The news release on my desk began with the dry statement, “Outrigger’s Fran Kirk receives the prestigious ‘Oihana Maika’i Award presented by The City and County of Honolulu.”

Yawn …. I was about to put the document aside, when I read a little further and suddenly realized what a special award this was. Stay with me for a moment, as I explain.

Under the leadership of Mayor Mufi Hannemann, the City and County of Honolulu recently recognized a select group of community leaders for their commitment, tireless efforts, and outstanding achievements, as they worked in a variety of ways to make our city a better place. The awards, called Honolulu Forever Young, are particularly inspiring because they are reserved for those who continue to work and excel beyond age 65, a milestone so many used to regard as the date when one slows down and takes up retirement pursuits like gardening.

The Forever Young awards, sponsored by several Hawaii corporations, were first presented in 2008. The “class of 2009” awardees included several very well known people, such as entertainer Danny Kaleikini. However, some deserving individuals could not be considered for the award because of their affiliations with program sponsors. The committee, therefore, created a new ‘Oihana Maika’i Award (“a job well done”) to recognize those who might be high on the judges’ list but could not qualify for Forever Young because of the affiliation technicality.

Accordingly, Outrigger’s own Fran Kirk, along with prominent business, political, and community leader John Henry Felix, each received the ‘Oihana Maika’i Award on September 23.

The award’s citation (see excerpt below) focuses on her work in the community as an advisory board member of the Pacific Century Fellows program, treasurer of the nonprofit group Honolulu 100, and chairperson of the popular Honolulu Family Festival. These activities consume hundreds of hours of her volunteer time every year.

But there is much more to Fran than that.

I first met Fran in 1969, almost exactly 40 years ago, when she brought the Society of Seven to the Main Showroom of the Outrigger Waikiki Hotel. I quickly found out that she was a talented executive who did a lot more than just booking entertainers into venues. With the SOS, 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 persuade Fran to join the Outrigger ’ohana as our Director of Entertainment.

As the head of Outrigger Entertainment, she has been responsible for the operations of the Main Showroom; for many years she also operated the Polynesian Palace Showroom, which featured many of Hawaii’s best-known entertainers, such as Al Harrington and the popular Comedy Triple Header starring Frank De Lima, Andy Bumatai, and Paul Ogata.

Fran has also been responsible for the day-to-day operations and management of the Outrigger Activities Center, which has operated optional tour sales in the lobbies of our Waikiki hotels for over 35 years.

Over the years, I have found that if I need to get something done, Fran is the “go to” lady who will make it happen.

• Years ago, my friends in the Kingston Trio needed to find a place to book a couple of gigs in Honolulu, and Fran was a big help.

• During the 1970s and 80s, she took the SOS to the mainland and provided entertainment, while we promoted Hawaii’s visitor industry in many major cities across the nation. One time, she put on shows in 11 cities in 14 days. In the process, she broke her ankle in Boston and badly burned her hand in Chicago, when she tried to replace a spotlight bulb that failed in the middle of a show before hundreds of travel agents. Those incidents never slowed her down and exemplified her devotion to the cardinal rule of theater – “The Show Must Go On.”

• When we needed an in-house infomercial for our guest room television sets, Fran not only wrote and produced it, but managed the installation and technology.

• When we developed Hawaii’s first modern all-inclusive package to boost business at the Royal Waikoloan Hotel on the Big Island, Fran put many of the parts together, including a low-cost but effective brochure.

• Even today, she is carrying on and, at my request, is coordinating the details of an exciting evening of entertainment for the annual Ronald McDonald House fundraiser scheduled for next month.

It should surprise no one that Fran was the first recipient of Outrigger’s highest honor, the Chairman’s Award.

Fran was born in Hong Kong and is of Chinese and Portuguese ancestry. As a young lady, she attended a Catholic girls’
boarding school in Kowloon, which was strictly supervised by nuns. We’ve swapped a lot of stories about our activities in the days of our youth. From what she has told me, she must have been a bit of a rascal.

To illustrate that, Fran has authorized me to share the following story with *Saturday Briefing* readers:

Once, she tried to leave the school’s dormitory after curfew by climbing out a second-story window, intending to use an awning over the window below as an escape chute. Things were going well, but her fellow students had also been using the awning as a place to hide contraband spicy romance comic books from the nuns. When Fran hit the awning, she and the comics came crashing noisily down, alerting Mother Superior to all the shenanigans!

There are other tales, but my lips are sealed!

Fran, a single mom for years, has not only found time for all of the accomplishments mentioned above but has almost singlehandedly raised two sons, Sean and Michael, who have turned into fine young men. In addition, for many years, she cared for her aging parents and other members of her extended family.

Fran will celebrate her 72nd birthday on October 19. Few have accomplished as much as she has in seven decades, and, like the Energizer Bunny, she keeps on going and going … and growing *Forever Young!*

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**Excerpt From Honolulu Forever Young Program**

“Fran is a “servant leader” who believes that it is one’s civic duty to give back to the community. In addition to her full-time work as executive vice president of Outrigger Activities Center/Outrigger Entertainment, Fran serves as president of the Fund for the Pacific Century, an advisory board of the Pacific Century Fellows; as treasurer of the non-profit organization Honolulu 100; and chairperson for the annual Honolulu Family Festival.

Fran is a go-getter and go-giver who keeps busy physically, mentally, and spiritually. She enjoys weekly recreational golf, stimulates her mind through reading, and appreciates a wide variety of music ranging from Hawaiian to classical music. This exceptional executive exemplifies the concept of “healthy aging” by serving as a role model for others to follow. Heading for “72 years young,” Fran’s vivacious personality demonstrates that Hawaii seniors can continue to “work hard and play hard.” It’s no wonder Fran Kirk is forever young.”