

Nana | Na Loea Hula
Kumu Hula: Etua Lopez
Interviewer: Lovina LePendu
Date: 4/27/91

(CAN YOU GIVE ME YOUR FULL GIVEN NAME?) My full given name, I have English name, so it's Edward Dean Lopez. (HOW DID YOU GET THE NAME ETUA?) When I started dancing in Waikiki I danced for Tavana. And when I started dancing he said no Edward danced on his stage so he was the one that gave me the name Etua, and the name stuck. I have a hula name, I carry Uncle George's hula name, "Lanakila Ke Ka Ahi Ali'i". But Etua stuck because all the young kids at that time that I danced with, you know. So until today they still call me Etua. (WHICH NAME WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE STATED IN THE BOOK?) Etua. (WOULD YOU LIKE ME TO PUT EDWARD ETUA, OR JUST ETUA?) Edward Etua sounds good. (DO YOU TEACH PRESENTLY?) Yes. (WHERE?) At the Hulihe'e Palace in Kailua-Kona. (COULD YOU TELL ME ABOUT THE AGE OF THE STUDENTS?) I think I'm about the only teacher in Kailua-Kona that take them from three years old, I accept from three years old already. But they go on a little trial where the parents don't pay for the hula but they come in, and I watch the child. Some of the children are very advanced for three years old. And I accept them. And then I go all the way up to Senior Citizens. (ABOUT HOW OLD ARE YOUR SENIOR

CITIZENS?) Oh I'd say anywhere... 67, maybe older. (AND YOU TEACH KAHIKO AND AUANA?) Kahiko and auana. (HOW ABOUT OLI?) With the kahiko, I would say olapa, yea they learn oli also. They have to learn to oli themselves on. (HOW MANY YEARS HAVE YOU BEEN TEACHING?) I've been teaching now going on 14 years.

(WHEN DID YOU FIRST START HULA?) I was 15 years old. (HOW ABOUT YOUR FIRST TEACHER?) That was Lokelani Anderson. You see, originally we went to the halau to become Tahitian drummers. (AT HER HALAU?) ...at her halau which was "Nani's Hula Studio" or "Naniloa Hula Studio". (THAT'S THE NAME OF THE STUDIO?) Yea. (AND THAT WAS LEARNING TAHITIAN DRUMMING?) Yea, learning Tahitian drumming. And my first experience watching the girls, oh I just fell in love with it, the hula. (AND THEN YOU ENTERED HER HULA HALAU?) And then I was in her hula halau as a drummer when I met, through her I met Uncle George. He came to teach us how to pa'i the ipu because we were going to pa'i for the girls. (SO HOW LONG WERE YOU UNDER LOKELANI ANDERSON?) I was under her only for about three years. (AND YOU GOT TO MEET UNCLE GEORGE THERE?) And I got to meet Uncle George through her. (AND THEN YOU LEFT LOKELANI?) Then I left Lokelani and then I came to Uncle George. (WHERE WAS UNCLE GEORGE TEACHING?) He was teaching in Hilo at that time. (SO

YOU CAME TO HILO?) I came to Hilo when I was 17 years old, and this was in 1971, and that's when the heavy-duty training began for the hula. (AND HOW LONG DID YOU STAY UNDER UNCLE GEORGE?) Now going on 22 years. (AND YOU LEARNED BOTH KAHIKO AND Auana?) Yea, kahiko and auana; more kahiko. (DID YOU DANCE OTHER THINGS WITH HIM TOO?) I taught Tahitian for his halau, that's what I was doing, I was teaching Tahitian at that time for his halau. And in return I was learning the hula. (JUST LIKE RAY?) Yea, just like Ray. Ray and I were together from 7th grade. We drummed together for the same ladies. He was the lead drummer, I was bass drummer. And ever since that time Ray and I have always been together. That's my hula brother. (SO YOU WERE KIND OF GOING TOGETHER ALL THE WAY?) Oh, all the way.

