-Bulletin reporter had noticed that Senator Hiram Fong had “spoken highly of the ex-sheriff” two years previously “as a possible candidate” for Congress. The reporter then asked Fong what he would think of Kahanamoku as a candidate for 1964, “and Fong again spoke favorably of him.” This conversation spurred “gossip” at the Republican State Convention spurring one politician to state that “he had checked and been told that Kahanamoku’s health was up to a candidacy.”

The Honolulu Star-Bulletin, following up on the lead, called Kahanamoku in New York City where he and his wife were representing Hawai’i at the World’s Fair. Asked about his running for office Kahanamoku revealed “he hadn’t thought about running.”

While that should have been the end to the rumors, the newspaper reported that
“Columnist Eddie Sherman who is also in New York talked to Kahanamoku” and
confirmed “Duke will announce plans to run after he returns to Honolulu in mid-July.”
For over a month Hawaiian political leaders could neither confirm nor deny the rumors of
a Kahanamoku run for the Congressional seat but all seemed to hedge their bets making
sure to note that Kahanamoku would be a worthy representative for Hawai‘i.

Senator Fong, who found himself at the heart of the controversy, decided against
endorsing any candidate, but noted that “Duke Kahanamoku would be good in Congress
because of his Polynesian ancestry.” Fong asserted that “it would again show that
Hawaii is a land of many races.” Potential opponents struggled with how to challenge
the legendary Kahanamoku. Age and lack of experience were factors which could be
used against him but as media reports commented, “his opponents would have to ask
whether open attacks on the long-revered Olympic swimmer would hurt them or him
more.” Fortunately for Kahanamoku’s political opponents, the worrying about
developing a strategy to beat the ex-sheriff would be short-lived and eventually
unnecessary.

Upon his return to Honolulu in mid-July Kahanamoku ended all speculation as to
his potential candidacy by stating that he did not plan to run for office. Explaining that
“it’s hectic there in Washington and expensive,” the seventy-three-year-old Kahanamoku
elaborated that “I would be willing to run if I thought it was for the good of the Hawaiian

2 Ibid.
4 “Kahanamoku May Enter GOP Primary For House,” Honolulu Star-Bulletin, 10 June 1964, p. 1
people. But I think I can do more good here at home.”⁵ Kahanamoku noted that “when I saw all that traffic there in New York I knew I couldn’t go to live in Washington. What would I do? Here I can swim and sail and do my exercises.”⁶ While Kahanamoku stated that he had not seriously considered running for Congress, his silence on the issue did not seem to sit well with political leaders. In fact, upon the Kahanamokus return from the mainland only their chauffeur and three members of the press showed up to greet them. The *Star-Bulletin* reported that they did not even receive any leis.⁷

Whether the people of Hawaii would have supported him again or if all had been forgiven from the 1961 debacle regarding his appointment as greeter and the perception of Kahanamoku as ungrateful is unclear. For one of the few times in his life when he returned home Kahanamoku was not welcomed as a hero. However, he seemed to have learned from the experiences of recent years and realized that his role would keep him in his homeland. Kahanamoku once again viewed his own role as that of an ali`i, a chief or leader, whose responsibility was to serve the people of Hawai`i to the best of his ability.

While he may have learned from the confrontation with his people in the early 1960s he still harbored a hint of bitterness regarding his proper place in Hawaiian society. This flirtation with potential political office would not be his last. Less than two years later reporters again questioned Senator Hiram Fong as to Kahanamoku’s fitness to run for lieutenant governor of Hawai`i. Fong once again stated that this “is news to me” but

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continued to express his belief that Kahanamoku would be a good candidate if he chose to run.”

Kahanamoku responded to the new political rumors from Los Angeles where he “participated in what has been described as the biggest department store presentation ever arranged on behalf of Hawai‘i merchandise.” Kahanamoku announced that “If Neal [Blaisdell] decides to run for Governor and wants me, I’d be proud and happy to run with him” Kahanamoku asserted.

Blaisdell decided against running for the governorship but that did not deter Kahanamoku. Senator Fong flew out to Los Angeles and met with Kahanamoku at the airport for an hour. When Kahanamoku finally flew back into Honolulu he announced that he would be “willing to run with anyone.” Kahanamoku’s legend had definitely not decreased in the islands nor on the mainland. On Kahanamoku’s seventy-fifth birthday Hal Wood, the sports editor of the Honolulu Advertiser, observed that “he became an international legend and remains that today. He is as much a part of Hawaii as Diamond Head or the Aloha Tower.” Wood’s counterpart at the Honolulu Star-Bulletin, Red McQueen remarked that “despite the fact that his achievements in swimming were made more than three-score years ago, the Duke still remains one of the best known sports figures in the world.” McQueen cited as his proof the fact that

Kahanamoku “stole the show at a gathering of world sports celebrities at the New York World Fair” in 1964.\textsuperscript{12}

In 1966, the new swimming Hall of Fame at Fort Lauderdale, Florida, inducted Kahanamoku as a “charter member. He also became a charter member of the Surfing Hall of Fame at Santa Monica, California.\textsuperscript{13} That same year Admiral T.J. Fabik of the United States Coast Guard (USCG) named Kahanamoku an Honorary District Commodore of the U.S. Coast Guard auxiliary.\textsuperscript{14} Besides these official honors from mainland organizations came the proclamation by Jim Murray, legendary syndicated sportswriter from the \textit{Los Angeles Times}, that Kahanamoku stood as “one of the great athletes of [the] century.” Murray with his typical satirical wit, argued that since the Hawaiian “alphabet is limited, so is their vocabulary . . . but no collection of syllables has meant to the islands quite what ‘Kahanamoku’ has.” Commenting on Kahanamoku’s great prowess as a waterman Murray wrote that “he was at sea so much he was listed as a navigational hazard in the Molokai straits and was requested to wear running lights and a horn.” Murray continued, observing that Kahanamoku was “the first guy to introduce the surfboard to the Mainland, but all the rest of his life has been above reproach.” Thus Murray connected the elderly legend to surfing’s youth counterculture which had developed in the 1960s in California.\textsuperscript{15}

In his sharply worded depiction of Kahanamoku’s history Murray also hinted at the ill treatment that had befallen the Hawaiian at the hands of the mainland media. In explaining that Kahanamoku had lost to Johnny Weissmuller in the 1924 Olympics when “Weissmuller was 19” and “Duke was 34,” Murray made the case for bias: “Weissmuller became a leading man in the movies. Duke became a leading redskin where his longest line was a death rattle. Weissmuller got the girl. Duke got the (horse.).” Murray had attacks for islanders as well as mainlanders. He noted that Hawaiian leaders “kept abolishing jobs on Duke because he would prove there was no need for them. The last one was ‘official greeter’ for Honolulu, only they forgot to tell him when anybody arrived in town above the rank of corporal.”

Murray observed that Kahanamoku was the last in line of those to greet both President Kennedy and England’s Queen Mother “because he only heard it on the radio.” However, both dignitaries went directly to the former champion extracting a “big grin spread over the president’s features,” and “a hula dance” with the Queen Mum due to the fact that “she recognizes Royalty when she sees it.” Murray noted that Kahanamoku planned to run for lieutenant governor and that at seventy-five years old he “sleeps 18 hours a day, and he thinks any man who sleeps 18 hours a day is perfect for lieutenant governor.” Arguing that Kahanamoku “doesn’t have a political party” Murray implored, “all I can say is, if they don’t want him, send him over here. I can get him elected on the surfing vote alone.”

\[16\] Ibid.
\[17\] Ibid.
Murray’s allusion to Kahanamoku’s age and sleeping habits were meant in jest. Others honestly felt that to take on the pressures of campaigning and holding office at his age would be detrimental to the great former champion. Kimo McVay responded to rumors that he had instigated the campaign announcement noting that “I don’t want Duke to run. I personally think it would be a cruel ordeal for him.” McVay elaborated, “if Duke runs I will help him. He’s my friend.” McVay also gave a hint as to Kahanamoku’s real motivation in running. He explained, “Duke wants to represent all of the people of Hawaii, and mainlanders don’t regard his status as official City-County greeter as representing all the people. So Duke decided he could do better as lieutenant governor.”

