

Hokule'a, crew wait for weather changes

By BARBARA HASTINGS
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They prayed for the Hokule'a yesterday — prayed for a safe voyage of the twin-hulled canoe — but somebody must have forgotten to add the supplication for fine sailing weather.

So the Hokule'a didn't sail. The principals of the voyage took part in the prayer service at Kawaiahao Church but went home instead of to sea when it was over.

Weather and winds willing, however, the pride of the Polynesian Voyaging Society will be off to Hilo today on the first leg of its trip to Tahiti.

If anything marks the difference between this upcoming voyage of the replica of the ancient Hawaiian mode of travel and its two previous expeditions — one which was completed, another which failed inside Hawaiian waters — it's the key in which the society has chosen to play this time.

The Bicentennial trip of the Hokule'a, which made it to Tahiti and back, amid controversy and strained crew relations, was accompanied by a media blitz.

Two years later, the hoopla again surrounded the sailing of the vessel. That time, however, the fanfare fell into grimmer news stories, when the boat was swamped and a member of the crew was lost to the sea.

Michael Tongg, the society president, says the reason for the subdued launching of the Hokule'a this time is its sense of purpose.

This time, he says, the vessel is going out with a carefully trained crew on a research and education voyage. The society wants to wait until the results of the trip are in, and then call out the heralds, Tongg says.

The Hokule'a venture is to study the ancient Polynesian methods of natural navigation — that is, non-instrument navigation. The society wants to figure out just what kinds of problems Polynesian ancestors



Michael Tongg
Sense of purpose

faced on the voyages between the southern islands and the Hawaii chain, and use that knowledge for at-sea survival situations.

What Tongg keeps stressing is that this voyage of the Hokule'a isn't a lark.

"We had a selection process this time. The qualifications of the individuals are much better. They were more randomly picked last time," Tongg says.

This crew has had classes in life-saving and training with flares and other emergency items, Tongg says, and the boat has been equipped with more safety features.

To avoid a repeat of the swamp-



Gordon Piianaia
Hokule'a skipper

ing, the hatch area has been redesigned, the gunwales changed, and additional hand pumps have been added, as well as emergency radio equipment, Tongg adds.

If the weather permits it to set sail today, the Hokule'a will be off to Hilo, where it will rest for a week, and then be off for Tahiti on a voyage that will take 30 days or so.

Traveling with the Hokule'a as a crew member will be Mau Pialiug, one of the few remaining natural navigators in the world. Pialiug will serve as a reference source to his student, Charles Nainoa Thompson, who will attempt the natural navigation.

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Advertiser photos by G. Joseph V. Yamamoto

Crew and friends, led by the Rev. Abraham Akaka, emerge from Kawaiahao Church yesterday after the prayer service.