(YOU SAID YOU STAYED WITH UNCLE GEORGE 22 YEARS?) Until today. (AFTER UNCLE GEORGE DID YOU HAVE OTHER KUMU?) Well through Uncle George I had a lot of kumus. I met a lot of very well known "masters" I would say. (CAN YOU NAME SOME OF THEM?) I would say Henry Pa, Lokalia Montgomery, Iolani Luahine, Edith Kanaka'ole, Eleanor Hiram Hoke, a lot of the biggies. Through him I got to take a class at least from each one of them. Also Aunty Io did not teach us to dance hula but she gave us a lot of the history. We spent every weekend for four years when I was living in

Hilo, and we come to Kona and spend the whole weekend with Auntie Iolani, and she was curator at that time here at Hulihe'e Palace. She lived in the house where the gift shop is now. And then Sunday we go take her home down to Napo'opo'o where her home originally was and spend the day with her. But more so we'd spend the whole weekend. See, because her and Uncle George did a lot of oli, blessings, and stuff like that. So we were always around. We were known as "The Boys". (DID YOU UNIKI FROM UNCLE GEORGE?) Yes. (DO YOU REMEMBER WHAT YEAR?) That was at Kalihi-Palama, Farrington High School. If I'm not mistaken it was in 1976. (IN THE 70'S?) Yea, in the 70's. (CAN YOU RECALL YOUR TRAINING TO UNIKI?) When we went through the uniki we had to... through KPC&A; they were having a big seminar. And you could learn how to make pahu drums, uli uli, feather lei making, all kinds of arts and crafts. So we took all of these classes, Ray and I did. And we made our own pahu drums. And then we had to learn what went on the alter, what goes on the kuahu. We went out, we gathered a lot of ti leaves, laua'e, 'ilima, all of the greenery that went on the kuahu, the palapalai. We had our alaka'i, was wrapped in tapa. We had to decorate... Ray and I along with Uncle George decorated the kuahu the day of our uniki. (WHAT DID YOU DO THAT DAY?) Well from days before we were going out picking all our greenery and everything and keeping them

fresh. Came that day - it was very exciting because we were the first two males to ever uniki from Uncle George. And we met him at Farrington High School Gym, at the Auditorium. And we set up the platform that Laka was going to go on. And he explained to us more so the different la'au that went on top of the kuahu and why. (SO THAT DAY ONLY YOU AND RAY...) Only Ray and I and Uncle George decorated the kuahu.

(WHAT MADE YOU WANT TO BE A TEACHER?) I love children. And to me the children is our future. So if we teach our children right they going carry on. I enjoy being around children. They make me happy. On behalf of the hula seeing how hard, you know, the hula was going through everybody saying that the hula was dying off. And we were drummers at that time and it came to our attention that either we have to choose what we're going to do; are we going to be Tahitian drummers or Tahitian teachers or are we going to be hula teachers. So finally Ray and I made our decision or I made my decision and I went into the hula all the way. (WHICH TEACHER HAD THE MOST INFLUENCE ON YOUR TEACHING?) I would say Uncle George. (HOW ABOUT YOUR STYLE? DO YOU CARRY ON HIS STYLE?) No, he always taught us that we can't be exactly like him, so he sent us to all different teachers and that's how we became, with our style. I still teach and carry on what he had taught me, but I feel that I have my own style because

another man that I really respect in the hula is Uncle Henry Pa, he has put a lot of coal in my fire. He inspired me a lot drumming. (DID YOU LEARN A LOT FROM HENRY PA?) I would say, not enough. (DURING YOUR HULA CAREER DID YOU ENCOUNTER ANY DIFFICULTIES?) Yes, a lot of difficulties as far as dealing as a kumu hula you have to deal not only with your problems, you must deal with the keiki and their problems at home. So you cannot think this big, you have to think real big. When my haumana come to me the little girls, I learned this from Uncle George, they are like little mirrors, they're just like their mommies, so more so I know how to accept their parents and sometimes some of them have a hard time at home and it reflects the problem in class. I try not to put down the kid, but I try to deal with the child to bring her out in her, not to reflect her mother, when she comes to hula I try to release her, so she can be her ownself. (WHAT GIVES YOU THE MOST JOY IN TEACHING?) Seeing my girls all in their costuming on the stage. All the hours of work, all the months of dancing even for a five minute performance is worth it. Just to see them up there and to hear the audience accept what they have done, the applause to me that is my reward. (IS THAT YOUR GREATEST ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF HULA?) Yes, one of them. (DO YOU UNIKI YOUR STUDENTS?) No, I am not ready now to uniki any of my haumana. (DO YOU THINK YOU WILL