Kahanamoku seemed to be trying to regain his mana as an ali`i and realized that his effectiveness in that regard was limited by the hierarchical governmental structure of United States politics where local government workers held little status. Kahanamoku confirmed his desires as well as his frustrations in an interview with Honolulu Star-Bulletin reporter Tomi Knaefler. The interview, however, undermined Kahanamoku’s legitimacy as a candidate. Kahanamoku began by announcing that he had changed his plans about running for lieutenant governor and now had decided to run for Governor instead. “Once I get to be Governor, I’ll get my cabinet to run the government. Then I’ll double back, see and become ambassador-at-large for the State of Hawai`i.” Kahanamoku explained “that’s what I really want. But I got to go through it this way.”

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It became clear to readers that Kahanamoku neither understood nor wanted the responsibilities of the Governor’s office. He commented that “this thing, is like a new game for me. All I know is that they want me to run.” He also inferred his indignity toward Senator Fong and the Republican Party, noting “sometimes its terrible. They say go here, go there, put some white shoes on, put aloha shirt on. What do they think I am, a chicken?”

As far as a platform or issues to run on, Kahanamoku had very little to say. When asked to comment on the Republican or Democratic platforms he bluntly replied, “I don’t know anything about that, I don’t keep up with that.” He did have a special building project in mind. As governor, Kahanamoku stated, “I want to build a sports hall of fame for trophies, pictures, histories of athletes. I have a lot of things. But not only for my things. All the athletes who have done a lot for Hawaii.” He also elaborated that he would like to see a beautiful stadium in Honolulu, explaining that “I saw a picture of one in Houston, Texas. It’s beautiful” referring to the newly built Houston Astrodome. “We should have the same thing. It’s covered and has air conditioning,” Kahanamoku reasoned.

While these responses may have garnered the votes of sports fans in Hawai`i his other stands endeared him to very few with any power in politics. Moving from the stadium to fiscal issues, Kahanamoku blustered against high taxes: “what about taxes? Mine only go up, up, up. I wouldn’t let it go higher unless some reason to put it up. Make the rich pay a little more. Not the poor.” He also railed against the powerful

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20 Ibid.  
21 Ibid.
Bishop Estate stating that he wanted more land available for the people that was fee simple and not leased from the Estate. Noting that “me, I have lease land, too, from Bishop Estate.”22 The Kamehameha Schools, run by the Bishop Estate, had curried Kahanamoku’s favor by honoring him - - even though he had dropped out of the private school for Hawaiian students - - with a diploma in 1959 for the class of 1909.23 Kahanamoku, exhibiting his frustration complained, “you’d think they’d tell me: ‘Duke, stay here the rest of your life.’ But no. I have to pay the lease and taxes too. All they think about is their own pocket.”24

Despite the insults made to the powerful and wealthy throughout the interview Kahanamoku maintained that he believed that he could win, “I don’t say it’s a cinch, but I think I can get in.” He noted that “we never had a Hawaiian Governor before. When I’m pau [gone], no Hawaiian left who can do it.” Kahanamoku also explained that he planned to “just put my name on the ballot and win,” with “no sticker, no buttons,” in a “campaign-less campaign.”25

In the interview it became clear that Kahanamoku had lost touch with the changing nature of his homeland, now fully enmeshed into the political and economic spheres of the United States, a feat accomplished ironically, with his assistance. When Knaufler asked his thoughts on the “New Hawaii,” Kahanamoku responded “what’s that?” What they mean by New Hawaii? I don’t know what they mean. The Old Hawaii

22 Ibid
23 “Kamehameha Diploma, Class Of 1909,” 1 April 1959, Duke Kahanamoku Collection MS group 354,, hereafter known as DKC, Box 1, file 15, Special Collections, Bishop Museum, Honolulu, Hawai’i, hereafter known as BMA.
24 Knaufler, “I Really Want.”
25 Ibid.
is good enough for me.” The article displayed that in the new political age that Hawai‘i found itself in, Kahanamoku would not have a chance against the powerful machines of career politicians. It also highlighted the fact that Kahanamoku sincerely wanted to represent his people in the only way he knew how, as an ambassador of aloha, living out the embodiment of all that the word meant in a traditional sense.

After the interview hit the newspapers Mrs. Kinau Wilder, Kahanamoku’s business partner and one of the leaders in Hawai‘i’s business world, recognized the damage that could be done to Kahanamoku’s legacy if he continued in his quest for the governorship. She immediately contacted her son Kimo McVay and hatched plans to provide for Kahanamoku and allow him to back gracefully out of the political race before it destroyed the famous Hawaiian. At the same time Senator Fong distanced himself from Kahanamoku. Fong even denied that he had encouraged the legendary figure to run for office. With the rats jumping off the sinking ship carrying a Kahanamoku campaign, Mrs. Wilder set out to rescue Kahanamoku and “make Duke financially independent for the rest of his life.”

Mrs. Wilder read a statement at a press conference held the day after the newspapers printed the Kahanamoku interview: “Because I cannot bear to see my beloved friend, Duke, be subjected to any kind of political race at this time in his life . . . Duke must be provided a means of continuing to be our ambassador.” Mrs. Wilder elaborated that as her part in helping her friend she had given her majority interest in

26 Ibid.
Duke Kahanamoku Enterprises “to her son Kimo Wilder McVay, with the assurance he would take care of Duke.”

McVay then asked Kahanamoku in the front of the press, “Duke, I think this takes you out of politics, doesn’t it?” Kahanamoku “stared at his arms, crossed in front of him on the table,” as McVay argued, “now you can spend your time on the boat-just drop over to the club once in a while - - and leave politics to other people.” Receiving no answer from Kahanamoku McVay pleaded, “Duke. No Run?” Finally, Kahanamoku raised his eyes to McVay and gave his answer, “No Run.”

Kahanamoku, who had no knowledge of these developments before the statements were made at the press conference, broke down in tears and responded to Mrs. Wilder: “This is what I want . . . its sweet of you. It’s a surprise to me, and I love you.”

The relief of Kahanamoku’s decision to pull out of the gubernatorial campaign swept over many in the islands. Political leaders of the Republican Party in Hawai`i, who had been silent regarding endorsements of the former Olympic star, were quick to praise Kahanamoku while cleverly feigning their disappointment. State Republican chairman Edward E. Johnson commented, “I am sure he will continue to contribute greatly to the progress of the State of Hawai`i.” Senator Fong replied that he was not surprised claiming that Kahanamoku had asked to meet Fong in Los Angeles. “Even then he wasn’t too firm on his political plans,” Fong revealed. Former Republican Governor Quinn stated that while he would have supported Kahanamoku’s run, “I think he is far

30 Ibid.
31 Ibid.
better off away from the maelstrom of politics.” 32 While Kahanamoku had proven to be ill-suited as a candidate for those leaders of the party, the fear still existed as to whether he could strike a cord with the poor and disenfranchised of all political parties and still get elected. In an era when the civil rights movement was in full swing on the mainland, the fear of the unknown in terms of racial issues was a political nightmare the ruling classes in Hawai`i did not want to face since ethnic minorities actually represented the majority of the population. If Martin Luther King, Jr. could rally African-Americans throughout the mainland the fears of what a popular living legend could do in Hawai`i must have been paramount in back room political discussions. 33

Fortunately for the political leaders the unnerving question of what to do with Duke Kahanamoku disappeared. The financial agreements made placated Kahanamoku. The reality was that Kahanamoku was not a revolutionary leader with a clearly established agenda. He had grievances concerning his own treatment by those in power around him, but failed to understand how common his experiences were for the rest of his people. He also failed to understand how to harness the potential political power that he could have engineered through his enormous popularity. Kahanamoku did not harbor ambitions of grandeur as a social reformer. In many ways he may have been too close to the changes occurring in Hawaiian culture to see beyond the impacts on his own life. For Kahanamoku the mere matter of financial survival and attempting to bring honor to his

people through his efforts were his primary concerns. In the agreement with Mrs. Wilder he could see the potential for taking care of both issues.

