

Nana I Na Loea Hula

Interviewer: Lovina LePendur

Kumu Hula: Michael Canopin

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(ALOHA MICHAEL) Aloha Lovina. (CAN YOU GIVE ME YOUR FULL GIVEN NAME) Michael Gary Kailipuna<sup>ohu</sup> Canopin. (HOW WOULD YOU LIKE YOUR NAME TO APPEAR IN THE BOOK) Without the Gary. (CAN YOU TELL ME WHAT AGE YOU STARTED HULA) What age I started hula? I think it was in my early 20's. (CAN YOU TELL ME WHO WAS YOUR TEACHER AT THAT TIME) My first hula instructor was Milton I. He taught out of his home in Kahala. (WHAT DID HE TEACH YOU, WHAT KIND OF HULA) We just went through basic steps, five basic steps, kaholo, uehe, hela, kawelu, and it was just a group that did shows. (DID YOU DO THAT JUST TO DO HULA, OR WAS THERE A PURPOSE) He just asked me one day, I was working at the Kahala Hilton and he asked if I was interested in hula, and at the time I wasn't, but I decided just to go and give it a try. (WHERE DID HE TEACH) He taught from his home in Kahala. (HOW OFTEN DID YOU GO TO CLASSES) We went there once or twice a week, I cannot remember. (HOW LONG DID YOU STAY WITH HIM) I stayed with him for about six months. (THEN YOU MOVED ON TO WHO) And then I took a break from hula, because I wanted more from hula, so I just didn't dance for a while and I went with friends to the Kamehameha competition out at Laie where I witnessed some other halau. (NOW THAT YOU ARE A TEACHER, DO YOU REMEMBER THE TYPE OF STYLE THAT HE HAD) It was very showy. It was more, I would say, there was a lot of dramatic movements and it was all for shows. (DO YOU REMEMBER THE METHODS OF HOW HE DID IT OR WAS IT JUST BASIC) Um huh. (ANY SPECIAL MEMORIES ABOUT HIM) No.

(YOUR NEXT TEACHER) Chinky Mahoe. (HOW LONG DID YOU STAY WITH HIM) I stayed with Chinky for about a year and a half. (WHERE DID HE TEACH AT THAT TIME) At the time he was teaching out of Enchanted Lakes Elementary School. (DO YOU REMEMBER THE YEAR) 1982. (HOW OFTEN DID YOU GO TO HIM) At the time we only went once a week, but I came in to his halau right as they were preparing for Merry Monarch or they were training for that so he asked me if I would like to be a part of that group to train for competition and I said yes, and from there we trained 3 to 4 times a week. (DO YOU REMEMBER THE

STYLE OR METHODS THAT HE USED) I found his style to be very <sup>aiha'a</sup> ~~ha'a~~. More low to the ground and we danced a lot with bent knees, very low, low stance. (DO YOU HAVE SPECIAL MEMORIES OF HIM) I found him to be disciplinarian, he was very strict in his basic training, but I liked that because it was a challenge. (HOW LONG DID YOU STAY WITH HIM) I stayed with him for a year and a half. (WHAT MADE YOU MOVE ON) I just felt that it was time to go and I wanted more from hula. I wanted to get involved more with the study and learning background of chants, and I just felt that I needed to move on. (WITH CHINKY DID YOU LEARN BOTH KAHIKO AND AUANA) Yes. (BUT YOU STILL WANTED TO MOVE ON) Yah, actually, at that time, I learned, because I was a beginner, all I learned was maybe a few less than two kahiko and about three auana. (DID YOU RECEIVE ANY CERTIFICATES FROM HIM) No. (DID YOU GO TO ANY SPECIAL COMPETITIONS) Oh, we participated in the 1983 Merry <sup>ie</sup> Monarch Festival. (HOW ABOUT WITH THE FIRST TEACHER YOU WERE WITH, DID YOU GET ANY CERTIFICATE) No I didn't. We just danced at, there was various shows around town, at the NBC arena, Danny Kaleikini show.

