



Lifeline

Newsletter of Hui Wa'a Kauka'ahi

Fall 2004 ♦ Issue 04 - 4

Kites Rule the 2004 Windbag Regatta

*Article by Kevin K. L. Ching, DDS
Photos by Anne Ashford and Lois Miyashiro*

According to the weather reports, there would be no Windbag Regatta as scheduled. The winds had been uncharacteristically light all week and a front was blocking the Trades. That morning as we stood at the starting point on Maunalua Bay, everyone wanted the race to begin and not be postponed to the September alternate date. At 10:00 a.m., the 6th Annual Windbag Regatta got underway. Everyone had a quick start except Joe Hu who arrived just as everyone was launching. The brothers, Graham and Brian Boltz, shot off the reef on their planing kayaks with parafoils. The winds were still somewhat light and the rest of the pack slowly rounded Paiko Lagoon. Steve Harris was sporting a brand new custom sail that he had designed and took an early lead with Chalsa Loo close behind. This race was beginning to look a lot like last year's except Steve was not yielding. The new sail was working well and was very efficient in the weak winds. Not wanting to fall too far behind, I started paddling -- first a few strokes, then more as I tried to close in on Steve. Not far behind me were Chalsa and Ed Rhineland. Ed had beaten me on a practice run the week before and found new confidence. Meanwhile, the Boltz Brothers were flying down the coast, their kites doing loops and dips as they took advantage of all the wind they could.

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*Ex-officio voting Board members

President's Message

Hello Paddlers,

Some of the paddles we do as Club members may seem commonplace but to a first timer a paddle can truly be the experience of a lifetime. On our 4th of July fireworks paddle, I had the opportunity to hear from Merritt Burke who had just returned from a first-time trip along the Na Pali Coast. Stan McCrea, Dennis Kees, and Mike Dubrovsky did the research and got suggestions from those who had paddled the route before. The advice did not quell the adventures of paddling Na Pali for the first time, hiking the numerous waterfall and river trails, swimming and hiking to Honopu, camping under the stars on the beach at Kalalau, and fighting the current back. It was described by Merritt as the "best" kayaking trip he had ever done. It was an experience that would stay with him forever, especially with his move from Hawaii back to the East Coast. We should count ourselves fortunate to have experienced these kinds of adventure and be ready to experience new ones. Keep in touch, Merritt!

There is no fun to an adventure if you do not return to tell about it. Two fishermen were lost off Oahu earlier this year, their boats found with motors still running. We cannot be sure what happened to these men who were experienced about Hawaiian ocean conditions. We can only guess that they fell off their boats and were unable to get themselves back on or to seek help. We paddle the same waters and should learn from these incidents. Even the most

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[continued from page 2 – President’s Message]

experienced kayakers have fallen off their boats and rogue waves do occur. Here is a list of basic suggestions for kayakers:

1. Use a paddle leash and also a leg leash for offshore paddling;
2. Wear or have a functional life vest on or within easy reach;
3. Paddle with a buddy within earshot of you; and
4. Have a signaling device and/or a VHF radio either attached to you or within easy reach.

You can then start to enjoy or continue to enjoy many paddling adventures.

Safe Paddling,

Joe Hu

President

[continued from front page – Kite Rules the 2004 Windbag Regatta]

It was beginning to look very ugly for me as Steve was smiling ear-to-ear and hooting ahead of me. He looked unstoppable; not even my paddling was drawing me nearer to his kayak. Suddenly, the wind gusted and caught Steve by surprise. His Scupper rocked right and left and, all of a sudden, his sail started to rustle like a sheet on a clothesline. Steve rolled into the water at Kawai Kui, a *huli* that changed the race forever. Not wanting to squander some good fate, I started to paddle hard to pull away from him. I knew that in a few short seconds Steve would right his kayak and be on his way. My job was to put yards between us that he would not be able to recover. Now the wind was picking up and my rig was eating up all the energy from the air. A wake was forming in front of my kayak as I looked behind to see Steve already upright and tearing down behind me.