Even though McVay had promised to give Kahanamoku “a new car, and boat and $1000 a month instead of the $400 he’s been getting,” the actual contract ended up being worth much less. The contract stipulated that Kahanamoku would receive “a car of the Lincoln Continental class” and payment of all expenses for that vehicle as well as Kahanamoku’s boat the Nadu-K-II. The contract paid the former Olympian “$750 per month subject to be increased upward as the cost of living increases.” In addition, McVay planned to transfer another “one sixth interest in the night club operation,” to Kahanamoku.

Kahanamoku signed the contract which allowed him to live out his days as he wished - - with financial security. Fortunately, the night club which had been teetering on the brink of financial insolvency had found a source of revenue from a young Hawaiian entertainer named Don Ho. Ho performed regularly at the Duke Kahanamoku Dinner club as he broke into the entertainment business. McVay observed that “we still owe a few bucks, but Don Ho is really coining it for us.”

Ironically, Ho’s entertainment abilities, which would lead many in the 1970s and 1980s to depict him as Mr. Hawai‘i, would prove the impetus for providing for the continued wealth of the Islands original Mr. Hawai‘i, Duke Kahanamoku. With Ho and other Hawaiian entertainers such as the Aliis [the Chiefs] performing at Duke Kahanamoku’s the nightclub entered its heyday as

34 McManus, “This Is What I Want,”
the place to be in Waikiki. Kahanamoku however, once again struggled with health problems.

Shortly after The Honolulu Advertiser in January of 1967 began to publish a serial, “Duke Of Hawai`i,” by Joseph Brennan the newspaper had to report that Kahanamoku had been treated for bleeding ulcers and that “about 40 per cent of his stomach was removed” during an operation in which he received five blood transfusions. While Hawai`i read daily of the history of their hero, Kahanamoku recovered at the Kaiser Hospital. Of course, even Kahanamoku’s visitors made headlines. He received a visit from Sweden’s Crown Prince Carl Gustav. The twenty-year-old prince, the great-grandson of King Gustav who presented Kahanamoku with his first Olympic Gold medal in 1912, had actually been in the area while on a training mission as a cadet on the Swedish naval training ship Alvsnabben. While visiting Kahanamoku the prince viewed a faded portrait of his great-grandfather awarding the medal to the Hawaiian that Kahanamoku kept at his bedside. Prince Gustav noted “oh, yes, I recognize him.” Kahanamoku considered it a great honor to have the Crown Prince come and visit him in the hospital. Ironically, Kahanamoku would have better knowledge of King Gustav V than his great-grandson standing before him since the Swedish royal was only three years old when the king died in 1950.

It was oddly symbolic that the great-grandson of the first royal to acknowledge Kahanamoku as an equal in royal standing would be in the area and visit the champion swimmer who had captured the minds and hearts of not only Sweden but the world when Kahanamoku burst upon the Olympic scene in 1912. The Prince’s visit did not occur upon Kahanamoku’s deathbed however. The great swim champion recovered from the surgery and become healthy enough to travel to the mainland again in June of 1967.40 Kahanamoku had been invited to “sit with the greatest athletes in the world at an event in Los Angeles.”41 The City of Hope’s Sportsman’s World Award’s banquet requested Kahanamoku and his wife to appear as one of twenty-six of the twentieth century’s greatest athletes.42 Along with Kahanamoku were boxers George Carpentier of France and Max Schmeling of Germany, runner Paavo Nurmi of Finland, and basketball star Elgin Baylor.43

Returning home to Honolulu Kahanamoku was honored for his role in the up and coming sport of surfing at the world premier of the surf movie, The Golden Breed.44 The documentary was dedicated to Kahanamoku and portrayed the lives of 1960s surfing legends, such as David Nuuiwa, Jock Sutherland, Corky Carroll and Eddie Aikau.45 Kahanmoku received a plaque at the premiers recognizing him as “the first of surfing’s golden breed.46 Kahanamoku’s connection to both the mainstream sporting world as

evidenced in the City of Hope Award’s and the counter-cultural world of surfing in which he was regarded with enormous reverence displayed the broad appeal that this great athlete attracted. His seventy-seventh birthday exhibited more of the same when over 6,000 people showed up to celebrate the life of their “Duke.” Don Ho marveled “I’ve been to a lot of parties, but this is the biggest ever.” Comedian Ken Murray and television star Richard Boone mingled with the masses to wish Kahanamoku well.47

The day before his birthday the Honolulu Star-Bulletin ran a story entitled “The Duke and The Sea,” capturing Kahanamoku in his favorite environment. The paper noted that Kahanamoku “has seen a lot of the world. He has known fame and a certain amount of glory. But the best thing of all, for the Duke is the sea.” Kahanamoku, pictured with his hair in a Mohawk hairstyle, while swimming and generally enjoying himself, declared that “a lot of Hawaiians have forgotten how to enjoy life.”48

The article foreshadowed the death of Hawai’i’s great star and his return to the sea. In January of 1968 the man who sports editor Andrew Mitsukado of the Honolulu Star-Bulletin claimed “personifies Hawai`i,”49 and whom Academy Award winning Hollywood songwriter Gene Burdette had just recently written a song for entitled The Legend of Duke Kahanamoku, died.50 On January 22, 1968, a heart attack struck down Kahanamoku in the parking lot of the Waikiki Yacht Club. His brother Bill, accompanying him at the time, recalled that Duke “fell while searching for the keys to his Rolls Royce shortly after 2:30 pm.” Kahanamoku reportedly struck his head on both the

car and the pavement as he fell. He never regained consciousness despite being rushed to nearby Kaiser Hospital.\(^{51}\)

The news that Kahanamoku had died gripped Hawai’i. An outpouring of both grief and fond memories for their Olympic champion filled the pages of newspapers. Governor John Burns ordered Hawaiian flags on all public buildings to be lowered to half staff. Burns proclaimed that “all Hawai’i today grieves the passing of Duke Paoa Kahanamoku; his loss leaves a void in our community and our culture that cannot be filled.” Mayor Neal Blaisdell called Kahanamoku “a true Hawaiian warrior.” Tributes poured in from around the world including a eulogy entered into the United States Senate’s official record by Senator Hiram Fong.\(^{52}\)

Dignitaries flocked to the funeral from around the world. Included among the 100 honorary pall bearers were film director John Ford, Hollywood stars Bing Crosby, Ralph Edwards and Art Linkletter, and members of Congress. Good friend Arthur Godfrey delivered the eulogy for Kahanamoku, as they had agreed many years previously. “If I make (dead) first you put me in, if you make first I put you in,” Kahanamoku had told Godfrey. Godfrey eulogized that “what Longfellow’s Hiawatha – and later Jim Thorpe – did for the American Indian, Duke did for the Polynesians, especially Hawaiians.” Godfrey proclaimed that Kahanamoku “gave these islands a new dimension – the respect of the world for himself and his people.”\(^{53}\)


While Kahanamoku would have appreciated the outpouring of love and support that gave evidence to the power of his life and the celebrity which surrounded it, he probably would have enjoyed the sidelights that were told between those acquainted with the legends of old Hawaiʻi even more. The later years of Kahanamoku’s life reflected more than an attempt to create a new dimension for the islands. He sought to return to the traditional values which had guided his people for centuries. He strove to live up to the heritage of his ali`i birth and to live a life which would bring honor to his people through the spirit of mana and aloha in his everyday life.