(AFTER CHINKY DID YOU MOVE ON TO ANOTHER ONE) Yes, I met Palani Kahala. (HOW DID YOU MET HIM) It was at a party out at Portlock and we were playing volleyball, and somehow, he was playing the ukulele and singing songs, and we just met. (DID HE ASK YOU) I asked him. (WHAT WAS HIS ANSWER) His answer was to go and, he recognized that I had another kumu and he asked if I was still involved and he told me the only way I could come into his halau was to make sure that it was a clean break and I needed to rest out a year before he'd accept me. (AND YOU DID THAT) Yes. (SO WHAT YEAR DID YOU JOIN HIM) I started with him in 1984. (WHERE DID HE TEACH) At the time he was teaching out of Kamehameha Schools. Well, he always taught out of Kamehameha Schools. (HOW OFTEN DID YOU MEET) We met once a week, which wasn't enough. (WHAT KIND OF HULA DID YOU LEARN THERE) He taught both kahiko and auana. (DID YOU LEARN ANYTHING OTHER THAN DANCING) What I liked about him was that he explained the background of each mele that we had learned and I was more fascinated because his method of teaching. He had a very systematic way of teaching, especially to dancers that were new to the hula, he would start with a foundation which was your feet, and he would stress the importance of your basics and from there he taught the hands. (DO YOU RECALL A DIFFERENT STYLE COMPARED TO YOUR PREVIOUS TEACHERS) I found that his style wasn't as <sup>aiha'a</sup> ~~aiha'a~~ as Chinky's, however, it demanded a lot of endurance and I



found it nice. (DID HE TEACH YOU OLI OR CHANTING) He taught, Palani taught oli, and he didn't teach chanting until later. (DID YOU RECEIVE ANY CERTIFICATE FROM HIM) I received a certificate of olapa. I was eligible to take an olapa class, and I passed.

(AFTER THAT YOU HAD ANOTHER KUMU) Yes, Robert Cazemero. (WHAT YEAR) I remember being with Robert in 1989. (WHERE DID ROBERT TEACH FIRST) Robert taught out of Kamehameha Schools. We met once a week on Sunday's. (WHAT DID ROBERT TEACH YOU) Robert taught me personally, timing in my dancing, he taught <sup>choral</sup> coral singing, he taught some traditional hula, and auana. (HOW IS HIS STYLE COMPARED TO PALANI) It's more of a comfortable style of dancing, free form and he did stress a lot of basics, but his style was more relaxed, upright style. (DID YOU GET ANY CERTIFICATE FROM HIM) No. (HOW LONG DID YOU STAY WITH HIM) About a year, year and a half.

(THEN DID YOU SEE SOMEONE ELSE) Then I returned to Palani after Robert. (WHY) I just felt that I wanted to go back to my kumu. (YOU WENT BACK AS AN OLAPA) Yes. When I went back to Palani, he offered to teach a class of ho'opa'a, he offered me, so I went ahead and learned ho'opa'a from him. (HOW LONG DID YOU STAY WITH PALANI THIS TIME) I stayed with him up until his death. (DID YOU RECEIVE ANY CERTIFICATE) Not as ho'opa'a, I guess he just felt that during his later years that it wasn't necessary to give out the certificates like he did for olapa. We learned basically the ipu, different beat patterns, what the ipu was used for, learned the difference between the hula pai ipu and the hula alapapa. We learned one chant using the pahu. (DID YOU UNIKI FROM ANY OF THESE TEACHERS) No, I didn't go through any ceremony for uniki.