SOMEDAY?) Yah, someday I will, I have some of my students that have been with me now in Kona going on 7 years. I have been teaching now in Kona for 7 years, so eventually, yes, I'd like to have an uniki to put them through the same process that I went through, because first was haumana, then we became ho'opa'a then we became alakai, then we became the kumu. (WHAT DO YOU EXPECT FROM THE CHILDREN BEFORE THEY UNIKI?) The same thing my kumu expected out of us. We had to know our drumming, our lei making, our skirt making and not one variety. If he said, humapa'a, we'd humupa'a, if he said ili we'd ili, if he say wili, we'd wili, kui we'd kui, so what ever way our ti leaves skirts were the same way, if he said hilo we'd know we'd have to make the knots, if he said hili we'd have to braid our ti leaf skirts. (WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO YOUNG KUMU HULA TEACHERS TODAY?) Remember the kupuna, the kupuna are very, very important, to me their the source and its not that we know it all, we must go back to talk. (WHAT KNOWLEDGE DO YOU THINK IS IMPORTANT FOR THEM TO GIVE TO US?) Right now we take things as is and, they take things in a different way and it's important to learn that. Right now I see most of the kumu hula's forget where the roots are their up in the tree, their up in the leaves, their going, they have no concept of what is down here, they must learn from the kupuna, they must learn from the masters. If you call them

up and you want to talk story, you need help as a young kumu then do that.

(WHAT DO YOU THINK OF KAHIKO TODAY?) It's very flamboyant today

because when we first learned how to dance it was basic olapa, as well as

beating the ipu, heke, things have changed. When you listen to them play

the ipu heke, they're just slapping away the ipu heke, you know as for us

we had beats we had to work to. (HOW DO YOU THINK HULA WILL BE IN THE

FUTURE?) What the islands are going through right now is progress, so

progress moves on, as long as we don't forget where the roots are. I think

workshops are good, very good because I've done a lot of workshops, a lot

of workshops. We always look forward to these workshops. IN what our

young kumu should remember, if we take from the old timers, they should

never feel it's boring, you have the young kumu now that go to somebody

and say, "Oh god, it was so boring, same feet, same motions, but if they

would only listen to their words, because that's where your expression

comes from, and to me simplicity is the key of dance. (WHAT IS YOUR

DEFINITION OF HULA KAHIKO?) My definition of hula kahiko, as far as in

what way, we use the word hula kahiko now, but when I was learning, it

was hula olapa, the hula pahu, kahiko means of the old and I don't know

nothing of the old because I was not brought up at that time, but we use it

very loosely now, you know we always say kahiko, kahiko, yah and really I

try to teach my haumana olapa, when we do the ipu eke, this is olapa if we were sitting on the ground and were dancing to ipu eke this is ku olo, you know if I use the punio and the pahu, this is ritual, this is pula pao. So, I try to teach hem more so on the sense that I learned. (DO YOU HAVE A FAVORITE CHANT?) My favorite oli to oli is ku kapunoho, it's an oli that the dancers do before they present themselves on stage and telling of how they are dressed, how smooth their moves like the ehu and the ocean and at the ending it says lau kanaka kahuna, the 400 of you of pia a pio to. I think that is beautiful. I always use that as an opening oli. (AND HOW ABOUT DANCING?) Dancing, my favorite olapa, I have plenty, but I really like E ^{Hoi}houi ke aloha e Ni'ihau. (DO YOU PREFER HULA KAHIKO OR AUANA?) I prefer hula kahiko. (DO YOU HAVE A FAVORITE AUANA ALSO?) Yah, well my favorite is E aloha no o Honolulu. Well, that was taught to me by George and to me I see a lot of him in the dance as well as Auntie Lolani Luahine, because it was also her favorite hula, everybody thinks, well certain people say it's Honolulu, Honolulu Harbor, some people say it's Honolulu here because it passes through Lahina, Kawaihai, that's why I like that. (DO YOU THINK HAWAIIAN LANGUAGE IS IMPORTANT IN HULA?) Yah, very important, very important. Because you are dancing to the words and you must know even if the composer or what ever isn't around, you must