While the main focus surrounding the funeral of Kahanamoku centered upon the celebrities such as Godfrey who expressed their condolences and words of encouragement regarding the incredible impact of Kahanamoku’s life, other vignettes reported in the newspapers gave readers a different view. The Reverend Abraham K. Akaka pastor of Kawaiahao Church performed “beachboy” rites for Kahanamoku at the surf in Waikiki. In the ceremony he noted that “in the Kailua-Kona area last Monday, where kings of old Hawaiʻi were born, and along which coasts the gods walk, a child of the land looked upon the usually calm ocean.” Akaka explained that the child saw “an ocean churning with nalu naukiuki - - waves in torment - - and said to his mother: ‘Mama, the surf is big in Kona. An Aliʻi died.’” Akana told the crowd that “it was at that time that our beloved Duke Paoa Kahanamoku passed from this life.” Referring to Kahanamoku as “more than a just a great hero and legend for us,” Akana confided that “in the quiet confidence of his faith and his nature as a Hawaiian, there came forth from deep within him the grace and goodness that united heart with heart, life with life and nation with nation.” Kahanamoku’s life was “gentle,” according to Akana, “and the
elements so mixed in him that nature might stand up and say to all the world. THIS was a man.” Reverend Akaka noted that “the heavens are grumbling. Something is very wrong. But this is the way it has always been when the ali`i dies. Nature protests, gives evidence, and nature is giving evidence today.”

Others interpreted his death in similar ways. “The Hawaiian gods said goodbye to Duke Paoa Kahanamoku this morning,” wrote one local reporter. On the day of Kahanamoku’s funeral an unpredicted thunderstorm arose suddenly bringing great amounts of rain. An authority on Hawaiian chants, Kaupena Wong explained that the storm was “a chant of lamentation poured from Hawai`i’s heavens for the final journey of Kahanamoku.” Wong revealed that “the dark skies and pouring rain,” were “hoaliona - - a sign of the gods saying farewell.” Wong concluded that “the heavy rains of the Kanikau – chant of lamentation – are comparable to heavy weeping . . . an acknowledgement of farewell for special personalities and ali`i.”

Nature’s evidence would have warmed Kahanamoku’s heart as it would have signified for him that he had earned his reputation as an ali`i. He had upheld the traditions of old Hawai`i and had been able to represent his people in a fashion that remained consistent with the great leaders from his ohana. Kahanamoku had been the leader of his people from the time that he leapt into Honolulu Harbor in 1911 and carried the hopes and dreams of Hawai`i on his shoulders enroute to Olympic championships and

56 Ibid.
worldwide recognition for his homeland. This young boy born before the overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy would become the living symbol of these islands at home and abroad.

In the turbulent twentieth-century Duke Kahanamoku emerged as the physical and spiritual representation of Hawai`i. From a territorial government to martial law to statehood, Hawai`i looked to Kahanamoku for stability, direction and rootedness in their rich history. While never acclaimed as an official monarch or assuming the formal title of an ali`i Kahanamoku performed the duties of both for the people of Hawai`i.

Kahanamoku also contributed to the intermarriage of Hawaiian and mainland American culture. As a U. S. Olympic champion, he earned the respect of mainlanders who were curious about their outpost of paradise in the Pacific. The personality of Kahanamoku allowed him to challenge the frontiers of racial exclusion in sport and movies long before the world ever heard of Jackie Robinson or Sidney Poitier. Though his ethnic heritage was different his skin was just as dark as their complexions. In business and politics he led Hawaii into respectability on the strength of his name alone. His mere presence could help calm racial tensions, political enmity, and fears of the future. For all the modernity that Kahanamoku embraced in American culture he also remained rooted in his historical past and native cultural traditions. This paradox created incredible tensions for the great swimmer. He both succeeded and failed in navigating those tensions at different times in his life.

As the tears of the gods attested on the day when Kahanamoku’s ashes were spread at sea following his request that those in the canoes and surfboards accompanying his urn raced back to shore in a competitive manner, Kahanamoku had served as a great
ali`i for his people. The New York Times obituary celebrated Kahanamoku’s life. In the final paragraph the nation’s leading daily noted:

  to his own generation of Hawaiians, Duke Kahanamoku was sometimes looked upon as the personification of a prophecy of King Kamehameha, who in the late 19th century predicted the complete subjugation of the islands by the white man, but said that before the native Hawaiian race died out, one man would bring it fame.\textsuperscript{57}

  Kahanamoku brought Hawai`i more than fame. He brought it hope. Hope for the future of the spirit of aloha in the islands, along with a legacy of grace, sportsmanship, generosity, and selflessness. Many more memorials would be built and named in honor of this great athlete in coming decades, but for Kahanamoku himself the greatest tribute may have come within those “teardrops of rain” that morning.

CHAPTER 16

THE ENDURING LEGEND

The death of Duke Paoa Kahanamoku may have brought an end to the great Olympic champions life but his legend has continued to endure and grow. In 2002 Kahanamoku was immortalized by the U.S. Postal service with a stamp issued in his honor. Kahanamoku has also been memorialized with statues in Australia, California and at Waikiki Beach. Since his death Kahanamoku has not faded into the shadowy memories of the past. In fact there may be as many articles written about Kahanamoku after his death in newspapers and magazines than ever appeared during his lifetime. However, there may be other methods to explore the lasting legacy of Hawai`i’s best known citizen than just in the memorials tributes and glorifications.

The stamp effort led by Kahanamoku historian and caretaker of the Kahanamokus personal belongings Earl Pa Mai Tenn, Don Gallagher head of the Surfrider Foundation in Washington DC and surfing legend Fred Hemmings, allowed Kahanamoku to become only the second pure blooded Hawaiian to be featured on a stamp. The other being King Kamehameha in 1937. Ironically Kahanamoku had sent a letter to himself on the first day of issue forthe Kamehameha stamp which he kept in his personal belongings, beginning a circle that would be completed in 2002.1 Gallagher argued in his request to the stamp advisory committee that “one individual spans the century from royalty to

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1 Envelope of letter From Sheriff’s office to Duke Kahanamoku, 9 October 1937, Earl Pa Mai Tenn Collection, Honolulu, HI. Hereafter referred to as EPT.
statehood. One individual best represents all of Hawai`i’s people, and has yet to be honored on a U.S. postage stamp. That individual is Duke Kahanamoku.”  

The idea of a stamp for Kahanamoku had first been broached in the 1980s by his wife Nadine. She had enlisted the support of both Senator Barry Goldwater from Arizona and author James Michener. The committee turned down the request. Tenn noted that “memorializing Kahanamoku on a U.S. stamp was the final achievement wanted by his widow.” Tenn commented that “I’m really sad she’s not alive to see this come to fore.”

