

# Hawaii Pilots Association celebrates 20 years

by Capt. Dave Lyman

January 1, 1999 marked the 20th year that the Hawaii Pilots Association has provided private pilotage services to Hawaii's commercial harbors. But the history of Hawaii pilotage dates back more than two centuries.

The first record of Hawaiians serving as pilots for visiting vessels comes from an account written by Capt. King describing the departure from Kealakekua Bay aboard the *HMS Resolution*, commanded by Capt. James Cook. A Hawaiian by the name of Koa'a accompanied Cook to provide him with local knowledge of Hawaii's coastline and guide him to a sheltered bay where the *HMS Resolution* and *HMS Discovery* could safely anchor and obtain water. On February 6, 1779, after clearing Keahole Point on the previous day, the ship was abeam of a large bay referred to by the Hawaiians, according to King, as "Toe-yah-yah" (probably Kawaihae).

A ship's boat was launched, and the master, Mr. Bligh (who later commanded the *HMS Bounty*) was rowed ashore with Koa'a. Upon his return to the ship, Bligh reported that the well ashore was inadequate for watering needs for the two ships and that a shallow reef extended at least a mile offshore therefore making it impossible for the ships to stand in close to the shore. When Koa'a realized that his recommended anchorage was not suitable for the deep draft vessels he "contrived to slip away, being afraid of returning, as we imagined, because his information had not proved true."

Koa'a did know the coastline, however, and he did know the bay to which he guided the ships. He certainly didn't fully realize that the drafts of Cook's ships far exceeded depth requirements of the vessels that

he was used to, the outrigger and double hull canoes. Mr. Bligh probably berated this first Hawaiian pilot in the manner for which he was later to become infamous and, rather than continuing on with the visiting Englishmen, Koa'a simply left.

Years later, on November 22, 1816, the Russian exploration ship *Rurik* appeared off Kawaihae to ob-

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tain permission from King Kamehameha, who was visiting John Young, to sail through the Hawaiian Islands. By this time Hawaii was well known as an ideal place for vessels to provision and water. Pacific whalers and fur traders called in Hawaiian ports regularly; the san-

dalwood trade was at its peak; and Kamehameha had absolute control over any foreign vessel entering Hawaiian waters.

Kamehameha allowed the *Rurik* entrance to Hawaii and assigned a Hawaiian, Manuia to accompany the ship from Kawaihae to Honolulu. He is described in Chamisso's account of the voyage as "...a guide and escort, and bearer of his [Kamehameha's] instructions concerning us, a noble of petty rank who enjoyed his complete confidence." Manuia certainly had acquired western seamanship skills as he is described as "...one who had traveled extensively, one of the king's men, who had been to Boston, on the North-West Coast of America, and in China...."

After a call at Kealakekua Bay the *Rurik* arrived off Honolulu on November 27. "Manuia went ashore in the first canoe which showed up, and soon a royal pilot came out, an Englishman, Mr. Harbottle, who had us anchor outside the reef, as each entering ship must be towed in during the calm which regularly precedes sunrise.

"At four a.m. of the 28th, in accordance with a prearranged gun signal we called the canoes alongside that were to tow us into the harbor. The pilot and eight double canoes, each under its owner, and with sixteen to twenty men each came out. Mr. Young was in a smaller canoe. The anchor was gotten up, and, playfully, laughing the while and noisily, the Sandwich Islanders towed the *Rurik* into the harbor in fine style, and with a power that surprised our crew. We were making three knots by the log. We dropped anchor under the walls of the Fort, and Mr. Young came on board, to demand payment for the services, which were not performed by the King's men."



Gov. George Ariyoshi signs Hawaii's 1978 pilotage law with two of HPA's original seven pilots: Capts. Dave Lyman (left) and Finn Annonson (right). In the center: retired pilot Capt. Jack Young. The other five were Capts. Mike Michaeledes, Lou Geronimo, Jack Atkinson, Ken Bohlin and Paul Uyeshiro. Photo by the late Al Gallant.



Probably partly due to naivete in some matters relating to international commerce while wishing to provide an inducement to promote foreign trade in Hawaii, Kamehameha provided certain services at no charge. Unlike Manuia and Pilot Harbottle, the canoe owners and paddlers were not "King's men," and therefore were entitled to payment for the towing service.

In 1817, harbor fees charged by the Kingdom of Hawaii were initiated, the beginning of the system that is still in place today by both private enterprise and the state government. Pilotage fees were established at a dollar a foot on the draft of each vessel; anchorage fees from 60 to 70 dollars. In his wisdom, Kamehameha realized that the assessment of port fees wouldn't deter ships from calling in Hawaiian ports and the revenues derived could be used for harbor development and improvements.

From 1817 through the transition to a territorial government in 1898 very little changed in the administration of Hawaii's harbors, though many technological advances were made. Steam tugs replaced the canoes and oxen tows that ships utilized to enter Honolulu's inner harbor; wharves were built; dredging was initiated; aids to navigation were established by the government and paid for via a surcharge to vessels. Rules and regulations regarding the operation and administration of the ports became refined over the years. Pilots were appointed by the government through the King's Privy Council.


"King's men" from the days of the monarchy became civil servants working for the Territory of Hawaii and later the state of Hawaii until the 1978 state legislature, with agreements reached by the government and the seven pilots employed by the state, passed HRS 462 A, Hawaii's state pilotage law. Effective January 1, 1979, Hawaii's harbor pilots were deemed to be independent contractors in a system that was modeled after all coastal American states. State pilot licenses were issued, similar in scope to the original monarchial "Commission as Pilot,"

and the pilots were granted the right to establish an association. The Hawaii Pilots Association prepared to commence business.

The pilots pooled personal resources to pay for initial start-up expenses that included the purchase of pilot boats for the four islands requiring state pilots, the establishment of a 24-hour dispatch system and an office. A Board of Pilot Commissioners was established and operated under the auspices of the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs (DCCA). A rotational job assignment system was set up within the pilot association, scheduled time off was established, and a pilot system that was much more efficient than the one operating under the constrictions of civil service rules began to provide safe and timely pilotage services.

For various reasons, including a desire to reduce the number of government boards, the Board of Pilot Commissioners was "sunset" by the 1985 Legislature. Today, with the advice of a group of knowledgeable individuals, the DCCA directly regulates all pilotage matters.

Today's eight Hawaii Pilots Association members are highly skilled professionals. All hold an Unlimited Master's License issued by the U.S. Coast Guard that qualifies one to sail as master on any vessel upon any ocean, pilotage endorsements for Hawaii's commercial harbors, and a state pilot license. Each member of the association is also a member of the American Pilots Association, the International Maritime Pilots Association, and the Pilot Division of the International Organization of Masters, Mates, and Pilots.

Along with their professional affiliations, HPA members have taken leadership roles in Hawaii's maritime community, including the Propeller Club, Chamber of Commerce of Hawaii Maritime Committee, HOST, and other community affairs. 

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*Capt. Dave Lyman has been a harbor pilot in Hawaii for more than 20 years.*

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