(HOW DID YOU BECOME A KUMU HULA) It was through Palani's blessings and wishes, he stressed on us the importance and the responsibility if we are going to take the title of kumu and in the sense <sup>where</sup> ~~were~~ he gave me the right to teach, it was how people term it <sup>hulepo</sup> ~~whoetepe~~, it means through his blessing, I became a kumu. (HOW DID YOU REALLY BECOME A KUMU, IS IT BECAUSE IT WAS WHAT YOU WANTED) Actually he offered my hula brother and I the opportunity to teach a high school in 1980, 1987, that's before I went to Robert and I took Pearl City High School to competition. It was his way of putting us through training to prepare ourselves one day to take on the role as kumu hula. (FROM THAT YOU DECIDED THAT YOU WANTED TO TAKE ON THE ROLE OF KUMU HULA) Well, I asked him and he said there was more involved than just teaching a high school.

(WHEN YOU THINK BACK, WHICH KUMU HAD THE GREATEST INFLUENCE ON YOU) I would say Palani. He has a lot of influence in what I do today because of what he had taught us. It wasn't just song and dance, there was a lot that was involved in the songs and dance that we did. He told us to research the mele that we did and research played an important role in our hula.

(WHEN DID YOU BECOME A KUMU HULA) In the year 1990. (HOW DID YOU DECIDE) My kumu hula, all three of them are a major influence in what I do today. It a combination of Chinky's style, Robert's and Palani, but I find that I lean more towards Robert and Palani. (CAN YOU GIVE ME THE NAME OF YOUR HALAU) The halau is Kealakapawa. (WHERE IS YOUR HALAU LOCATED) We practice in Honolulu, at the University of Hawaii and also and Aliamanu Elementary. (DO YOU HAVE MEN AND WOMEN) Men, women and children. They range from 3-55, or older, but nobody came that's older. (DO YOU REMEMBER HOW YOU STARTED YOUR HALAU, THAT SPECIAL TIME RIGHT BEFORE, AFTER PALANI PASSED AWAY, DID YOU SIT ON IT FOR A WHILE) No, actually he was still alive when we had started and he said it was okay and he came to several of our practice sessions and there was a lot of guidance involved with him. ( DID YOU RETURN TO HIM FOR HELP WHILE YOU WERE TEACHING) Yes, always.

(DO YOU TEACH HULA KAHIKO) Yes I do. (HULA AUANA AND CHANTING) Yes. (DO YOU TEACH THEM BASICS, HOW DO YOU CHOOSE YOUR STUDENTS FOR THE DIFFERENT CLASSES) Actually, they all start from beginning, regardless if the learned hula from elsewhere, there's always a beginning class. The beginning classes are, we just go through the basic hula steps and that will be months of training. (DO YOU FOLLOW THE WAY YOUR KUMU TAUGHT YOU OR DO YOU HAVE YOUR OWN WAY) The method by which he taught, I have adapted, the systematic way of teaching choreography, starting with the feet and with the hands. (SAME AS PALANI) Right. (YOU ALSO TEACH CHANTING TO YOUR CHILDREN) Yes. (THAT IS FROM THE BEGINNING ALSO) No. Chanting, there's basic chants that I would like each member of the halau to know, but I don't go on to other chants, it depends on the individual and that's how I go about teaching the chants. (HOW MANY TIMES DO YOU MEET WITH YOUR STUDENTS) I have classes six days a week. (WHAT COMMITMENT DO YOUR STUDENTS HAVE TO MAKE) Come to hula everyday. There's a lot of demands, but I find that you have to no matter how strict your demands are, you have to treat each individual as an individual, they all have different personalities and you have