Before her death however, Nadine Kahanamoku was able to see a statue honoring her husband erected at Kuhio Beach on Waikiki. On the celebration of Kahanamoku’s 100th birthday Hawai`i honored their hero with a centennial celebration lasting over a month. Athletic competitions were conducted including outrigger canoe races, body surfing, yachting, windsurfing, running races, swimming and longboard surfing. On Kahanamoku’s birthday the Duke Kahanamoku statue, created by Jan Fisher, an art professor at Brigham Young University-Hawai`i was unveiled on the beach. The dedication of the statue was not without its own controversy however. Local beach boys protested the statue due to the fact that Kahanamoku’s back is to the ocean and facing toward Kalakaua avenue. Rabbit Kekai one of the old-time beach boys explained that

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2 Letter from Don Gallagher to the Citizen’s Stamp Advisory Committee, 4 July 1999, EPT.
3 Letter From Barry Goldwater to Nadine Kahanamoku, 30 June 1983, EPT.
5 “Duke Kahanamoku Centennial,” July – August 1990, Program of Events in Author’s personal collection.
“when I first came to the beach he [Duke] taught me. The first thing he said to me was ‘never turn your back to the ocean.’”\(^6\)

Along with Kekai those who believed that the statue should face the ocean included entertainer Don Ho, Fred Hemmings, “every beach boy in Waikiki,” and some members of Kahanamoku’s family including brother Louis, and grandniece Jill Kahanamoku. Not all of the Kahanamoku family agreed on the direction of the statue Duke Kahanamoku’s brother, Sargeant, and wife Nadine both agreed with U.S. Senator Dan Akaka and Tommy Kaulukukui, Office of Hawaiian Affairs trustee, who argued that “Duke wasn’t just a surfer, he was a man of the people. He had a love for people. This man is a world figure. He doesn’t turn his back on people.”\(^7\) Fortunately the ceremony itself witnessed no demonstrations or protests as all present chose to honor Kahanamoku and put aside their differences of opinion for the time being. Honolulu also honored Kahanamoku by naming the Fort De Russy beach after him as well as the police substation which sits near the statue.\(^8\) Figure 16-1

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\(^7\) Ibid.
Figure 16-1: Duke Kahanamoku Statue in Waikiki. Authors personal collection.
Statues, postage stamps and the multitude of other awards and memorials only begin to explain the influence of Duke Kahanamoku. Another method of measuring the great swimmer’s legacy would be to compare Kahanamoku to a contemporary leader who also came from a colonized island of an imperial power and study the development of those two cultures. The life of C.L.R. James and Sir Learie Constantine from Trinidad serve this purpose well.

What do they know of surfing who only surfing know? To rephrase the famous quote by C.L.R. James regarding cricket may seem like a superfluous act. However, when investigating it in the context of James’ contemporary, regarded as the father of modern surfing, it becomes clear that this statement illuminated the life of Duke Kahanamoku. For James, as well as his good friend Sir Learie Constantine, cricket signified more than just a game, but also a way of life indoctrinated through the sport of cricket. The culture of cricket in the West Indies helped shape James’ life and cemented the British influence of his upbringing while at the same time establishing an indigenous foundation upon which he developed his ideals of independent rule for the West Indies.

Although Hawaii took a different route politically, surfing, for Kahanamoku, played a similar role. In the life of Duke Paoa Kahanamoku, surfing exemplified more than a sporting recreation. It captured an ancient way of life, filled with values such as *aloha* (deep love), *lokahi* (harmony, balance, unity) and *mana* (authority, power, wisdom). As such, scholars can gain valuable insight through a study of these values.

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sportsmen from island nations who became significant role models for their homelands during periods of colonial rule.

Kahanamoku represented a link to old Hawai`i, with its monarchy and proud people as well as the emerging image of modern day Hawai`i depicted in travelogues and television advertisements. Kahanamoku may be the greatest Hawaiian hero of all time. He played a major role in the development of modern Hawai`i. Hawai`i, through the help and encouragement of Kahanamoku became the fiftieth State of the U.S. in 1959. As a State modern Hawai`i exists with little autonomy and yet retains a proud history. However, outside of the islands that historical lineage is often overlooked as a new Hawaiian image developed in the twentieth-century also due in part to the influence of Kahanamoku. As Hawaiian culture mutated from a proud independent monarchy to a dependent state of a superpower, James and Constantine’s West Indian homeland took a much different path, one of national independence from their colonial oppressors’ thanks to the influential leadership of Constantine and James.

Examinations of Kahanamoku and the team of James and Constantine demonstrate numerous similarities. Racial conflict, hero status, island culture, and governments run by colonial empires as well as lives lived as world-class athletes and celebrities are all shared experiences.

Interestingly, while all three men were born and raised in their island homelands they all moved to their respective colonial rulers mainland’s to further their careers. Kahanamoku moved to Los Angeles in the 1920s in order to earn enough money to

continue to compete as an amateur swimmer. Unable to find a decent paying job in Hawaii, even after becoming a world-renowned Olympic gold medalist in swimming, Kahanamoku migrated to the west coast of the United States where he worked at the Los Angeles Athletic Club as a swimming instructor to the California elite, including Hollywood stars and their children.\textsuperscript{11} His connections with those people also led to a career in films, expanding the Olympic champion’s legacy.\textsuperscript{12} Ironically, early in his career Kahanamoku gained greater acclaim with the elite and powerful in the mainland U.S. than he did in his homeland. In Hawai‘i many white elite clubs refused to grant Kahanamoku full membership due to his ethnicity.\textsuperscript{13}

James and Constantine also faced these racial issues when attempting to join cricket clubs in the West Indies.\textsuperscript{14} Constantine, like Kahanamoku, failed to gain employment in his homeland. James wondered “why in the name of heaven those who could have given him a job in town didn’t do so remains beyond all reasonable comprehension.” James understood that “the people would have appreciated them [the white colonial leaders] for it.”\textsuperscript{15} James and Constantine followed their cricket abilities to Great Britain where they gained a platform to promote independent home rule for Trinidad.\textsuperscript{16} While Constantine’s cricket ability made him an instant superstar in England, James also had his own opportunities playing in the English county cricket leagues.

\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid, 68.
\textsuperscript{14} James, \textit{Beyond a Boundary}, 52-3.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid, 107.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid, 109-110.
power of James and Constantine’s influence on the drive for independent rule came in the combination of the duo’s athletic prowess combined with the masterful writing and speaking ability of C.L.R. James. James articulated the case for home rule masterfully all the while demonstrating that he and Constantine were the equals of the British on the field and off. Cricket represented the character of the British possibly more than any other game in relation to other countries. Baseball is noted as America’s national pastime and hockey is a defining trait of Canadian identity, however, cricket may be wrapped tighter in British ideals than those two combined. James understood the role of cricket from an early age, as it was a prime method of establishing British assimilation for its colonies. Referred to as “the code” it represented British expectations of dealing with life. James noted that all West Indians “knew the code as it applied to sport, they expected us, the educated, the college boys, to maintain it.” James explained that the islanders respected the code so highly that “if any English touring team or any member of it fell short they were merciless in their condemnation and shook their heads over it for years afterwards.”

For Constantine and James, the dignity established on the cricket pitch established the rules for successfully navigating British culture and provided the platform for deeper discussions regarding potential independence for the West Indies.

It is interesting to note that Kahanamoku never had the eloquent mouthpiece that Constantine did in James. The closest that Kahanamoku ever had was his good friend Arthur Godfrey. While Godfrey certainly had eloquent expressiveness as a radio and television personality, he could not be innately aware of the issues Kahanamoku had to

17 Ibid, 40.
deal with in the same way that James did with Constantine. Godfrey fell in love with the Hawaiian Islands while serving there on military duty and adopted many cultural icons into his entertainment persona. He played the ukulele, wore Hawaiian print shirts and introduced his audiences to hula dancing and other traditions. Godfrey and Kahanamoku became close friends and the famous entertainer delivered the eulogy for Kahanamoku at his funeral.

