

## PULAMAHIA MAILE

Presently employed by Aloha Airlines, George Pulamahia Maile graduated as kumu hula in the "Papa Lehua" class from Ma'iki Aiu Lake in 1981.

I must have been about seven or eight when I first took hula lessons from Aunt Mary Puku'i at her house on Birch Street. There were two cousins and three other members of Aunt's family. I took on and off for about a year or so until Aunt cancelled the lessons when the cousins stopped coming.

My next teacher was Momi Auwae-Yaw who I stayed with for two years. She studied under Ruby Ahakuelo and she taught us strictly 'auana. She did shows for the service clubs on the military bases and local clubs as well. It wasn't until years later, that I started with Aunt Ma'iki Aiu. I was 24 when I started with Aunt Ma'iki and I stayed for over 20 years. I never left! I came and never left!

It was really a chance of coincidence that I got into her halau. We were all at April Chock's wedding reception when I was persuaded to go up to dance. I was going to die. It was years since I danced. After I finished, Aunt Ma'iki said, "Where did you learn that? You did my whole routine. You're coming into the boys' class next week!" So that's how it started. I had picked up her whole routine without even realizing it by going in to her halau to wait for my friend Dutchie and by talking story with Aunt Ma'iki. I guess I was just absorbing all these things.

The kumu class was opened up to the public. We started with 'auana and then the kahiko was slowly interjected in until we actually studied to become kumu. The name of our class was "Papa Lehua". I was asked by Aunt Ma'iki to be in this particular class for kumu. I think there were twenty-four in our class and we all became kumu. We trained for four years to become ho'opa'a and then we trained to become kumu hula. The first student in "Papa Lehua" to become kumu was Ho'oulu Cambra. The rest of us puka(ed) as ho'opa'a that year and we followed as

kumu the next year. In our class were Robert Cazimero, Kaha'i Topolinski, Kelii Tau-a, Mililani Allen, Ulalia Berman, and 'Ala Heine. Kalena Silva, Evangeline Kealoha Wong, Kini Sullivan and Milton I were also part of our class. There are many others that I'm missing.

The first 'uniki was at Ulumau Village in Kaneohe. It was an overnight thing. We had our ailolo ceremony the next day, but we went through the meditation and the preparation the night before. Many people were there to watch. Ka'upena Wong, Aunty Sally Wood, Aunty Alice Namakelua, Aunty Nana Kalama, Aunty Lokalia Montgomery and I think Uncle Manuel Silva were there. Ma'iki would also invite them in during class time to observe from the back.

Our class performed in mass at the 'uniki. As part of the uniki process, we had to write a poem or 'oli and turn it in. We had to write something and then put a mele to it. If not, Ma'iki would. Some were to be kept as a private thing and it wasn't performed.

After the 'uniki, I continued with Aunty Ma'iki. I've never had my own halau. I stayed with Aunty Ma'iki forever and a day. Every so often she would call me and ask for help. At first, I stayed on basically as a performer and a student. Then I started to teach in the halau. One group I worked with was a firemen's group and then I worked with another school of children at the halau. The only time I taught outside of the halau was with Kealoha Wong and her sister when they were teaching for the May Day program at Maryknoll. I also taught the promotion team for Aloha Airlines and I did four Hula Bowls' half-time shows. We brought girls in from all over the island for that. When I teach, I try to be as close as possible to how Aunty Ma'iki taught it and try to keep her style of dancing.

Sometimes I wonder where they got the feet movements for the hula kahiko today. I feel a lot of influence came from other Polynesians, especially in the male kahiko. I remember watching the gentlemen dance thirty and forty years ago and I see nothing the same today.

I think that it was prevalent with the old masters that if they thought that you weren't

ready, they wouldn't give and you couldn't ask for it. There was no way that you could say, "I want to learn this, please." You waited until it was given to you or until the time was right. And sometimes that's sad because these masters took half of it with them when they passed on.

Nobody got it.

Before, every halau or hula studio had their own style. There was some movement of hands or some face gestures, something automatically saying that this dancer came from Leilani Alama, or her sister Puanani or Aunty Ma'iki. I don't find that anymore. I think it's sad because most kumu have no traceable style of their kumu that is passed on to their haumana.

Approved: 1/31/95  
5/04/95