

# Waikiki Beach Girl Pat Barker

By Barbara Del Piano

Even if you weren't around at the time, you would surely have heard of the Waikiki Beach Services that rented space at the "Old Club." It employed the famous "beach boys" who offered canoe rides, surfing and swimming lessons, umbrellas, beach chairs and other amenities to the tourists from the Royal Hawaiian and Moana Hotels . . . and royally entertained them as well.

But I bet you didn't know that there was also a "beach girl" among them. And no, it wasn't Shirley Temple, although she was made Honorary Beach Captain in 1935 when it was still called the Waikiki Beach Patrol. The "beach girl" was Pat Barker, a fixture at Waikiki Beach since she was little more than a toddler.

At the young age of six, Pat decided she wanted to learn to surf and had the good fortune of being taught the rigorous ocean sport by David Kahanamoku. Pat joined the Outrigger as soon as she was old enough, and in addition to surfing, took up canoe paddling and volleyball.

While attending Hanahauoli, and later, Punahou, Pat spent her weekends and vacations at the Club surfing . . . the sport she loved so much. She also paddled for Outrigger as part of Johnny Hollinger's crew.

Because she spent so much time in the ocean, Pat got to know all the beach boys well. She fondly remembers them, of course by their nicknames . . . Molokai, Ox, Steamboat, Chick, Panama, Splash, Squeeze, Boss, Turkey, Curly, Kalakaua, and Sally, the head guy.

In her oral history, Pat recalls fond memories of the Moana pier which jutted out into the ocean about 300 feet. After work, the beach boys often headed out there with their ukulele and played and sang to the delight of tourists and locals folks as well.

She talks about fun times with the beach boys on the Hau Terrace and reminisces about the great times she had on Saturday afternoons, going with the "beach boys" and other friends to the Banyan Court at the Moana Hotel to listen to Hawaii Calls, the popular radio show hosted by Webley Edwards, with music provided by Al Kealoha Perry and his group. The show was broadcast all over the country, luring tourists to Hawaii's sunny shores.

All this was before that fateful December 7 bombing of Pearl Harbor. Not long afterwards, in January of 1942, Pat and her sister, Jill, were temporarily sent to live with relatives in California, fearing further invasions of the Islands. As soon

as they returned, Pat headed back to the ocean with her surfboard.

The Beach Patrol closed down for the duration as the tourist business had come to an abrupt halt and the Royal Hawaiian Hotel was taken over by the Navy as a place for rest and recreation for the submariners. Many of the Beach Boys joined the military or took defense jobs.

As soon the war ended, however, Sally Hale and his crew returned to the beach, and before long, Pat was hired, as the first and only wahine to ever be employed by what had been renamed the Waikiki Beach Services.

At first, Sally was a bit dubious about hiring a wahine, but several customers, including movie star Betty Hutton, preferred to ride tandem on a surfboard with a woman instead of a man. So Sally took a chance and it turned out that Pat was a perfect fit. She taught swimming to celebrities as well as to children and older folks, and served as second captain on outrigger canoes. She met and provided services to people like Betty Hutton, Humphrey Bogart, Red Skelton and many other movie stars.

Her surfing improved even more, and when the waves were right and she could get away from Waikiki, Pat went to

Makaha and rode twenty-foot waves. In his book, *Surfriding--Its Thrills and Techniques*, O.B Patterson mentioned Pat as one of the top women surfers in Hawaii.

Although she loved her job and the people she dealt with, after a few years on the beach friends began to tell her that she really should do something more with her life. It was a difficult choice but by chance, a customer from Beverly Hills who had been coming to Hawaii for many years, took a liking to Pat and asked her to consider moving to California to be a governess to his children. Feeling that it was time to move on, she took the offer and left the beach at Waikiki in 1956, never to return as a permanent resident.

Pat later married and spent twenty-four years at the Santa Clara Parks and Recreation Department where she taught swimming and managed pools. She started a masters swim club, called Primo Masters, and not only coached but competed as well. Her life never took her far from the water, but instead of the ocean, it was lakes and pools.

However, her fond memories of those grand old days on the beach remained with her forever. She called Hawaii, at the time, Paradise. Pat passed away in Santa Clara in 2008 at the age of 81.