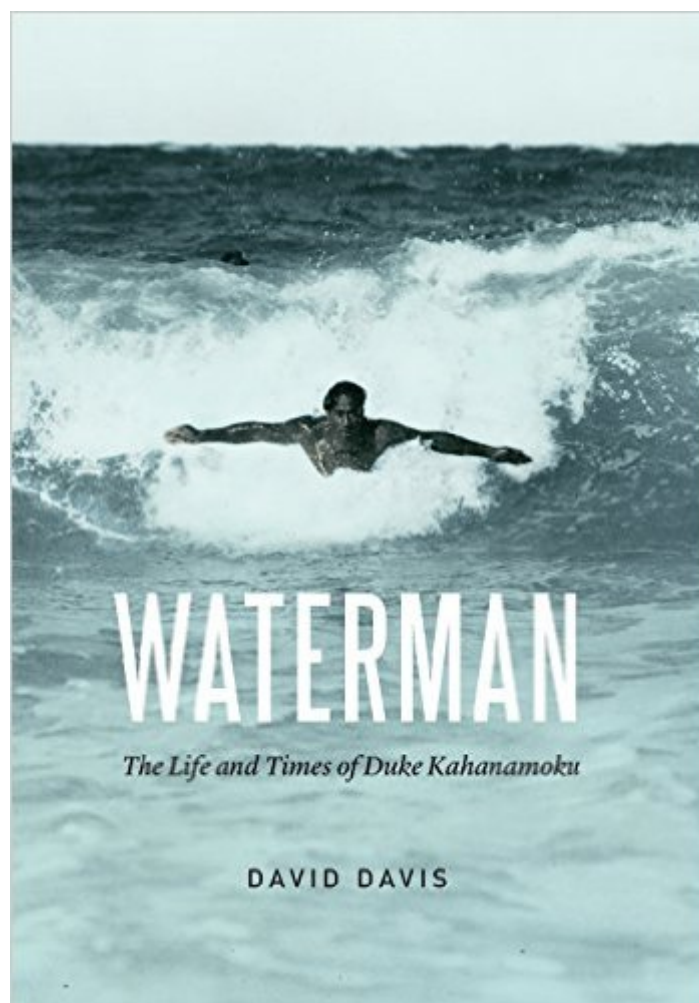


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# Waterman: The Life And Times Of Duke Kahanamoku



## Synopsis

Waterman is the first comprehensive biography of Duke Kahanamoku (1890–1968): swimmer, surfer, Olympic gold medalist, Hawaiian icon, waterman. Long before Michael Phelps and Mark Spitz made their splashes in the pool, Kahanamoku emerged from the backwaters of Waikiki to become America's first superstar Olympic swimmer. The original "human fish" set dozens of world records and topped the world rankings for more than a decade; his rivalry with Johnny Weissmuller transformed competitive swimming from an insignificant sideshow into a headliner event. Kahanamoku used his Olympic renown to introduce the sport of "surf-riding," an activity unknown beyond the Hawaiian Islands, to the world. Standing proudly on his traditional wooden longboard, he spread surfing from Australia to the Hollywood crowd in California to New Jersey. No American athlete has influenced two sports as profoundly as Kahanamoku did, and yet he remains an enigmatic and underappreciated figure: a dark-skinned Pacific Islander who encountered and overcame racism and ignorance long before the likes of Joe Louis, Jesse Owens, and Jackie Robinson. Kahanamoku's connection to his homeland was equally important. He was born when Hawaii was an independent kingdom; he served as the sheriff of Honolulu during Pearl Harbor and World War II and as a globetrotting "Ambassador of Aloha" afterward; he died not long after Hawaii attained statehood. As one sportswriter put it, Duke was "Babe Ruth and Jack Dempsey combined down here." In *Waterman*, award-winning journalist David Davis examines the remarkable life of Duke Kahanamoku, in and out of the water.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I've always been aware of the legend and mythology of Duke, but in *Waterman*, Davis clearly defines the nuanced personality and character of one of surfing's most iconic figures. It sheds light on the man himself, how Hawai'i shaped him, and how he shaped Hawai'i. *Waterman* is an asset and a must-read for anyone interested in surfing, Hawai'i, or simply American history. Much gratitude and thanks!

David Davis's *Waterman* the life story of Duke Kahanamoku is a great read and well written story of the first real surfer as well as a history of early surfing. Besides the historical aspect of the story it is well researched and provides one with a pleasurable experience. I highly recommend this book to anyone who enjoys reading about real people. Sam Bloom

David Davis details the things that made Duke Kahanamoku special in this biography. Duke shared his love of surfing and swimming by showing people around the world how to do it. He also competed in three Olympic games earning gold medals for swimming. I am inspired by the achievements of Duke Kahanamoku. He supported himself by working as an actor, musician, sheriff, restaurant owner and athlete. I love the Hawaiian words that David Davis includes in this book. I learned that *kanikapila* means playing music on the beach. I learned that *hui* means club or organization. I learned that *nalu* means wave. I have lived in Hawaii for most of my life, and I have just learned the definition of these words. I am motivated to learn more of the Hawaiian language because of this book. My only criticism of this book is that it does not have a glossary that lists all these Hawaiian words. I have to go back and write them down if I want to remember them. I really enjoyed this book. I hope I can share my knowledge with other people like Duke Kahanamoku did.

What a story! From a simple rural life, the Duke rose to be an Olympic champion, international name, movie personality, father of modern day surfing, and a Waikiki home town source of Aloha, warm, friendship, and love to everyone. One life that made a difference!

This is an interesting biography, well written and with good illustrations. The only real complaint is the rather casual treatment of the Hawaiian language. Language is culture and for a book that talks a lot about Hawaiian culture this is a major issue. First, it would have been good to always include the meaning of the Hawaiian names of people mentioned. The names are important and had a lot of symbolic significance. Second, the writer omitted the marks indicating important sounds in Hawaiian. Example: octopus is not "hee" but "he'e" with a stop between the two "e" s. This is like leaving out a

letter in English (like saying "ocopus" or "otopus"). Also, the author ignores the difference between long and short vowels (indicated by a line over the vowel; for example rock is "pÅ•haku" not "pohaku"). Otherwise, very nice.

I only really knew the legend of Duke and was aware of his contributions to surfing and swimming, but this excellent and very well researched biography is a must-read for anyone who loves surfing and swimming. Duke was an exceptionally gifted athlete who suffered from discrimination and poverty to become one of the world's greatest athletes. The fact that he and Jim Thorpe were fellow Olympians together only reinforces how famous and influential and famous Duke was. Hats off to Davis for his impeccable research that reveals among other things that Duke helped create the sport of beach volleyball!! This is the kind of book in which you continually stop to share the incredible details of Duke's like as in "Did you know that Duke..." Serge Dedina Author of Surfing the Border, Wild Sea and Saving the Gray Whale

Wonderful bio of Duke Kahanamoku! I learned so many things I didn't know.

A wonderful recounting of a unique life.

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