Despite the closeness of their relationship and Godfrey’s dismay at the lack of financial opportunities that were available to the famous Hawaiian sportsman, being a haole, or white foreigner, he did not experience the changes in Hawaiian culture nor the struggles of being a member of a colonial oppressed people personally. Godfrey had a great appreciation of Hawaiian culture and he conveyed this to the American public through his broadcasts. However, the lasting images that the average American had from this communication were commercialized versions of their tourist mecca in the South Pacific. While American audiences loved the paradise that Godfrey took them to on his programs, they failed to understand that this land was one imperially overthrown with the assistance of their very own government.

The value system that Kahanamoku had grown up with also became a footnote, which Godfrey could not completely understand. Aloha became a familiar way of greeting people in Godfrey’s entertainment world, and the deeper meanings of the word got lost in the translation. Aloha has numerous meanings, but chief among them is the

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20 Queen Liliuokalani, Hawaii’s Story: By Hawaii’s Queen (Honolulu: Mutual, 1990), 368.
sense of deep feelings embodying an emotional and spiritual essence. It is a term used to communicate deep and compassionate love, encapsulating a way of living in and with the world. It is a rich word full of depth, beauty and power and yet that sense is lost when relegated to “hello” and “goodbye.”

Kahanamoku lived *aloha*, it was bred in him as were other Hawaiian values such as *mana*, which elucidates one’s authority, wisdom and power in a number of realms including the physical, spiritual, emotional and social. Kahanamoku also lived under the value of *lokahi* or balance and harmony. For native Hawaiians, this balance and harmony should be exhibited in dealings with other people as well as the world around us in both a physical and spiritual sense. While Godfrey had some understanding of this world-view that characterized Kahanamoku’s life, he had not grown up in the culture and had no lived experience of these values. In fact, he came from a capitalistic world-view, which saw all things in terms of their inherent value, which at some level is quantifiable in a monetary sense. As such, while he could advocate for Kahanamoku in terms of the lack of rewards, compensation and respect he received from people in Hawaii, he had no life experience to communicate the deeper Hawaiian values that permeated Kahanamoku’s life.

In contrast, James and Constantine came from the same island community. They had grown up experiencing the same threats, opportunities, and shared values in the British occupied West Indies. It makes one wonder if there would be a different

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22 Ibid, 235.
Hawaiian image if Kahanamoku had a C.L.R. James in his life as the great cricketer Sir Learie Constantine did.²⁶ Hawaiian cultural and political identity could have been much different today if Kahanamoku had an articulate comrade who could confront the colonial injustices served upon them as Hawaiians through his influence as a sportsman. Would he have pursued communicating a deeper understanding of Hawaiian culture outside of the islands rather than trying to blend these into a materialistic dominated world where he attempted, without much success, to cash in on the *aloha* phenomenon? Possibly, yet while scholars could debate these issues we do know that these two island communities of oppressed colonial populations took very different roads of development during the twentieth century. While there are many other variables which were at work as well it is instructive to study these divergent paths.

James and Constantine held their dreams of independence for their people and worked tirelessly for that. Constantine challenged James to understand that while they had been raised according to the “code,” and indoctrinated to the values of the English public school system while growing up, the English were not superior to their island people. James recounted a significant conversation with Constantine in which the great cricketer confronted him saying, “You have it all wrong. You believe all that you read in those books. They [the British] are no better than we.”²⁷ This message resonated in James’ life and changed the way he viewed the colonial oppressors of his homeland. Through cricket, James saw that West Indians could hold their own with the English at

²⁶ James, *Beyond a Boundary*, Throughout this work the relationship of James and Constantine is highlighted.
²⁷ Ibid, 112.
their own game, and understood that cricket represented more than just a game. The victories in cricket convinced him that West Indians were the equals of their English conquerors not only on the pitch, but in all areas of life. However proving that would necessitate leaving their homeland and establishing a reputation in their colonial mainland.

While all three left their homelands to pursue athletic and occupational opportunities, it is significant that they were celebrated in other ways. Kahanamoku gained acclaim as a lifesaving hero and movie star while James and Constantine emerged as playwrights, speakers and revolutionary leaders for their homeland.28

Kahanamoku, James and Constantine followed similar paths in their lives. Sport, politics and values intricately intertwined in their everyday existence as they represented their respective peoples to the world. Yet, those paths took very different turns in how these two island cultures developed. The West Indies gained its independence, becoming an autonomous nation. At the same time, Hawa`i became an isolated state in a large world superpower with little independence.

The length of the British occupation established a culture in which James and Constantine identified stronger with British ideals rather than traditional West Indian values. James remembered listening to Mr. Aneurin Bevan in 1956 in Manchester and having a moment of understanding regarding the strength of the British influence. Mr. Bevan, who had developed a reputation as some one who failed to be a part of the team, stated that “I did not join the Labour Party, I was brought up in it.” James wrote that this

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single sentence “tolléd like a bell” as he realized that he “had been brought up in the public-school code.” The British had occupied Trinidad since 1802. They had established their educational system and governmental control long before James’ birth. Therefore, James’ world revolved around British values derived from educational and competitive English traits.  

Kahanamoku on the other hand struggled to adopt the new values of the capitalist United States government due to his strong upbringing in traditional Hawaiian values. At the time of Kahanamoku’s birth Hawaii was still ruled by a monarchial government. Kahanamoku held shared bloodlines with the royal family as a descendant of Kamehameha I. During Kahanamoku’s youth, the American military joined forces with capitalist white businessmen in Hawaii to overthrow the Monarchy in a hostile act against a friendly nation. Kahanamoku grew up raised by a family that remained entrenched in Hawaiian tradition and beliefs much different from the capitalist ideals of the United States. With little formal education, Kahanamoku struggled to find a prominent place in the elite Hawaiian world. He sought opportunities to help his people and accepted a role as the unofficial greeter of the islands. Kahanamoku held the title of sheriff of Waikiki for sixteen years, and eventually was given the title of official ambassador for the State of Hawaii. In his roles, Kahanamoku became the peacekeeper. The friendly face of a people whose glorious history had been stolen and replaced by a commercialized replica

29 James, Beyond, 24-25.  
31 Allen, Betrayal, 304-5.  
and marketed to a growing consumer-driven culture on the mainland. Kahanamoku bought into the new cultural model, trusting American businessmen and politicians, believing that the best path for his peoples prosperity was to align themselves with the vibrant and growing United States.

His own dealings show this as he attempted to make money through various ventures including, real estate, clothing, restaurants, night clubs and the stock market.\(^{33}\) Though not a total failure, Kahanamoku’s upbringing in Hawaiian values, trustful nature and faith in human nature betrayed him in the world of business and he was often taken advantage of. Contracts Kahanamoku signed with Cisco casuals are proof of this. Without his name and support the shirts would never have sold, but Kahanamoku did not realize this and undersold his potential. In the midst of this changing cultural world, where did Kahanamoku go to understand his cultural heritage? To the water!

While he made his name on the world stage as a world record-holding swimmer, Kahanamoku retreated to the sea on his surfboard. An instrument and sport which connected him to his royal lineage and encompassed Hawaiian values in much the same way as cricket did for James and Constantine. For Kahanamoku surfing allowed him an ability not to conquer the wave, but, to become one with it. The balance, harmony, deep appreciation and understanding of ones authority were part of the surfing experience for Kahanamoku. Surfing was more than a sport, it was also a spiritual endeavor connecting Kahanamoku with his historical roots and allowing him to reconnect to Hawaiian values.