Up ahead, Graham Boltz sailed into Waialae (Kahala) Beach Park in record time, beating the previous fastest time by 6 minutes. Brian Boltz had a little trouble at the end as he *huli*'d just before landing at Kahala but he still came in second. As I was rounding the point by the Kahala Mandarin Oriental Resort, it was clear to me that I no longer had to paddle because Steve had a lot of water to cover to catch up to me. Steve came in soon after I landed, followed by Ed and Chalsa. Al Narciso, a rookie Windbagger, was the first single-line parafoil to land. Phil Dang, Chuck Ehrhorn, Paul Tibbetts, Mira Tsang and Tim Baltzer, first-timers in a tandem, closely followed. D'arcy Kuba was next, paddling his first Windbag Regatta as well. D'arcy caught the bug and entered the race, having recorded the last three WBR events on videotape. Rounding out last place was Hui President, Joe Hu, who was also racing for the first time.

It was another exciting finish. As onlooker Jeff Aurrecochea said, "It was fun just watching all of you come in and to see the rivalry between you and Steve!" Another year and another chapter in the saga of the Windbag Regatta were over.

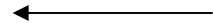


Bernie Boltz accepts trophies and prizes on behalf of his sons, Graham and Brian, who finished in first and second places, respectively.

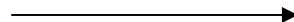
***The organizer and the participants of the Windbag Regatta would like to acknowledge the volunteers –
Jean Ehrhorn, Peter Nicholson, Lois Miyashiro, and Anne Ashford. Without their help, there would have been no race. We would also like to thank Gary Housley of Pacific Action Sails, Robert Lyon of Primex Sails, and Gary Budlong of Go Bananas Kayaks and Roof Racks for their generous support of the Windbag Regatta.***



Steve on the left and Kevin on the right as they start the race.



Volunteers Jean and Peter scout the horizon for the Windbaggers.



WINDBAG REGATTA 2004 OFFICIAL RESULTS

| <u>Name</u> | <u>Time</u> | <u>Type of Kayak</u> | <u>Type of Wind Propulsion</u> |
|--|-------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1 GRAHAM BOLTZ | 19min 55sec | Waveski | Dual Lined Parafoil Kite |
| 2 BRIAN BOLTZ | 26min 16sec | Cobra Strike | Dual Lined Parafoil Kite |
| 3 KEVIN CHING | 39min 59sec | Scupper Pro | 2 Primex V-Sails |
| 4 STEVE HARRIS | 41min 3sec | Scupper Pro | Custom Rectangular Sail |
| 5 ED RHINELANDER | 46min 56sec | Scupper Pro | Custom Crabclaw Sail |
| 6 CHALSA LOO | 52min 44sec | Scupper Pro | Custom Triangle Sail |
| 7 AL NARCISO | 53min 54sec | Scupper Pro | Single Lined Parafoil Kite |
| 8 PHIL DANG | 54min 53sec | Drifter | Custom Triangle Sail |
| 9 CHUCK EHRHORN | 62min 34sec | Scupper Pro | Single Lined Parafoil Kite |
| 10 PAUL TIBBETTS | 65min 21sec | Scupper Pro | Single Lined Parafoil Kite |
| 11 ELMIRA TSANG and TIMOTHY BALTZER | 70min 46sec | Malibu Two | Rain Jacket |
| 12 D'ARCY KUBA | 79min 36sec | Tarpon 120 | Single Lined Parafoil Kite |
| 13 JOE HU | 89min 15sec | Scupper Pro | Triangular Sail With Jib |
| 14 ALAN CALHOUN | did not start or finish | | |

Kolohe Kolekole!

*Article by Kevin K. L. Ching, DDS
with excerpts by Jean Ehrhorn and Joe Hu
Photos by Jean Ehrhorn*

Welcome to Kolekole!

