



Pattie Walkabout Gymnastics Club Owner/Teacher Class of 1980

By Kazane Namikawa

There are at least thirty students this afternoon at the Pantheon School of Gymnastics. One expects a lot of noise. But, it is strangely quiet because all four of the classes which meet in different areas of the gym are busily going through their routines. The Tiny Tots (ages 3 to 6) and the young boys are warming up by doing stretching exercises. The advanced level (upper elementary age) girls are

running. The Level 7-10 Optional team is practicing their routines on the balance beam as preparation for a team competition in Honolulu. This is a typical day in the life of Pattie Walkabout, who with her husband, Jerry, are the owners of the Pantheon School of Gymnastics. The school has a total of 300 students and has been in existence in Hilo since 1996.

Pattie began learning gymnastics at the Hilo Gymnastics Club when she was age 10, when her mother, Priscilla, was the director of the YWCA. The club met at the YWCA, and her mother routinely enrolled both Pattie and her sister Kathleen in classes at the Y. She met her husband while she was still in high school when he came to Hilo to teach gymnastics at the Club.

Pattie is a member of the first graduating class at Waiakea, the class of 1980. Since Waiakea was still a new school at that time, classes were short, and school ended very early. There were only three buildings for classrooms and no cafeteria until her junior year. They had to bring home lunch, and eat somewhere around the school. Because they were the first graduating class, there was no homecoming. So instead of homecoming, they had Spirit Week. She was Spirit Week queen, and when her father, Alan Garson, who happened to then be the principal of Hilo High School, crowned her, there was a bit of confusion about this. Competition between the two schools was already in effect even back then.

She was also part of the very first cheerleading squad there, under the coaching of P.E. teacher, Millie Daikawa. They learned all of their moves from watching other cheerleaders at other schools. Thanks to the experience on the trampolines she got from going over to her father's school when she was young, she was used to using it. She was also fit from gymnastics thanks to her mother. But in her junior and senior year, she quit cheerleading to work at her grandparents' grocery store, Pick & Pay.

After leaving high school, Pattie started out in a college in Arizona, but later moved to Oregon. Pattie graduated from Portland State University with a degree in Theatre Arts and a minor in dance. After graduating from the university, Pattie married Jerry and they moved to Santa Cruz to teach at a gymnastics school there. They later moved to Sacramento in 1987, where they purchased the Pantheon School of Gymnastics. In 1996, they sold Pantheon, and returned to Hilo to take over the same gymnastics club where they had met. They renamed it Pantheon School of Gymnastics.



The school has eight part-time teachers plus Pattie and her husband. To successfully run their school, they each take specific roles. Pattie is in charge of the floor and choreography routines, while her husband does spots (supporting students), vault, uneven bars, and tumbling.

Competitive girls will practice for at least 4 hours a day, 5 days a week for a total of 20 hours per week. In order to compete, they have to go through a grade check, since education is a bigger priority.

Besides running the gym and coaching, Pattie is also a gymnastics judge. She is the state judging director and also serves as a judge on the national level. She is never home on a weekend; she is either on Oahu for a tournament, workshop, competition, or training, or on the Mainland at least once a month. She has attended four Olympic events. Indeed, Pattie has spent her entire lifetime as a competitor, teacher and proponent for gymnastics.

Pattie and her husband have been married for 26 years, and have coached gymnastics together for 30 years. Her daughter Jackie is married and lives in Oklahoma.

