

Sky St. John, Senior Minister of Unity Church of Hawaii, passed away Thursday, December 19<sup>th</sup> 2013. Sky was blessed with many gifts and talents. He possessed that unique ability to love unconditionally and effortlessly and to see the beauty in all. He could uplift spirits with loving encouragement and infectious humor. He was kind and generous with all he met. He lived each day with passion and purpose. That passion served him well throughout his life as he never hesitated to question the norm and champion the impossible.

Sky St. John lived a dynamic life of accomplishments. His began his life with his given name, Patrick Lynn Dickson. Born, December 15, 1948 in a loving military family home in Independence, Missouri, his family moved around the country as his father was stationed in Kansas, Texas, Virginia and later Hawaii. His mother was determined to tap into the family musical side and so Patrick was held hostage to piano lessons for many years (it would serve him well later). Patrick was probably the closest to his mother than the rest of the sons and so he always had a special place in her heart. He grew up exploring the Texan deserts and was often bringing home snakes and lizards much to the shock of his mother. He dreamed of becoming an Astronaut (probably after he met Neil Armstrong) in the 60's even winning a Science Fair project where he subjected a poor rat to a simulated space flight training program that included a spin in the family dryer. He graduated early from Andress High School in El Paso, Texas and after a disappointing matriculation at a rigid Baptist college in the south (where he was not allowed to play the church piano) he rejoined his Army family and travelled with them to Hawaii when his father had orders to report to Schofield Barracks on Oahu in 1967. He graduated from the University of Hawaii in 1970 and began his professional journey as a public school teacher at Punahou and later at Radford High School teaching drama and speech. Gifted with innate musical talents and endless energy, he embarked on a musical career while teaching. He became a successful entertainer in several local theater productions. Forever full of surprises, he delighted the audience whom he knew included many hearing impaired children and "signed" the finale of *You Gotta Have Heart* in the musical *Damn Yankees* and in which he played the lead in the Manoa Valley Theatre production. Around 1985, early on when the disease was not well understood and still very controversial he played the lead role in the production of "Warren" about a man who was afflicted and died from AIDS.

Patrick's musical career blossomed along with his love and fascination of Hawaiian culture. In the mid-1970's he met Kaipo Hale on the set of *South Pacific* and together they were regular performers at Benihana of Tokyo in the duo *Two's Company*. He immersed himself in all things Hawaiian and learned to sing authentically in Hawaiian – even singing his own translation of the National Anthem in Hawaiian at special events (like the Hula Bowl). His musical career continued as the piano player and musical director for the Beamer Brothers. He was also often asked to accompany the well-known Karen Keawehawaii at different venues around Oahu. Throughout the mid-1980's Patrick became very popular with locals and tourists through his successful solo act at Benihana's. In 1981, he became a member of the Historic Hawaii Foundation and would donate his tip jars to their cause. In 1983, he co-produced a record album of many of his own songs both in English and Hawaiian called *No One Is Higher* for which he was nominated as *Hawaii's Most Promising Artist*, a local version of the Grammy awards. Around this time he was also Musical Director at the Honolulu Jr. Academy and appointed Director of the Theatre of the Deaf. One important side note: Having succumbed to the "entertainment lifestyle" in the late 70's and after

miraculously surviving the second of two solo traffic accidents Patrick (then, later Sky) began his journey as an openly recovering alcoholic in 1982 - embracing the fellowship and purpose of Alcoholics Anonymous

Patrick loved diversity in the careers he had chosen to pursue. In the mid-1980's he began a career in Nursing and Public Health. He surprised himself when he topped Hawaii's Nursing Board exams. He earned his nursing certification and a Master's degree in Public Health from the University of Hawaii in 1987. He had completed all course requirements for a doctorate in Public Health, all but dissertation (ABD). Inspired by Saint Damien and heeding a desire to follow in his footsteps, he worked as a nurse in Kalaupapa, Molokai to serve patients with Hansen's disease. Later on, he was moved by the desire to help fill Hawaii's urgent need for more nurses. Using his background in education, he formed a company with Danny de Castro which they called *Take Flight, Inc.*, a metaphor to follow one's dreams. Their partnership, *Operation Nightingale*, was awarded a state contract in their mission to prepare foreign nurses to become certified in Hawaii. They became so successful in their mission to educate and help many aspiring nurses that after three years of doing outstanding work, their work was complete.

Never saying no to adventure, Patrick and Danny's partnership also led to their dream to build a bed and breakfast which they called *Lokahi Lodge (Unity)* in Volcano on the Big Island of Hawaii in 1990. The bed and breakfast hosted thousands of people from all over the world for more than ten years.

In 1994 Patrick was accepted into the Unity School of Christianity in Lee's Summit, Kansas. Firmly believing that "change is the essence of my life," he decided to change his name to Sky Liko St. John to coincide with the great spiritual awakening that had taken place within him. After graduating from the seminary in 1995 he stayed on to work as a Minister in the Retreat Department at Unity Village for two years. During that time, he was also the Music Director for the first Unity World Conference and traveled throughout the country presenting workshops, concerts and Sunday services.

In the late nineties, Sky became a Minister of the Unity Church of Omaha where he grew the church from 50 to 500 congregants. Later, Sky spent time as Minister of the Unity Church of Coos Bay, Oregon before returning back to his adoptive home to be the Senior Minister of the Unity Church of Hawaii in 2005. Unity Church of Hawaii allowed Sky the flexibility to travel all over the world spreading a message of unconditional love through inspiring sermons and workshops. His herculean efforts led to the expansion of the Unity movement throughout the Pacific Basin and parts of Asia. He had a way of inspiring one to tap into their own inner spirituality to exude forth love and compassion.

Sky is survived by a multitude of friends and family who loved him dearly. Preceded in this worldly transition by his parents CWO4 (ret.) William H. Dickson and Shirley Dickson, his immediate surviving family are his brothers Michael Dickson, Parker, CO; Jim Dickson, the Woodlands, TX; Kevin Dickson, Colorado Springs, CO; and Tom Dickson, Colorado Springs, CO.