look at the word not only one way, you must look at it 5 different ways it may mean, to get the concept of the motion while you're doing it. And if the composer is alive, then that's when you call us and you ask. Because if I do auana , and I say before Bill Alohalii passed away, I couldn't find of Lani Hawai and he had the song and I called him in Honolulu, I called the composers when I know they were alive, and I say I am a kumu hula from Kailua-Kona and I would like your manao on this here and I say its the only way I would be able to express it to my student and he gave me, he didn't compose the song, but he did the music and everything for the song. So you see he's an unknown composer and everything, but he explained to me the lawai and kulai and today it's a botanical garden and so you see, know today I get the concept of what is lawai. So we must remember that when we do a sentence, when your dancing a sentence, you don't dance the sentence as it is in English, you dance the sentence as it is in Hawaiian of course, adjectives, you must dance to the words, you cannot dance to a sentence, you must dance to the word, and take out you key words that your going to do the motion to. (DO YOU EXPLAIN TO YOUR CHILDREN WHAT THE MEANING IS?) Oh yah, it is important. (HOW DO YOU TEACH YOUR CHILDREN?) No, my keiki first show up, they must have pahu skirts, to me it's very important, it's the beginning, the groom, I'm a groom person, the

parents must have their daughters groomed. I wanted the hair brushed, braided, whatever way, but they must be groomed when they come to hula because hula is groom, when I first opened my class, they come into class and I sit them down and I ask them questions. I say, baby why do you want to dance hula, and I feel what some of them say my mommy wants me to dance hula, you know, and I give them a trial for one month, the whole class and I tell the parents, you know, you want to dance hula through her, she doesn't want to dance hula, you want to. You should come to class, leave her home, and the parents, I am very straight with them, I say you're going to waste your money. Why bring her to class, she doesn't want to dance, she has no interest. Some of them their lights are on everything, and I tell the parents you've got something good here, but I say don't be a stage mother. All I want you to be is be a mother. What makes a good hula dancer is a good mother backing her daughter, but not a stage mother. What I do in class I don't want you to tell her, nothing. I want her to remember, I don't want the moms to correct the daughters, I correct them when they come back to class. (DO YOU LET THE PARENTS COME AND WATCH?) Sometimes I do, today is an exception, I have this interview today, so I have some of the parents here, they came to see, but usually, no I have none of the parents around. And teaching here on the grounds, we

have a lot of people treading right, and it's good in a way because the keiki don't know any of these people, it grooms them for that stage, but when I have parents around, of course parent-daughter-mother, so they have to go. When they first come to class the only thing we work on for maybe 3 months is only basic hula. They must accomplish that first. I'd say that. That's using 9 of the basic steps I've learned. They only learn basic footsteps, they exercise, they roll, they do everything, no dancing. About 3 months go by, the hardest step I find for children to learn is the uehe, so we take a long time on that one and their first dance that they do, I teach them very basic olapa, they do Kawika, they do Liliu'e you know they do basic hula with a lot of the basics in it. Kawika they do a lot of kaholo uehe, Liliu'e that's a challenge for my little keiki's because that's all uehe. Now try to get a little girl to do all of this uehe and hand motions at the same times so that is the task for them, they must learn the basics first and I don't only teach them only when they are little. They sit around for my advance class, and then they hear we practice our vowels, a,e,i,o,u and oli. That is the beginning, they must learn that first. We just don't go right through and learn the oli and everything. Auana comes in after the basics come in. Once they have the feel of the basics and I teach them what is the difference between olapa and auana in the hands as well as, I

try to restrict them on movement in the olapa. I want definite movement, I don't want no softness, but in the auana I want movement, I want smiles and bright faces, this is music, this is today. (HOW MANY STUDENTS DO YOU HAVE ALTOGETHER?) All together, I would say over 50, over 60. (WHO DO YOU CONSIDER A HULA MASTER OF TODAY?) Of today, I would consider ***END OF TAPE***

As a kumu hula you deal with not only problems but also with our haumana's problems, their parents, sometime your little girl come to hula because the parents want see the little girl are like minors just like their dummy. Some of the children have hard time at home so it reflects the problems in class. My girls in their costuming are the stage gives me joy all the month of dancing of hard work even a five minute performance is worth it. I have been teaching here in Kona for seven years. I was haumana, ho'opa'a, alaka'i, kumu, that was the process I went through I probably will uniki someday some of my haumana. As for myself I (always) expect my haumana to do the same thing that my kumu expected from us. We had to know our drum making, lei making, costume. Advice to my haumana is remember our kupuna. Most the kumu hula forget their roots they are up in the leaves they are going; they have no concepts what these are here down here, no sense of ha'aha'a. Hula today is very