

Lani Kalama

When I was about fifteen-years-old, my friend Nellie came home and told me she heard of a lady named Lokalia Montgomery who was teaching the hula pahu on Charles Street. This was my introduction to the pahu and it was an awesome feeling. I payed fourteen dollars to learn which was a lot of money in those days. I didn't dare ask my grandmother because I was sure she wouldn't let me, so I broke my piggy bank and I took that money to Lokalia. It was then that I began an education that was a privileged part of my life.

My hula training actually began at the age of seven under tutu Keaka Kanahale and Gertrude Mckinney at Aunt Gertrude's home on Rosa Street. The class was made up of all the neighborhood children and the kids in my family. The Mckinney's had a big yard and a large home and we would move all the chairs in the living room and that's where we would dance. We would go to class everyday and if tutu felt like it we were there for hours. If she was tired the class would be canceled for three or four days.

At the age of twelve I studied with Harriet Kepelino who taught me hula auwana, and graduated traditionally (uniki) with tutu Kepelino at fourteen. She gave us each a little jigger of inu and then she performed the rituals. I went through the hula kapu training but when it came time to perform the rituals myself my grandmother stopped me. Today I'm grateful to her because I now know the rituals that are involved and how it has affected the lives of others who participated. Back then the definition of hula auwana meant hula that was free of any ritual, ceremony or kapu and had nothing to do with creativity or musical accompaniment.

My experience with Harriet was beautiful. We traveled around the islands performing and entertaining but I wanted to study more of the hula pahu and that is how I was led to Lokalia Montgomery. In Lokalia's dining room she had a great dinner table where she would talk with her guests. All the beautiful people in the Hawaiian community like Kawena Pukui and Malia Kau would drop in throughout the day and we would be in the dancing area separated by a sliding door waiting to learn. At fifteen I was a very sassy, very hookano girl and when I thought Lokalia was taking too long I would start to pai the drum and act like the teacher. I would make the four other girls dance the mele until one day she opened the door and told me that from that day on I would learn both the dance and the chant. We learned humility, to wait and keep your mouth closed but I don't think I changed until I was in my thirties.

One night there was a chant I really wanted to learn so I sat in my room in the dark and beat my pahu softly and chanted to myself. After awhile I got so involved I began pounding my drum and chanting full-voice. Before I knew it the door was open and my mom was standing there. Up until that evening no one in my family had any idea I was learning the hula pahu and I thought that was it for me. I told her about the piggy bank and Lokalia and she began to cry. She told me that her father had told her mother that the family's ~~future~~ <sup>future</sup> was in a Christian world. No one was allowed to go into the Hawaiian culture. But her mother told her father that ~~despite~~ <sup>DESPITE</sup> all the suppression one of us would come out of it and it turned out to be the one. I was sixteen at the time and my mother said she wanted to meet this Lokalia.

Under Lokalia we were never allowed to write anything. We never received a copy of a translation, she just taught and we just listened. I was always niele and asking her the meanings of certain words or chants but the only thing she gave us were descriptive explanations all pertaining to nature. Lokalia said her mentor was Kawena Pukui. ~~and~~ <sup>There was</sup> no teaching differences between Keaka Kanahale and Lokalia so I consider my career a continuation of the Kawena Pukui-Keaka Kanahale-Lokalia Montgomery line. In preparation for our uniki, we had a midnight practice on the night before the ceremony. Sally Wood Naluai was married and so she was permitted to go home but the rest of us had to sleep over in Lokalia's home. All of our implements ~~were~~ were made by Lokalia and on the day of the uniki we had a little paina in the living room which was followed by a public ceremony to which all of our friends and relatives ~~and friends~~ were invited.

I began to teach in 1948 as a means of earning a livelihood. I was married and I was starting a family and I taught the parishioners at Pauoa Church. I consider myself a contemporary hula teacher and not a kumu hula. I think the word kumu is used to loosely today. I'm only a branch of a tree. My teachers were the real kumu. To be a real teacher you cannot have two lives. You cannot be married or have a family because your life has to be dedicated to your students.

Someone told me that people have to express their creativity ~~and~~ <sup>AND</sup> you have to have modern thinking today. But I feel we have to remember the past. That doesn't ~~mean~~ <sup>mean</sup> we stay in ~~the~~ <sup>THE</sup> past but without our traditional ways we have no foundation. The question that is repeatedly asked is how do we know what is traditional? There are a few people who lived during those times and were taught by masters and I am asking the kumu of today to have faith and a belief in them.