Context: Hui Wa'a Kaukahi scheduled a "luxury" paddle in Hilo from September 10-13, 2004. Luxury means no camping, hot showers at night, and the paddles are day paddles. After picking up kayaks on Friday morning from Young Bros., the group decided to do a short afternoon paddle, launching from the stream at Kolekole Park and paddling north as far as we could go in an hour or so and then return to the park. After a comfortable launch, the weather turned iffy, which complicated the landing. (JE)



Kevin launching from Kolekole

"Jeanie's caught in a rip!" exclaimed Joe just as I surfed a 5-foot wave into the mouth of Kolekole Beach Park. Looking back, there she was floating next to her pink Scupper stuck in a holding pattern in the impact zone. That was the start of the "Hilo luxury paddle," and the Kolekole menehunes were in rare form. Just a few minutes ago, we were waiting just out of the surf zone, studying the steep waves pounding the boulders at the beach. When I looked at Jeanie, I knew she just needed a little push to get her past the breakers and back to shore so I waited for a lull in the sets and ordered the charge to shore. I paddled hard, leading the way with Jeanie close behind when I heard a roar. Not looking

back, I guessed it must have been a wave. Joe said it looked like a 5-footer building fast behind my Scupper. The stern rose as the wave approached and I braced to the right, sliding smoothly into the mouth of the stream, but Jeanie wasn't doing as well and immediately *huli'd*.

After hearing Joe's call for help, Dennis and I paddled into the impact zone to give her a hand with getting out of the pounding surf. Not long after getting to her, I tried to coax her out to sea into calmer water but the rip wouldn't allow her to swim out. We tried to stabilize her kayak so that she could get back in. Just when we were about to attempt "Plan B," the next set of waves came in, this one larger than the first. Joe estimated the wave to be 6-footers. The wave immediately blindsided me and I *huli'd*, then Jeanie's kayak was next. Dennis was the final victim as the wave folded the front of his Scupper. His kayak looked like he had slammed into a Humvee. At this time Chuck jumped in and pulled Jeanie and her kayak to the mouth of the stream as Dennis and I recovered. Fortunately, the only thing injured was Dennis' kayak and it popped back with a few well-placed punches from Dennis.

Lois and I were by ourselves in a short double kayak outside Kolekole and the rest of the group was still up the coast. The northeast horizon had turned the dark grey of a coming storm. As raindrops began to fall, ocean swells began to grow and break, and the sea was getting erratic. A "washing machine" effect was created as the swells bounced off the cliffs. Lois reported that when we had left Kolekole, the sets consisted of several waves with a long lull in between. This was not the case now -- surf was breaking continuously. As we slowly paddled closer to the mouth of the river, we saw that the surf was breaking in the bay as well as on shore. We did not know when the storm would hit so we wanted to land soon.

About 50 yards from the mouth of the river, we saw a lull in the waves and decided to make a break for the shore. Our wide two-person kayak took a second or two to get moving as we paddled in earnest. I glanced behind and saw the ocean behind us grow into a large swell. We were too far in to back-paddle over the swell; the only thing we could do was paddle harder. The swell grew larger and began to break. Our kayak began to slow as the wave pulled us into its curl. All of a sudden, there was a sea of foam and our kayak turned 45 degrees into the wave. For a split second, we thought

we could surf the wave sideways. In another split second, the wave flipped our kayak over and we were in the water. I had told Lois earlier that if we capsized, we should let the boat go to avoid being hit by it, a common cause of kayaking injury. The boat would find its own way to land. This time, though, we were too far from shore so we hung onto the boat as the surf continued to break on us. It was too deep for us to touch bottom and we began to swim towards shore while hanging onto the kayak. [This is normally a good technique because the waves will push the kayak in while a person is holding onto it.]

We kicked and stroked and began to get tired. Lois' life vest was unclipped and I had an inflatable life vest usually used only in emergencies. After all, this was supposed to be a simple paddle.

Lois asked "Are we getting any closer?" I assured her we were but was thinking to myself that we should have reached shore by now with the amount of surf breaking over us and the swimming we were doing. We both realized at the same time that we were caught in a rip current coming out of the river mouth. I sensed the current was trying to push us out and to the left and started angling the kayak to the left and swam harder. We needed to break out of the current. I began to get exhausted and finally inflated my life vest. I was not able to easily pull it over my head while holding onto the kayak and swimming in surf. I decided to use the vest as a float instead and rested my left arm on it and continued swimming.

The shore began to get closer. We finally felt the ocean bottom with our feet and eventually dragged ourselves onto the boulders. Other kayakers began to arrive. Dan grabbed our kayak and dragged it above the surf line.