to handle them differently. (WHEN YOU LOOK AT YOUR STUDENTS, DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHY THEY COME TO YOU) No. They come because they are interested in hula, and not all of them, I don't find that a lot of them, they come for different reasons and then eventually, they conform to what we do. (WHAT IS THE AVERAGE AMOUNT OF YEARS THAT THEY STAY WITH YOU) Well, the average, right now I have students since 1990, this is 1997 I have a whole, say about 20 something of them remaining. (DO YOU HAVE PLANS TO UNIKI ANY OF THESE STUDENTS) No. (WHY) Because I did not go through the uniki ceremony, I just feel that it's not my right to. (WHAT MADE YOU PERSEVERE YOUR HULA CAREER) What made me, well. I knew the commitment that I had to make if I was going to take on this responsibility and I don't feel that I'm going to start something and not finish, finish in the sense where I am going to do it for a few years and quit, I find that it's a lifetime, for myself it's a lifetime to hula. I am committed to hula. (WHEN YOU LOOK AT THE CHILDREN YOU TEACH TODAY, DO YOU SEE SOMEONE THERE THAT WILL CONTINUE YOUR STYLE) Yes. (YOU STILL DO NOT WANT TO UNIKI THEM) (MICHAEL, WHEN YOU LOOK AT YOUR STUDENTS DO YOU SEE SOMEONE THAT MAY CONTINUE YOUR WORK) When I look at my students, I know that there are some of them with aspirations to teach and at this point in time all I can do is encourage them to study and continue what we are doing. But the thing that I like to stress the most, especially in the study of hula is to learn the language, because I feel that the language is the root, the Hawaiian language is the root of hula. (CAN YOU TELL ME THE STEPS YOU REQUIRE YOUR STUDENTS TO KNOW TO GO OUT AND TEACH) Well, the language is just the basic, the very basic, you must know the language. Then after that, I would, there's different steps that they would have to go through such as an olapa, being an olapa. An olapa isn't just being a dancer, but I find that it's becoming an educated dancer, were in the sense you'd know what a kuaho is, what is the kinolau of Laka. What are the different plants and manifestations of the plants used on the kuohu. These are just basic knowledge that I feel they must know as olapa. Kalakaua's Hala Nau's Society, and what it stood for. (DO YOU HAVE ANY STUDENTS PAST THIS STEP) No. (LOOKING TOWARDS THE FUTURE IS STILL FAR AWAY) Right.

(LETS TALK A LITTLE BIT ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF THE LANGUAGE) I find that if you look at a chant and you look at it for face value, what you'll find is just a little translation and knowing the language, the word is the root of the language and I just feel that there's much more than looking at a



translation and acting upon that and creating your dance. I find that you must understand thoroughly each word. (DID YOU LEARN LANGUAGE FROM YOUR PREVIOUS KUMU) Palani taught language in his halau. (DO YOU TEACH YOUR CHILDREN LANGUAGE IN THE HALAU) I teach the keiki language. (WHAT KIND OF LANGUAGE) Basic, greetings, basic everyday conversation. (DO YOU WRITE CHANTS) I try to. (WHY DO YOU WRITE CHANTS) The reason why I write chants, its my form of expression on if I am inspired by a certain place, or if I am inspired by a certain event I will put it down on paper, as to commemorate that particular occasion, and that's my reasoning for writing a chant or if I need a special, instead of using the traditional hula ka'i and ho'i, there has been times that I have written to talk about a certain place like Mount Ka'ala. (DO YOU PERSONALLY FEEL THAT KUMU SHOULD WRITE CHANTS) I don't particularly want to say that they should, but I find that they should put their thoughts down on paper and that could be almost like a recordation of their time in hula.

(WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER YOUR GREATEST ACCOMPLISHMENT IN HULA) So far, that I lasted this long. My accomplishments in hula is when I look at my babies and how they have grown. Since 1990 and up until today and to look at them and to see how much I've learned teaching them and how much they've learned from me teaching them. (YOU ENTER HULA COMPETITIONS) Yes I do. (DO YOU HAVE A CERTAIN REASON) I think the hula competition for me serves as a time for the dancers to strengthen themselves in the sense of dancing together, in the sense of feeling each other and also we all strive to research material that we are dancing and we get to present what we do. (WHEN YOU GO TO HULA COMPETITIONS, IS IT YOUR DECISIONS, OR THE CHILDREN'S DECISION) It's my decision. (WHAT KIND OF ADVICE DO YOU GIVE TO ASPIRING HULA TEACHERS) Actually, it's part of the everyday training where we have discussions and lectures about certain things and what they should do and blah, blah, blah. (WHAT DO YOU THINK OF HULA TODAY) For my hula, I've had, I guess my kumu that I've had, that I've studied from, would be considered contemporaries and in some sense traditionalist too, but I find my style leaning more towards being traditional and what I think of the hula today is just so varied. We have a various spectrum of hula, there's the traditionalist, there's the extreme contemporary. (WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THE FUTURE OF HULA) I think hula is going in the right direction were we are all coming back to tradition.

