

Vivian Kistler

Remembrances From the PFM Family

The art and framing industry and the *Picture Framing Magazine* family have suffered a great loss with the death of Vivian Kistler on January 6, 2010. Everyone in the picture framing industry felt a connection to Vivian. Those of us at the PFM family felt an especially close connection through our educational programs and through the magazine, both of which were made better by Vivian's contributions.

Vivian came to PFM four years ago full of energy. She knew her craft. She knew her industry. She knew her audience. She was driven to stay current and give her audience the latest information.

After 30 years in the industry Vivian could have stepped back and coasted. But that was not Vivian and the remarkable drive she represented. She got her MCPF after joining the PFM family. She continued to travel the United States and the world giving seminars. Even when the doctors said "you're not going to last forever," she set out to prove them wrong. At the time of her death, she had three venues and audiences waiting at the WCAF in Las Vegas; The Spring Show in Birmingham, England; and the PPFA convention in Anaheim, CA. She went out on top, and she earned it.

You can tell a lot about a person in what is said about them by their peers. For example, PFM Business Editor Jay Goltz says, "Vivian and I used to always kid that she invented picture



framing. The fact is that she didn't actually invent it, but she certainly did help bring it along to its present form. This is a great loss for the industry."

Jay's quote echoes the 1999 presentation of the PPFA's Award For Innovation, in which the late PPFA president, Jim Adler, presented the award to Vivian. Like Jay, Jim noted that Vivian's time in the industry went back to the beginning.

Frequent PFM contributor and industry educator Jim Miller says, "Vivian probably influenced

more picture framers than anyone in the industry, worldwide. Her positive influence on picture framing will be felt many years to come as framers continue to study her books and practice her techniques."

Jim's comment underscores the fact that Vivian knew her craft and she taught what she knew. She held the MCPF certification from the PPFA in the U.S. and



In 1982 Vivian was president of the Fairlawn, OH, Chamber of Commerce, where her shop was located, and a speaker at industry shows.

the GCF with honors certification from the Fine Art Trade Guild in the U.K. In taking the MCPF, Vivian faced a challenge. If she took the test and failed, it would have called her abilities into question. If she passed, there was little benefit because that was what everyone expected. She could have avoided the test with no harm to her career, but she took the test and passed anyway.

PFM's Mounting Editor Chris Paschke adds, "Vivian impacted us all in one way or another, and the best way to remember those we have lost is by talking about them and sharing our



Vivian speaking to an interior designer at a Kistler Art and Framing gallery show in 1982.



Teaching framers in 1984. By this time, teaching had become her favorite thing to do.



Demonstrating mat cutting techniques for an instructional video for framers in 1990.

stories. Her biggest impact on me was as the catalyst for writing my mounting books. There were also the years of being gypsy educators roaming from one ABC, PPFA, or Larson show to another. But most I fondly recall sipping champagne in a bar with her while at the Dallas ABC show, lunch in New York discussing color marketing, and driving around looking for a movie theatre and ending up with hot fudge sundaes instead. Good times.”

Contributing Editor Brian Wolf says, “Whether she was making pictures or pasta sauce, Vivian had a joy for life and a spirit for adventure that drew everyone in. For those of us who worked with her, everything we touch now has a story that begins, ‘Remember what Vivian said about...’ Thank you, Vivian.”

Much of Vivian's career is best captured by vignettes and stories. Most people remember Vivian at venues like the ABC Show in Gettysburg, PA, where the hotel had theme rooms. That is but one story in thousands, which

is how everyone who knew Vivian will remember her.

One of the best stories occurred in Italy. Vivian had taken a side trip there after a European show to visit the hometown of the Columba family. Vivian met cousins who still remembered, through their parents, talk of her mother coming to the U.S. Then she headed back home and had to make the flight. Of course, she was running a little late. There was a crowd at the gate, and a great deal of confusion. No one was being processed. Realizing that if something did not change, she wouldn't make her flight, she moved to the front of the line and whistled to get everyone's attention. Then she started dividing up the group by destination and created a line. It resulted in people being processed by the ticket agents. As the last person moved through the ticket line, Vivian took her place, and made her flight. We like to think that Saint Peter is now getting the same kind of help.

The PFM family has lost a writer, an educator, and a friend. And the industry has lost a legend. ■



Vivian worked with many companies over the years, including this 1995 advertising photo.



Vivian continued making videos, including this one in 2002 at the Columba studio.



Vivian was honored in 2009 with the PPFA Lifetime Achievement Award.