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Yachts ‘Long Gone’, ‘Velaris’, ‘Norena of Wight’ Pioneered First Victoria-Maui Classic

Officially, the history of the Victoria-Maui International Yacht Race is condensed into a couple of brief paragraphs which disclose that the idea of organizing the race was originated by James B. (Jim) Innes of the Royal Vancouver Yacht Club, and in the first race three yacht competed. These were the “Long Gone”, “Velaris” and “Norena of Wight”, owned and skippered by Innes, L.H. (Lol) Killam and M.R. Ramsey, respectively.

The inaugural race, which began on the 29th of June 1965, was won by “Long Gone” with an elapsed time of 15 days, 15 hours and 55 minutes.

“Support for organizing and establishing the race in 1968, to be sailed at two yearly intervals as a regular feature of the Pacific racing calendar, has been provided by the Royal Vancouver Yacht Club, the Lahaina Yacht Club, Maui, and yachtsmen from clubs in the Pacific Northwest”. In the 1968 race 14 yachts competed and, and “Porpoise III”, owned and skippered by F. R. Killam won the lion’s share of the trophies, placing first in both elapsed time and corrected time overall.

When the three original “pioneers” quietly put into Kahului Harbor, which was the official finish line in 1965, no one, except perhaps the harbormaster, even realized that history had been made. No one, as far as we know, went rushing down with leis of welcome, and the three quietly sailed over to Napili Bay and anchored off Canadian Jack Millar’s Napili Kai Beach Club. It was Jack who suggested that perhaps there was big news in the making.

Innes, who acted as spokesman for the group, told surprised and delighted Mauians that the race had been in the talking stage for a number of years. It really started to jell in 1963 when the planning got underway.

“We are sure there would have been more entries for this first race”, said Innes, “for about 16 boats had expressed interest, but up until they actually left Victoria no one except our three really believed the race was a fact”.

He said that there had been considerable hesitation and doubt about the feasibility of the race, and that owners of some of the larger craft who had expressed interest were fearful that the race would be through areas where the winds were not favorable. They would not have the wind to stern as in the Transpac and some very rough waters would have to be crossed.

The doubters were right on both counts—that is, none of the three ever ran before the wind, but they did find there was a good “reach”. There were also some rough waters, both at the start and the finish of the race, but all hands agreed that “it was a beautiful trip”.

In that first race the yachtsmen were quite clear in pointing out that they had no desire to compete with the Transpac. “We really didn’t want to make it at the same time for this first race”, Innes said, but explained that the “didn’t want to keep putting it off, and it was a time that suited all of us. We plan to start future races on July 1st, Canada’s Dominion Day”.

After Millar’s alerting of The Maui News personnel, the story spread quickly and Richard E. Mawson, general manager of Maui Publishing Company, promptly announced that the company

would present a trophy to the winner of the race. The trophy was a big monkeypod calabash bowl, as was presented to an informal cocktail party at Napili Kai, hosted by Millar.

Charles C. Young, County information officer, representing County Chairman Eddie Tam, presented small “keys to Maui” to the skippers and members of their crew. Ron Kondo, who was president of the West Maui Business and Professional Men’s Association came through with small monkeypod whales, ably assisted by Diane Omura who was “Miss Lahaina of 1965.

The skippers did not want to go in for elaborate entertaining, expressing the opinion that by the time was run their “dress clothes” would be hardly presentable. They did sound receptive to the idea of one big luau or feast, which has since become traditional, and is held at Hale Paahao, the old prison in Lahaina, an edifice specifically constructed in the last century for the purpose of hosting British and American seamen, but not quite in the manner in which our Canadian visitors are becoming accustomed. This year’s “luau” will be held on Friday night.

Historically, the yachtsmen are, in a way, retracing the steps of Captain George Vancouver, R.N. who was sent from England in 1791 to finalize the Nootka Sound incident with the Spanish representatives in the area. During the four years he was on the Pacific Coast he surveyed and charted the coast from Puget Sound to Alaska. In 1793, 1794 and 1795 Vancouver established winter quarters for his crews at Lahaina—and maybe that’s really the way the whole thing got started.

Crews of the first race, in addition to the owners-skippers, included: “Long Gone”—R. Andrew, A. D. Whitmore, L. Minney, E. Kendal and D. McGreer; “Norena of Wight”—J. Damagaard, D. Taylor, G. West and R. Muirhead; “Velaris”—Dr. R.B. Baker, W.R. Anketell, J.L. Williams, R.M. Laird and C. Brewer.