\(^{33}\) Letter From Joseph Rosenthal To Duke Kahanamoku,” 23 March 1954, DKC, Box 1, File 2, Aloha shirts: Cisco Casuals, HSA.
which guided his life, similar to what James experienced through cricket. Kahanamoku would understand that those who only understand surfing as a sport or recreational experience do not truly understand surfing, nor do they truly understand the heartbeat of the Hawaiian people, which beat in the chest of the father of modern surfing. Godfrey could not understand it the way that James understood Constantine, and as a result the West Indies and the Hawaiian Islands developed new and divergent identities.

Whether the Hawaiian model or the West Indian is better or worse is a debate that has no clear answers. What is significant however is that as these island cultures developed in two different ocean bodies they followed the paths of their favorite sons, Duke Kahanamoku, C.L.R. James, and Sir Learie Constantine. Even today, these men continue to be highly regarded figures in Hawaiian and West Indian lore and represent the complexities of changing cultures for proud peoples.

Kahanamoku has remained an icon for young people in Hawai‘i. He inspired other Hawaiians to live lives of selflessness and humility. Surfing legend Eddie Aikau held Duke Kahanamoku as his hero growing up. Aikau took sixth in the second annual Duke Kahanamoku surfing contest in 1967 held at Sunset Beach on Hawai‘i’s north shore. Aikau received his trophy directly from Kahanamoku at the awards ceremony, along with a warm hug. Aikau would go on to become one of the greatest big wave riders in surfing history. He also became a life guard at Waimea Bay saving hundreds of swimmers from drowning. Ten years after his first entry in the Duke Classic, Aikau

\[\text{________________________} \]

\[\text{34 Duke Kahanamoku and Joseph Brennan, } \text{Duke Kahanamoku’s World of Surfing} \text{ (New York: Gossett and Dunlap, 1968). This work is as close to an autobiography that we have of Kahanamoku and in it he describes his perspectives on surfing and how it has changed and developed.}

would finally win the event. One of the first black surfers in Hawai`i, Bill Pierce described Aikau’s mindset regarding the contest, “the reason he wanted to win was to honor the Duke, not to honor himself. I always thought of him as a modern Duke Kahanamoku because wherever the Duke went he spread aloha.” Pierce reminisced that “Eddie kind of personified that for me.”

Others would make the connection between Aikau and Kahanamoku due to an event in 1978. Aikau had the opportunity to sail on the Hōkūle`a, the double-hulled voyaging canoe which had made history in 1976 by traveling the 5000 mile trip to Tahiti and back. Unfortunately the canoe encountered gale force winds and a rogue wave capsized the vessel in the Moloka`i Channel. The crew held on to the overturned canoe throughout the night and Aikau envisioned a rescue plan. Utilizing a surfboard he had brought along in hopes of surfing in Tahiti, Aikau asked for permission to paddle to the island of Lāna`i over twenty miles away to go for help. Fearing his crew’s safety the captain finally agreed and Aikau set off in the heavy seas. Later that night a plane passing over the canoe saw the last of the flares that the crew had and rescued the those clinging to the canoe. Aikau never made it to land. Despite an enormous search Aikau’s body was never discovered. Aikau became a legendary hero in the Islands and the line “Eddie Would Go,” has become a popular cultural and advertising statement in Hawai`i reflecting the bravery of the Hawaiian icon. For Aikau it was simply a matter of

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following the example of his hero Duke Kahanamoku, who had saved eight men with his surfboard off Newport Beach, California, in 1925.\(^\text{38}\)

Aikau was not the only young person whom Kahanamoku would inspire to great feats of courage, strength and accomplishments. As part of Kahanamoku’s living legacy the Outrigger Duke Kahanamoku Foundation (ODKF) now gives away numerous scholarships annually for Hawaiian youth to go to college, study and compete in athletic endeavors. The organization notes that “the Mission of the Outrigger Duke Kahanamoku Foundation is to financially support the development of individuals and organizations which perpetuate the spirit and legacy of Duke Kahanamoku.”\(^\text{39}\)

That spirit and legacy began in a small nation of Islands ruled by a monarchy whose traditions and beliefs differed from their conquering Imperial foes. Duke Kahanamoku would emerge from the bloodlines of that royal family and as Fred Hemmings eloquently stated “with 1,000 years of Hawaiian culture behind him, Duke marched into the 20\(^{\text{th}}\) century.”\(^\text{40}\) As an Olympic champion swimmer, the father of modern surfing, sheriff of Honolulu, ambassador for Hawai`i, and Hollywood film star Kahanamoku spread his understanding of Hawaiian culture far and wide. He influenced the growth and direction of Hawai`i politically, socially, spiritually and culturally.


\(^{39}\) Outrigger Duke Kahanamoku Foundation Home Page, http://search.netscape.com/ns/boomframe.jsp?query=Duke+Kahanamoku+Foundation&page=1&offset=0 &result_url=redir%3Fsrc%3Dwebsearch%26requestId%3D2e5bc14eca3ace02%26clickedItemRank%3D1 %26userQuery%3DDuke%2BKahanamoku%2BFoundation%26clickedItemURN%3Dhttp%253A%252F%252Fwww.dukefoundation.org%252F%26invocationType%3D-%26fromPage%3D%3DSN%26%26amp%3DSNamp%3DSNTest%3D1&remove_url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.dukefoundation.org%2F, accessed on 6 March 2006.

As his business partner and friend Kimo McVey related, “Duke actually is to surfing what Babe Ruth was to baseball. To the world, Duke is Hawai‘i!!”\textsuperscript{41} Kahanamoku’s worth to the development of Hawai‘i’s image both in the United States and abroad can never be counted for in a monetary sense. The sum would be too great. In today’s Hawai‘i the statue of Kahanamoku in Waikiki draws a continuous stream of tourists, visitors, and locals who take photos and leave their leis upon the outstretched hands of the statue as a means of thanks for the hospitality and sense of aloha they experienced, due partially to the influence of this great sportsman. Due to the easy access for the masses of tourists in the Waikiki area where most hotels are located, Kahanamoku’s statue probably welcomes more visitors each year than does the statue of Kamehameha I near Iolani Palace. In fact some who visit the statue of Duke Kahanamoku in Waikiki mix up the great swimmer with the distant memory of Kamehameha. On one such occasion a young man was asked by his girlfriend “who is this guy anyway?” The twenty-something man responded with absolute certainty, “he was the king of the islands. He conquered the whole South Pacific and then won the Olympics in surfing!”\textsuperscript{42}

Despite the obvious flaws in the young man’s historical knowledge the conversation does demonstrate the pervasive power that the legacy of Kahanamoku holds. While not an actual earthly king Kahanamoku drew constant comparisons

\textsuperscript{42} Conversation overheard by the author and friend Larry Kekaulike during a picture taking adventure in Waikiki near the Duke Kahanamoku statue, 14 June 2005. Unfortunately the young woman could have answered her own questions by simply reading one of the three plaques adorning the statue, but that may have required more work.
throughout his lifetime to Kamehameha I. Kamehameha ruled his people and consolidated the islands through power, strength and the sword. His mighty army defeated all foes and Kamehameha was recognized as the first king of the Islands.

Kahanamoku did not rally his people in a revolutionary or military style. Yet in a much more subtle way he united the people of the Hawaiian Islands.