A lone board surfer remained outside for a while and suddenly got out of the water. When asked why, he reported that he saw fish acting erratically and then saw a large dark shape in the water. He wasn't going to hang around to see what it was. Dennis reported that his kayak had a lot of blood on it from a Kawakawa he had caught earlier. (JH)

That night, we discussed the itinerary for the next day and it was clear that we were going to launch from Kolekole again. This time we were going south to Hilo. There was no other good put-in according to the map of Hamakua we looked at. I wondered if Jeanie and Lois would be very happy about the prospect of facing big sets of waves. The next morning Lois and I were supposed to paddle Joe's double kayak and that night she seemed determined to paddle the next day.

Kolekole Challenge

We arrived at Kolekole the next morning and, to our surprise, the surf break was bigger than yesterday's! Lois had a change of plan and was taking on a different paddle and a different paddling partner, Jane. They were going to do "the deluxe Hilo paddle" (shopping, dining, sightseeing, and maybe a short paddle in Hilo Harbor) while we made the long paddle to Hilo the hard way -- through the surf. We all stood at the beach gazing at the 4- to 5-foot breakers that were coming in without lulls. The surfers were now collecting at the mouth of the stream, hooting and hollering at their good fortune. Jeanie was going to brave the breakers despite her harrowing experience the day before.

No one wanted to be the first so I volunteered. "Go right!" advised Chuck as he noted the break was smaller on that side. I paddled out to the mouth of the stream as the waves broke right and I back-paddled. Dennis was to my right and waiting for the charge. Another wave broke and it looked like I would have a 3- to 4-second interval before the next wave so I paddled straight out as another wave was building. I punched out and turned to signal that I had made it out safely. Dennis was right behind me and made it out safely as well. The surfers were hooting in amazement that anyone would be crazy enough to paddle in these conditions. Jeanie was next, plowing through a set, and she made it out okay with Chuck following behind.

Alan was the last off the beach, having made sure everyone launched safely. As he approached the breakers, he started to turn right just as a wave was breaking. The wave caught his Spike on the left side, his bow high in the air. Then came the horrendous *huli* as Alan and his kayak were pitched back towards the boulders. With the kayak upside down and pounding on the shore, I couldn't see him. I started paddling back to help when, all of a sudden, I saw his head pop out of the water and upright his kayak, jump on and paddle out. As he paddled out, I noticed a trickle of blood running down his chin and onto his chest. Alan had a small puncture wound on his chin which he claimed was caused by hitting the hull of his boat with his chin. I told him to apply pressure with his hand but he said, "It's kinda hard to do that and paddle at the same time, Kevin!" About an hour later, I checked on him and noticed that he was still bleeding. This time he pulled his lip down to show that the hole went through and through. He was now using a piece of clothing to stop the bleeding. With a "been there, done that" attitude, Alan was determined to paddle on.

The cliffs we paddled along seemed to go on to infinity. After about 6 miles, I saw from a distance a small but

interesting crack in the cliff. As I paddled closer to the opening, I noticed that the water looked calm inside. I waited just outside of the breakers to see if any of the waves were large enough to scour the crack. It looked just fine; the breakers stopped at the opening and the water inside remained calm. I cautiously paddled past the breakers and through the mouth into a small valley. It looked like I was suddenly transported into a Garden of Eden! The walls of the valley were neatly lined with short palm trees, green with frequent sprinkles. In the



Kawainui Falls

back was a small waterfall that fell into a small pond connected to the ocean. Along the banks of the pond were a group of local fishermen. One man had a bamboo pole and a net, fishing off a boulder near the waterfall pool. I slowly approached him. With the Hui's history of encounters with fishermen (it wouldn't be a paddle without at least one fisherman yelling some expletive at us), I wanted to avoid a scene. "You know what the name of this waterfall is?" I asked the man, trying to strike up a conversation. He shrugged his shoulders and shook his head. He looked over at his friends on the other side of the bay and gave them a nod. Silence... Not a word uttered by any of the men there. At first I thought this was a sign of hostility. I radioed Jeanie that this was a nice place but the fishermen didn't look too friendly. "Is there any place to land?" Jeanie asked. "Sure there is; I'm standing on a rock right now! Come on in!" I said as I gazed at the fishermen laying a net across the mouth of the waterfall pond and looking at me with blank expressions.