Lani Kalama

We always had music either at home or at the aunty's house. I began learning how to dance when I was age 5. I just love dancing. I began my formal training about 7. We never use to hear the term hula kahiko before. The term kumu hula was never used in my time.

From the age of 7 to 11 I was involved with Tutu Keaka and Aunty Gertrude Mckinney on Rosa Street. The Rosa Street address was Aunty Gertrude's home. Tutu Keaka would come and teach a whole class. The class would be made up of all the neighborhood children and the kids in my family. We would go up against the wall and learn to ami and things of that sort. They had a big yard and a big home and we would always dance in the living room. We would move all the chairs and dance. We would go everyday but we didn't have that kind where you come every week and today you learn one hour. If Tutu felt like it we were there for hours and then maybe the next three, four, five days we don't hula. But when you come back again it's another two or three hours.

From 12 to 14 I started with Harriet Henrietta Kepelino. She taught me hula auwana and gave a little ancient. It was through her that I learned to ami on the floor because that was her thing. I uniki'd with Tutu Kepelino when I was in my teens. She ~~would~~ came in and gave us each a little jigger of you know (inu?) and then she performed the rituals. My grandmother Helen never wanted me to be involved with the hula kapu. My understanding of the hula kapu is this, they called it kapu because of the rituals and ceremonies attached to it. So this is where my grandmother was very wise. I'm very thankful for her foresight. I went through the learning but when it came time to uniki I was not permitted to perform the rituals. I'm very happy because I now know the things that it involved, and how it affected your life. But I do know many people who uniki'd in that manner.

But my experience with Harriet was very beautiful. We traveled quite a lot around the Islands dancing. But I always had this dream about my hula pahu. With Tutu Keaka we learned Kaulilua and it stuck in mind. We had occasions to perform at Fort DeRussey. Tutu would sit and pa her drum and we would go into the ocean and as a offering we were told to untie our hula skirts, turn around and come back. That was the most significant thing that happened to me as a youngster learning that time. ~~But being~~ ~~young~~ I thought that was beautiful and I at least did that. At this time I did not see Tutu Keaka anymore and we weren't dancing at Aunty Gertie's but the hula pahu was still in the back of mind always. I was dancing for my uncle at Kilohana Gardens with my friend Nellie and my cousin Maiki, and I used to tell them how I wanted to study more of the hula pahu. When I was about 15 my friend Nellie came home and told me she heard of a lady named Lokalia Montgomery who was teaching the hula pahu on ~~and from~~ Charles Street. This was my introduction to the pahu and it was an awesome feeling. I payed 14 dollars to learn which was big money in those days. I didn't ask my grandmother because I was sure she wouldn't let me so I had a piggy bank, and I broke it and I took that money and took it to Lokalia. It was then that I began an education that was a privileged part of my life. Things that I do today in chanting I give respect and I acknowledge that it is from Lokalia that it stems from.



I wish I had been a little smarter and had spent more time with her. ~~There~~ There are many things that only in the last ten years have I realized she had left with me. I was always a very impatient person and people were always dropping in on classes. These were the beautiful people of the hula community like Kauena Pukui. Lokalia's house on Charles Street had a big dinning table where she would talk with the guests and we would be separated by a sliking door in the dancing area wait-int to learn. You learned humility to wait and keep your mouth shut. But I was a very sassy gir., very hookano and it wasn't until I turned 32 and met a very beautiful person in Pianaiia that I wanted to change and become more selfless. But then when I thought Lokalia was taking too long I would start to pa'i the drum and act like the teacher. I would make the four other women dnace the mele and one time she opened the door silently and told me quietly form now on I could learn both hoopaa and dancer.

All until this time my family had no idea that I was learning hula. One time there was a chant I really wanted to learn so I sat in my roon one evening very quietly and beat my pahu softly and chanted to myself. After awhile I got so involved I said what the hell and began going at it, pounding the pahu and chanting full-voiced. Before I knew the door was open and there was my mom and I thought that was it. My heart went down and I stopped. My mother asked me in Hawaiian where I had learned this. I told her about the piggy bank and Lokalia. And she told me with tears in her eyes that her father had told her mother that the family was going to be brought in a Christian world. No one was allowed to go into the Hawaiian arts. But my grandmother had said there would be one that would come out of it despite all of the suppression. I turned out to be that one. So my mother said she wanted to meet this Lokalia. I was so happy she didn't stop me. I was 16 at the time.