(DO YOU THINK THAT THERE WILL BE A TIME THAT EVERYONE WILL COME BACK TO TRADITION) Yes. (DO YOU SEE YOURSELF DOING THAT KIND



OF THING) Oh yes, because I find that with Palani Kahala, he was very expressive in how he felt, his choreography was modern and I enjoyed it at the time, but I find myself going on a more traditional path. (WHAT DO YOU THINK IS TRADITIONAL) What is traditional? Traditional to me is for hula, if you are going to learn a hula, to keep tradition, you cannot alter choreography, or alter chant styles or alter beat patterns. (CAN YOU GIVE ME A DEFINITION OF THE HULA KAHIKO) Hula Kahiko is more rigid in form, basic, very basic. (CAN YOU TELL ME SOME CHANTS THAT CAN IDENTIFY THAT) Au<sup>u</sup>'aia is a very traditional form, it's a very traditional chant. I also find that A Ko'olau Wao<sup>u</sup> is another traditional chant, and these are all hula pahu as well as Kaulila<sup>u</sup>. (WHICH ONES DID YOU LEARN FROM PREVIOUS TEACHERS) I learned A Ko'olau Wao<sup>u</sup> and Au<sup>u</sup>'aia. (WHICH TEACHER DID YOU LEARN THEM FROM) It was Palani Kahala that taught Au<sup>u</sup>'aia and A Ko'olau Wao<sup>u</sup> and he felt that we needed to know these traditional chants. There was a whole number of chants that he felt that was imperative to us learning. (DO YOU TEACH THESE IN YOUR HALAU) I haven't yet. (WHY) They really haven't touched a hula pahu except for Auntie Pat's chant that we did. (DO YOU HAVE A REASON WHY) It's not time to learn it yet. I find that they are not ready and I try to base my teachings on what they are ready for and at this time we are not ready for the hula pahu. (SO IT KIND OF GOES IN STEPS) Yes. (END OF TAPE)

(DO YOU HAVE ANY THOUGHTS ON WHERE THE HULA IS GOING TODAY) I think the hula is going in the right direction, in the sense that there's a lot of people, students and kumu that are involved with the Hawaiian language coming on strong again. I think as long as they follow the guidelines, we are headed in the right direction. (DO YOU THINK THAT THE ANCIENT DANCES ARE BEING PRESERVED, HOW DOES IT LOOK FOR THE NEXT GENERATION) Well, I think if the kumu would take interest in learning the ancient dances, through programs like Kalihi-Palama where they have masters of the hula teaching and they keep it the way it was taught, it'll end up in the right direction. (DO YOU THINK THAT IT IS IMPORTANT TO LEARN DANCES THAT ARE SO CALLED ORIGINAL AND WOULD THEY BE CONSIDERED HULA KAHIKO, OR WOULD IT BE CONSIDERED ONE SORT OF HULA KAHIKO) No, I think it is hula kahiko, especially if it is taught by the masters and I feel that it builds your foundation, you strengthen yourself by learning these chants and dancers are learning it well and I feel you must, you shouldn't change what you learn. (ARE YOU STILL SEEKING MORE KNOWLEDGE) Yes, everyday is a learning. (DO YOU HAVE SPECIFIC