One by one, everyone came into the bay with the same look of awe on their faces as I had paddling in. Jeff paddled up to the fishermen with a 14-pound Uku in tow. When the fishermen saw the fish floating on the side of Jeff's kayak, *they* had the look of awe on their faces. That was all that was needed to break the ice as



Jeff and his 14-pound Uku

the fishermen started opening up, curious about who we were and how we got there. I realized that they were actually very shy and not hostile at all. While they were talking to Jeff, Dan, Dennis and I tied up our kayaks and hiked over to the waterfall pond and went for a delightful swim. The swim to the falls was easier than the swim away, probably because the tide was rising. It turned out to be a great place to gobble our lunch. Soon it was time to leave and the fishermen waved "aloha," still amazed that we had paddled all the way from Kolekole. We, on the other hand, were wondering how these men had hiked down to this very isolated spot.

The Long Slog

We were soon on the long leg of the paddle to Hilo. On the cliff above were the million-dollar houses, very reminiscent of the Portlock area on Oahu. The only break in the cliff was a short stop at a beach with an abandoned sugar mill.

We finally arrived in Hilo! We must have been a sight



when we pulled our kayaks up the bank at Queen Liliuokalani Gardens in front of the Hilo Hawaiian Hotel. We were making a lot of friends as people started coming over and talking to us about our paddle. Alan was sitting by himself on his Spike. “What do you think, Doc? Should I go to the hospital?” he asked. His wound was still bleeding after 6 hours of paddling and his chin looked swollen. I told him that he should go immediately to the emergency room and that I would drive him. Not wanting to sit in a waiting room all night, he decided to wash the wound with copious amounts of beer.



Alan's on the left nursing his chin while Doc Kevin keeps an eye on him. Good buddies, Jeff and Chuck, hang around to make sure Alan's okay.

The Day-After Paddle

The next morning, we all got up later than the day before. We planned to paddle from Hukilau Beach on the other side of the Hilo breakwater to Kapoho. As we prepared for another day of paddling, we wondered if Alan was going to join us. He had spent a good deal of the night “cleaning” his wound with beer washes but there he was, swollen and somewhat alert but ready to paddle.

Hukilau Beach was the most delightful place to launch and land, especially when compared to Kolekole. The water was calm and cold from underground springs. The paddle route featured a number of small coves to paddle into and snorkel but we soon had to turn back because some of us had to fly back to Honolulu that night.

The paddle was over for me but the rest of the Hui members who stayed behind had a burning desire to find out how the fishermen were able to hike down to the

waterfall we had seen the day before. They spent the next day hiking and looking for the trail. Jeanie said they never found it but found a very cool lava tube instead.

Joe's suggestions for future paddles-

1. *Lois and I could have waited for the other paddlers because it is often safer to be on the open water rather than in the surf. However, we did not know how severe the storm would be. It turned out to be a passing squall and the seas calmed after an hour or two.*
2. *We both should have put on our life vests, properly fastened, before entering the surf zone.*
3. *After we had capsized, we were pushing our kayak upside down. It may have been easier to push if we had flipped it right side up instead.*
4. *We should have predicted that there would be a rip current coming out of the river mouth and, thus, should have swam in from the right of the river mouth.*
5. *Since we had a double kayak, Lois could have gotten back on the kayak while I held onto the back to prevent it from capsizing in the waves again. She then could have paddled while I pushed from behind.*

Factoids

Day 1 – Kolekole to Hakalau Bay, 3 miles round trip.

Day 2 – Kolekole to Kawainui Falls, 6 miles.
Kawainui Falls to Hilo Bay, 7 miles.

Day 3 – Hukilau Beach to Kapoho, 7 miles round trip.



Dan Sailer with future kayaker, daughter Danicka. Proud grandparents are Chuck and Jean Ehrhorn.

(Danicka's mom is the former Ericka Ehrhorn.)

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CONGRATULATIONS

**to the newly elected 2005
Officers and Board Members**

**The HWK membership
re-elected all officers and
board members and added
Peter Nicholson
to the Steering Advisory Board
at its monthly meeting held on
October 19, 2004.**

**We thank all of you for your
continued support and look
forward to another year of exciting
paddling adventures.**