One of the people that used to cme was a beautiful person named Malia Kau who at that time was well-known as a chanter. My grandmother always told me if you please the old people never mind the young people, then you are a dancer. So this is what I always worked for. At our uniki under Lokalia was Sally Wood Naluai. Both of us were graduating as ho'opa'as. The one thing was a midnight practice before the uniki. Sally was married and was permitted to go home but the rest of us had to sleep over. All of our implements were made by the kumu. On the day of the uniki it was beautiful. We had a little paina in her living room.

Sally being the elder entered first and oli'd, I followed after her and began my oli and when I finished a woman in the back began to oli in response to my chant. That was the crowning glory of my training years because that lady was Malia Kau. And my grandmother who was sitting in the audience began to cry because she told me it reminded her of the earlier years she spent with her father. When it was throught she told me she was happy I had pursued this because she was able to see that her father was right. The fact that I had pleased Malia Kau, someone who lives today who knows what chanting is all about gratified her.

Ther were no big differences in the teaching styles of Lokalia and Keaka Kanahale. Tutu Keaka was not really hard on us because we were young. We had to go over the basic steps: ami, kaholo, u'ehe, hela, etc. Today I hear there are over 90 basic steps in hula kahiko. To me there were 8 basic steps and from these steps come all these other steps of today. With tutu Keaka, Aunty Gertude McKinney, I was strictly a dancer. We did not get any training in learing how to pa'i or the mana'o of the chants.

It was only with Lokalia that I got the training of a hoopaa. We were never allowed to write anything. We never received a copy of a translation. She just taught and you listened and you learned. I was always niele and asking her for themeanings of certain words or chants, but the only thing she gave us were descriptive explanations all pertaining to nature. For the hula pahu, there were no changes in the Kaulilu'a between Lokalia and Keaka so I consider my tree a continuation from Keaka to Lokalia to me. I know Lokalia considered Kauena her mentor, but she never specifically mentioned her kumu. I went to her in '45- '46. When it cmae to dances that I had learned from my teachers, I always had this feeling that I didn't want to add anything. I wanted to keep them traditional. But for dances and chants that I have not learned from my kumu I will put creative things in.

I began to teach in '48 as a means of earning a livelihood. In '48 I had gotten married and I was pregnant with child. I taught parishioners at Pauoa church.

Kahiko was not a term used by Lokalia. She just said dances. Tutu Keaka used the term olapa and when it came to Lokalia, it became ala'opapa. I taught from '48 to '59 but I stopped in the 60's and only taught when I felt an urge to teach.

I consider muself a contemporary kumu hula. I'm only a branch of a tree. My teachers ~~xxx~~ were kumu hula. I consider myself a hula teacher. I think kumu is a word used too loosely today.

To be a real teacher of the hula you cannot have two lives. You cannot be married and have a family because it's too demanking. Don't bother teaching if you aren't willing to give of yourself.



My special memory was in 1950 at the Queen Emma Summer Palace. Lokalia pai'd the drum and I came out dancing. In the midst of my dance, Iolani jumped up on stage and joined me. Even now I get a thrill

I think the hardest time for me was hiding my hula from my relatives and my husband who didn't want me to dance.

Learn your dances well. If you are a male dancer, dance like a male, if you are a female show your charms. I find that to be the most disturbing change in the hula. The female dancers of today dance and dress like men.

Someone told me that people have to be allowed to express their creativity. The kumu then have to be careful how they guide and teach the haumana. This phrase, "all knowledge of the hula does not reside in one halau," was never heard of in my time. I think today you have to keep reminding people of today. But I cannot say that step I have never seen before are not from out of the past because they may or may not have originated from another island.

How do we know then what is traditional? I think you have to have faith, you have to have a belief in what you were taught by your kumu is genuine. We have a few people who lived during those times. I don't agree with what these people say sometimes, but yet I respect them because they come from a master. I think as long as the use of the implement, the motions, the foot movements are mixed, the hula ~~xxxx~~ is changing for the worst. The question ~~xxxxxxaskingxxthexxkumuxxx~~ that is asked repeatedly is how do we know. I am asking the kumus to respect the fact that we have a few people from that time who say it wasn't done that way.

You have to have modern thinking today, but you have to remember the past. That doesn't mean you stay in the past, but without a history we have no future.