“The Show Must Go On!”

It’s the tradition in show business that no matter what happens – and many things do happen – the performance must still be put on for the waiting audience. “The show must go on!”

In that tradition, the Society of Seven show, in the Main Showroom of the Outrigger Waikiki Hotel, was performed on schedule this week even though there was a significant change in the producer.

For over 30 years, Outrigger Entertainment has been the exclusive producer of shows at Waikiki’s No.1 venue for fun and entertainment. Under the leadership of Fran Kirk, the Outrigger Waikiki has hosted a wide variety of artists, including The Ali’is, The Krush, The Kim Sisters, Melveen Leed & Loyal Garner, Carole Kai, Andy Bumatai, Rap Replinger, Marlene Sai, Tommy Sands, John Rowles, Francis Ruivivar, Frank De Lima, Martin Nievera, and more recently Jasmine Trias.

Through it all, the Society of Seven (“SOS”) has always been the room’s mainstay, returning season after season to fill the room with great music, dance, impressions and skits – and gales of laughter. In 2002, a second group, Society of Seven–Las Vegas, debuted, freeing the original SOS to perform in other top entertainment locales, including Las Vegas and Tahoe.

Along the way, the Main Showroom has been a place where many memories were born, for both local residents and visitors – birthdays, proms, anniversaries, baby showers and bridal parties. Marriage proposals have even been made on that happy stage!

And the driving force behind the Showroom scene has always been Fran Kirk.

In fact, Fran was the one responsible for bringing the SOS to the United States in the late 1960s. She was working in Hong Kong and heard about an exciting new group of performers called The Fabulous Echoes. She booked them into several Asian venues and then landed a gig for them at the Thunderbird Hotel in Las Vegas!

TV variety show host Ed Sullivan happened to be in the audience and told Fran he would like to have the group travel to New York to appear on the Ed Sullivan Show, the Sunday evening highlight in millions of living rooms across America.

The group worked hard for their debut on what was in those days the nation’s hottest TV show – the same show the Beatles had chosen for their American TV debut. But just before they went on the air the group had a narrow escape from disaster. A Canadian group called The Echoes wired Sullivan claiming their name was copyrighted and threatening to sue if he introduced his guests as “The Fabulous Echoes.” Sullivan did not want to end up in court, so he introduced “The Fabulous Boys From Hong Kong.”

A few days later, they were sitting around having coffee, feeling dejected because they might not be able to use their name, The Fabulous Echoes. Then they started to think up possible new names. Fran wrote “Society of Seven” on a napkin and passed it to Bert Sagum. “I like that!” he exclaimed, and passed the napkin to Tony Ruivivar. He liked it too, and the Society of Seven was born.

Fran brought the SOS to Hawaii and over to the Outrigger Waikiki Hotel when the Main Showroom was completed in 1969.

Fran always did a lot more than just booking the group. She handled all of their managerial work, coordinated advertising, negotiated contracts, and produced five of their albums. She even co-wrote their biggest single, “99.8,” also known as the “Love Fever Song.”

In 1980, I was fortunate enough to be able to persuade Fran to join the Outrigger ‘ohana. As the head of Outrigger Entertainment, she has been the heart and soul of the Main Showroom for the past three decades. But now she is ready for some rest and more time to play a few rounds of golf without worrying about the details of tonight’s show or who’s going to be on stage next week.

The new producer for the Main Showroom is World Class Entertainment, which is headed by SOS founding member Tony Ruivivar and local businessman Clyde “Tiger” Shirai. All members of the showroom staff have been offered jobs with the new producer.

We wish Tony and Clyde good luck and great success in the months and years ahead.
And, Fran, please keep us posted as your golf handicap starts to fall! As Ed Sullivan always used to say, it’s been “a really good show!”