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## Features

# Walk this way

By [Nadine Kam](#)

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Few of us ever go through the trouble of learning the proper way to walk — much less walk in heels — and for a while I had the scars to prove it.

No, I didn't fall down. But I was walking through Waikiki one evening with friends, one of whom was happy to be breaking in a new pair of platform shoes. We were laughing and talking when she lost her footing and started clawing the air and everything around her, including my arm as I broke her fall. The scratches lingered for months,

and she ended up getting rid of those shoes.

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## 'HEELS TO GO' WORKSHOP

» **Where:** Ballet Hawaii studios, 777 S. Hotel St.

» **When:** 3-4:30 p.m. March 17

» **Cost:** \$35 in advance, \$40 at the door; to register, call 255-8120 or email [qsandridge@gmail.com](mailto:qsandridge@gmail.com)

» **Note:** Bring high-heeled shoes and large towel; wear comfortable clothing

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Some people learn. But many others don't, and for those willing to risk spills and posture for the sake of a beauty ideal, Pam Sandridge is coming to your rescue.

The jazz-dance veteran and Pilates instructor couldn't help noticing the "weird, crablike crouch many adopt with sky-high heels," and, after seeing national news stories about the hazards of walking in heels, she concluded something must be done.

She noted that every woman interviewed for the stories understood the risks but insisted, "I'll never give up my heels."

So rather than fight a woman's impulse to look taller, leaner and sexier via stiletto, Sandridge will present "Heels to Go," an informational session to help women learn to balance the risks of heels with their rewards. The class will take place 3 to 4:30 p.m. March 17 at the Ballet Hawaii studios at 777 S. Hotel St. (the old Scan Design Building

near King and Cooke streets).

The session will focus on strategies to employ before, during and after walking in heels for long-term well-being, improving awareness of core stability, and lengthening and releasing leg muscles so women “may strut upright with beautiful posture.”

“I haven’t been on heels for maybe a year or two, so I’ve really been doing my research from scratch,” Sandridge said.

In that time, thanks to the magic of the platform sole, heel heights have risen from a maximum of about 3 1/2 inches to 5 inches. By raising the angle of the derriere 20 to 30 degrees, such heels are intended to cater to men’s visual fantasies.

“Most very high heels are created by men because it does make legs look long and look more beautiful,” Sandridge said. “You also kick butt, literally, because heels will tighten and lift your buttocks.”

There’s no fighting human nature, so rather than advocating for or against heels, Sandridge merely wants to arm women with knowledge of their bodies’ response to the high heel and “how to work with it.”

“You have to ask yourself, ‘What am I feeling when I wear them? What part of me hurts?’ Whether you’re aware of it or not, you’re paying for it.”

THE EXERCISES follow the principles of Sandridge’s COREography movement, which focuses on improving the body’s alignment and core stability, developed to help dancers.

“Dancers muscle their way through everything. They’re willing go through extreme pain to do what they need to do, but they’re crippled; they’re very sore. That’s who they are. That’s who I was,” she said.

She was able to find balance through Pilates and her studies of Feldenkrais, developed by Moshé Feldenkrais to improve movement through self-awareness.

Sandridge said women who think their shoes are hurting only their feet and legs have to understand how the whole body is affected.

“The legs carry the weight of the body. When this alignment is compromised and not immediately addressed, the effect can be painful, and residual effects can be felt much later.”

In her quest to do the proper legwork for her class, Sandridge, who turns 65 this year and thought she was past the age of wearing 3-inch heels, gathered up her remaining three pairs for a road test.

“Consequently, blisters and minor aches inspired me to learn and create recovery and rehabilitation methods,” she said.

Choosing to go out for a night on the town in 3-inch boots, she noticed her ribs and hips had to make an adjustment. With her training, she knew she had to shift her weight to keep it over her heels.

At her workshop, she invites women to bring in their heels so she can help individuals adjust and get the proper support. One of the most important rules, even when not in

heels, she said, is to keep your knees soft.

“By soft I mean relaxed. When you’re not used to heels and you step into them, the first thing you do is stiffen your knees, and right away, that tilts the pelvis forward too much. Women stiffen because they’re afraid to fall, and if you’re afraid, that’s when you will fall.

“There are a lot of videos on YouTube that show how to walk in heels, but it won’t feel natural if you have to concentrate on the rules and make the effort,” Sandridge said.

“It has to happen in a more organic way. The body will tell you what it needs, and when you have that mind-body connection, then you’re free.”