Remembering Pat Kelley

By Dr. Richard Kelley

Our Outrigger ‘ohana lost a beautiful family member with the peaceful passing of my youngest sister, Patricia “Pat” Kelley, late Sunday afternoon, November 17, 2013, in Honolulu with many family members at her side. She was 76 years old.

Pat was two years younger than her sister Jean and four years younger than I. As often happens, the youngest in a family with several children becomes more outspoken and active than their older siblings. Pat certainly fit that pattern. During my life, I watched with interest and admiration as my baby sister grew from a feisty, quick, vocal child into a woman of steely courage and strength, common-sense smarts and independence.

We all grew up in the hotel business in the early days of post-World War II Waikīkī. Pat was just 10 years old when Roy and Estelle Kelley opened the five-story, walk-up Islander Hotel, located on Seaside Avenue, about one block mauka (towards the mountains) of the deluxe Royal Hawaiian Hotel, completed some 20 years earlier.

It was a family enterprise and we all worked together. I have heard Pat describing those early years to others saying, “Working in the hotels was a family tradition. We’ve done everything. All of us have cleaned rooms, scrubbed toilets, worked the front desk and handed out keys. When Roy acquired the land where some years later he would build the Outrigger Reef Hotel, he installed an old-fashioned soda fountain at the beachside end of the property, under the hau trees. We kids all became ‘soda jerks.’ Other times, I worked in the reservations office with my Mama, doing filing … lots of filing.”

Pat’s grit, talent and determination were key attributes of her success in the business world as well as her survival against almost overwhelming odds when facing major health challenges later in life. She never approached a project or an activity half-heartedly. Quite the contrary, she usually attacked it with full-bore, pedal-to-the-metal spirit.
In her 20s, after working for Trade Wind Tours at the Outrigger Reef Hotel, Pat told our father that she wanted to start her own business of promoting and selling optional activities to visitors. She offered to pay $100 monthly rent for the chance to set up her own “desk” – a folding card table – in one of the hotels. From that modest start, she built up two successful businesses, Pat Kelley Tours and Pat Kelley International Travel. Along the way, she helped many others start and succeed in their own businesses.

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After observing that people come from all over the world to get married or renew their vows in Hawai’i, she became a licensed minister and developed a business to provide chapels, transportation, catering and other arrangements for that segment of Travel & Tourism.

Later in life, she began to focus on quilting. She joined quilting organizations, set up tables and equipment in several rooms in her home and developed a quilting school. Many friends and family members have wrapped themselves in the “quilts of love” that Pat created for them.

Pat loved to travel, and rather than just booking package tours to New York City, London, Paris and other destinations, she visited all the world’s continents and also helped many others to travel and expand their horizons.
our company’s enduring foundation of focusing on employees, caring for guests and operating efficiently. She was a savvy professional who grew successful businesses, a caring sister, a loving mother and a faithful friend for ever so many.

She is survived by her siblings, myself and Jean Rolles; daughters Michelle Norstrom and Estelle M. Kelley; son-in-law Jason Weber; and grandchildren Michael and Mackenzie Norstrom. She is also survived by her beloved pet dog, a Corgi named “King Tut.” Services are pending.

Our family will always remember Pat with deepest fondness, enduring love and aloha.

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Pat, Roy, Jean, Richard & Estelle, 1990

Daughters Michelle and Estelle celebrate Pat’s 50th, 1987

Michelle, Pat and Estelle at a family gathering

Richard always had a special place in his heart for his sister Pat

Pat, Richard and Jean at Estelle M. Kelley’s wedding, 2012

Pat and her beloved King Tut, 2011

Pat and late husband Pete Petrequin

2012