When Duke Kahanamoku emerged on the national scene as a swimming champion Hawai’i was in the throes of rapid change. Immigration of numerous ethnic groups, plantation labor, white supremacy and a vanishing native population created a scenario much different than that which faced Kamehameha. The one remaining need however was for unification. Kahanamoku became the tool that unified the Island people, haole, native Hawaiian, Japanese, Korean, Chinese, Pilipino, Samoan, Portuguese, and various mixes of all of these and more looked to their “Duke” to represent them to the world. Kahanamoku did just that, as a movie star, athlete, sheriff, businessperson, and ambassador. Most of all he represented them as a man who became a bridge between an old and new culture for Hawaiians. Kahanamoku understood the old traditions and values of the ali`i but he also grasped the new modern world in which Hawai`i found itself colliding with.

As flamboyant con-man turned newspaper columnist Sammy Amalu noted upon Kahanamoku’s death, “The Duke stands alone in that his greatness lay in himself.” Amalu asserted that Kahanamoku “built no edifice that miserable termites -.--. human and otherwise -.--. could gnaw away to ruin. He preached no great lesson for Man to prostitute to his own selfish ends.” The Olympic champion “led no armies to smash his way to glory over the bones and gore of the dead and the dying,” Amalu argued,
Kahanamoku “had no need for these, but make no mistake that he was not among the world’s truly great.” Amalu surmised that “therewith lies the glory of Duke Paoa Kahanamoku. He was always himself - - no façade, no veneer, no pose - - only himself.”

Perhaps because of the transparent nature of Kahanamoku’s personality that Amalu demonstrated the world could clearly view Hawai‘i, its people and its culture through the life of its most famous citizen. The struggles, financially, personally, racially, and spiritually all were revealed in Kahanamoku’s experiences. His joys and successes were also plainly displayed for all to see. As a result, Kahanamoku became a wonderful cultural text allowing observers an insider’s picture to understand the changing nature of his o`hana (people), aina (land), mana (power) and the true spirit of aloha.

Kahanamoku’s role in the development of Hawaiian culture cannot be diminished. He became the symbol of Hawai‘i during his lifetime and remains that symbol nearly forty years after his death. Some historians and other scholars may dismiss Kahanamoku as insignificant in understanding and examining Hawai‘i and its development. However, when examining the life of this monumental figure it becomes clear that he played a central role in the twentieth-century changes in perspective in and of the Hawaiian Islands.

As the Honolulu Star-Bulletin noted in an editorial in 1950, Kahanamoku desired “to live a life beyond reproach, so that the youngsters who idolize him could find in him a pattern of decency and helpfulness and consideration in human conduct.” The newspaper

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rightly stated “early in his career he realized that people throughout the world saw Hawai‘i through him.” Ending with a simple yet definitive statement the editors simply concluded that “Duke Paoa Kahanamoku is Hawai‘i.” The same may still be true today.

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Mid-Pacific Magazine
Newsweek
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# Appendix A
## Glossary of Hawaiian Words

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hawaiian</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>`Āina</td>
<td>Land, region, psychological and spiritual also</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alaka`i</td>
<td>To lead, guide, direct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ali`i</td>
<td>Noble, chief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ali`i nui</td>
<td>High chief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aloha</td>
<td>Deep compassionate love, greeting, affection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awāwa</td>
<td>Valley, deep knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ha<code>aha</code>a</td>
<td>to be humble, modest, unpretentious</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hanai</td>
<td>Traditional child rearing practice</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hanohano</td>
<td>Dignity, honor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haole</td>
<td>Foreigner, white person.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ho`okipa</td>
<td>To entertain, hospitality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hula</td>
<td>Native Hawaiian dance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kahuna</td>
<td>Expert, priest, sorcerer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kanaka</td>
<td>Person, human</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kapu</td>
<td>Sacred, restricted</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kaukau</td>
<td>Affectionate advise, to step up and serve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaukau ali`i</td>
<td>Chiefly server</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kela</td>
<td>Excelling, exceeding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koa</td>
<td>Brave, bold, fearless; courage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word</td>
<td>Definition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kōkua</td>
<td>To help, aid, assist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kūpono</td>
<td>Honest, decent, proper, right, just</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kupuna</td>
<td>Ancestor, elder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kumu</td>
<td>Master educator, foundation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kuma hula</td>
<td>Masters of the native dance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laulima</td>
<td>Cooperation, working together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le<code>ale</code>a</td>
<td>Playfulness, have a good time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lōkahi</td>
<td>Unity, accord, agreement, harmony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mana</td>
<td>Spiritual, authority, power, wisdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahele</td>
<td>To divide, share from a larger whole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mele</td>
<td>Chant interpreted through dance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>`Ohana</td>
<td>Extended family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>`Oiwi</td>
<td>Native Hawaiian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>`Oiwi maoli</td>
<td>Native Hawaiian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>Olu</code>olu</td>
<td>Pleasant, nice, amiable, happy, agreeable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pa`ahana</td>
<td>Hard working, busy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Papa</td>
<td>Earth mother, reef</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pono</td>
<td>Correct, proper, rightly balanced, excellent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Out There besides a flowering hau tree, crouched upon the sand

A Slim Hawaiian boy is singing `neath the crescent moon;

A melody of haunting minors, a gently mournful tune,

The cadence rising from the shadows lovely as rose petals shewn

To flutter on the dimpled fountain, cast idly by a maid’s fair hand.

Close at his feet the tinkling wavelets tell a story of the sea;

In monotones intriguing they whisper of the ancient lure,

The ocean holds for valorous souls who dare adventure on her;

To know the joy which fires the heart and sets the blood astir.

Through calm and storm their quest goes on, unafraid of destiny.

He trills and trills his tender theme below the jeweled sky,

This slim Hawaiian youth, whose heritage of song

Is his by every right; in him the gift lives fresh and strong.

Upon the vagrant breeze his words are caught and wafted on,

To bring a benison to grieving hearts and soothe away the sigh.

Oh, lithe, bronze boy, your words bring peace and healing to me;
So poignantly you tell of life and love, and all the hidden
Treasures of this earth which come to you unbidden
Upon the soaring wings of harmony, unhampered and unridden.

A little while my captive soul is free—I’m what I long to be.
But ah, too soon across night’s vast domain the stars have sped;
   The nascent orb of Luna is sinking in the farthest west;
   Her scintillating road is dimming now upon the water’s crest.
   The strings are mute, his song is stilled; The lad has gone to rest,
While ‘round me olden memories assail, the wraiths of years long dead.
VITA

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Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Pennsylvania. Doctoral Candidate in Kinesiology. Sport History and Philosophy emphasis, with a minor in humanities. ABD.

RELEVANT WORK HISTORY:

Assistant Professor, Department of Physical Education, Health and Recreation, September 2004- Present, Eastern Washington University, Cheney, Washington. Tenure track position teaching courses in sport management, sport history and philosophy, pedagogy, health and recreation.

Graduate Assistant, August 2001-present, Penn State University, State College, Pennsylvania. Graduate assistant in the Kinesiology department, working toward Ph. D. in sport history and philosophy. Responsibilities include teaching assistantship, lead teaching in sport history, activity courses and pedagogy/adventure education and research concerning 2002 Salt Lake City Olympic Games and other Olympic related topics.

Adjunct Professor, Assistant Football Coach, Athletic Recruiting Coordinator and Assistant to the Athletic Director, 1992-2001. Whitworth College, Spokane Washington. Responsible for coordinating public and community relations. This includes developing the Barnabus project, a speaker's bureau and coaching education utilizing our athletes and coaches. Coaching the defensive backfield & special teams, breaking down & evaluating film, coordinating and developing game plans arranging all travel, recruiting student athletes, and overseeing the recruitment of student athletes as a liaison between admissions and athletics.