PEOPLE THAT YOU GO TO) At this day and time I am learning chant from Kalani Akana and once or twice a year I attend workshops that is provided by Kalihi-Palama Culture & Arts, where they feature hula master such as Aunty Edith McKinzie, George Holokai, Aunty Pat Bacon, I am also attending the University of Hawaii furthering my knowledge in the language. (DO YOU THINK THAT IS VERY IMPORTANT FOR EVERY KUMU) It's very important, because we don't speak Hawaiian everyday, I think that it's very important that you keep up with the language. (IN YOUR SCHOOL DO YOU TEACH EVERYTHING TO YOUR CHILDREN, OR DO YOU LET THEM GO ELSEWHERE TO LEARN) I try to teach whatever I learn to my students, if I don't teach them, I'll record it down and teach it to them one day. I find it really important that what I learn I pass on.

(IN YOUR HALAU DO YOU DO RESEARCH BEFORE YOU TEACH OR DO YOU JUST TEACH WHAT YOU LEARNED FROM YOUR PREVIOUS KUMU) No, I actually like to go out and research the material, I use places like the State Archives, and the Bishop Museum Archives where I find material and what I'll do is research the material and study and try to bring it all together before I go ahead and teach my students. (DO YOU DO ALL THE RESEARCH, YOUR STUDENTS DON'T DO ANY) Well, I find, I also have them do research, that's part of their learning as dancers that they, I'll give them specific areas that they have to go out and research. Everyone is required to research. Say if we had a chant like Mele Jubilee No Kalakaua I will ask them to research the jubilee and if there's specific place names or poetic phrases in a chant, they have to go and find out what these things were talking about. Such as in Mele Jubilee No Kalakaua, 'Aina o Hana Aka Ia ike talks about Hana, land of the little fish well that's very vague, so I have them go out and research what that means. And that spoke of a specific time when the land of Hana was going through famine, a period of famine. (DID YOU GET THAT KIND OF KNOWLEDGE, BECAUSE THAT'S HOW YOUR KUMU DID TO YOU OR DO YOU DO THIS YOURSELF) I went out and studied. (DO YOU THINK IT'S IMPORTANT IN THE HALAU TO DO RESEARCH, OR DOES IT DEPEND) No, I think that it's very important that we research. That way, if I just provide the students with materials, they will take it and they will file it, were as if they go out and they research themselves and they write it down and have it embedded in their heads and that why they will learn more, than just to receive. They go out and research their own.

(DO YOU HAVE ANYTHING YOU WOULD LIKE TO ADD) I would just like to thank all the kumu that have taught me and I have found from each and every



one of them that I've learned a lot and I'll try to pass on what they have taught too.  
(DO <sup>YOU THINK</sup> YOUR CAREER OF KUMU HULA IS GOING FURTHER, IS THERE A FUTURE  
FOR YOURSELF, WHAT DO YOU THINK THE REQUIREMENTS ARE TO BE A  
MASTER, WHAT IS A HULA MASTER FOR YOU) A hula master is years of study,  
and it's also being taught by a master. I don't consider myself as a hula master, no.  
(DO YOU THINK A KUMU HULA CAN EVER BECOME A HULA MASTER) Well,  
it depends who their kumu hula is. (SO IT'S NOT SOMETHING THAT YOU ARE  
TRYING TO REACH) I'll always try to further myself in hula, but I don't look at  
myself as becoming a hula master. (DO YOU THINK HULA MASTER IS A TITLE  
THAT PEOPLE GIVE TO YOU, OR IS IT SOMETHING THAT YOU CARRY ON  
FROM THE BEGINNING) No, it's a title that's earned. (DO YOU THINK YOUR  
PREVIOUS KUMU HULA WERE MASTERS, OR DO YOU JUST LOOK AT THEM  
AS KUMU HULA) I look at them as kumu hula. (FROM CHINKY TO PALANI TO  
ROBERT BACK TO PALANI, IS THERE A REASON) Actually, when I was with  
Chinky it seemed that (END OF TAPE)