

Nana I Na Loea Hula
Kumu Hula: Ellen Castillo
Interviewer: Lovina LePendur
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(YOUR FULL GIVEN NAME?) Ellen Ku'uilei Puinaole Puka'ikapuaokalani Smith Castillo. (NAME OF YOUR HALAU IS PART OF YOUR NAME?) Right, well when I decided to teach, I thought of part of a Hawaiian name, so I thought I'd be nice to use Puka'i, Puka'ikapuaokalani, being that my grandmother, that's my father's mother, she was a dancer, she was a kumu dancer one that never danced out but back, you know back door or for special people, so you know she was never allowed to come out, so I thought it would be proper to use her name, but she was know as Puka'i and I guess in the days of old, I guess they always cut the name short and they never used the whole name, when I decided to use Puka'i for my halau name, I'd better go and research it a little bit more. So, I got in touch with one of my grand aunts Bridges from Laie, that's really, that's Cy's grandmother, so we were ohana, because she knows the family background. She has the genealogy. She knows Puka'i real well. So, she told me the story on it and we got it researched on the name and she said its more than Puka'i, so we went to research and found that it was Puka'ikapuaokalani and so I thought that was nice, so I thought I would use

it. (SO YOU GAVE THAT NAME TO YOUR HALAU?) Yes, and hopefully she'd agree with me on that. (YOU TEACH PRESENTLY AND DANCE IN KAILUA RIGHT?) Right. Keolu-Enchanted Lakes. (CAN YOU TELL ME THE AGE OF YOUR STUDENTS?) Well, my youngest that I've taught was 2 1/2, so it depends on the individual, the oldest, the seniors, 75, 80 years old. (YOU TEACH BOTH KAHIKO AND AUANA?) Kahiko and auana. (OLI ALSO?) Yes. (FOR OLI DO YOU TEACH SENSE OF DANCE OR TEACH OLI THAT YOU COMPOSE?) I try to put it with something that, I try to put something together if we can, whatever, whatever I would want to present, I try to put it together in that sense. (HOW MANY YEARS HAVE YOU BEEN TEACHING?) I graduated with Auntie Bella. I had my certificate in '58. 1958. I've been teaching, I've been teaching before that because I was teaching with Auntie Bella. You know with Auntie Bella, she wouldn't let anyone teach, unless she saw. So I had to teach with her a couple of years before getting my certificate, so I was an alakai. (DO YOU REMEMBER WHAT AGE YOU STARTED TO DANCE HULA?) Not really age, but around 9, very young. (DO YOU REMEMBER WHO YOUR FIRST HULA TEACHER WAS?) My first hula teacher was really Auntie Bella. I mean, I always..from 9 that was 10... (DO YOU REMEMBER WHERE SHE USED TO TEACH?) Yah, on Kalama street and I think, yah, she still has her place there, her daughter now

stays there with Uncle Bill and she's been there for years, so were there right at home and at times she had a big empty lot on the side of her house, we all danced on her lawn right in the yard. Yah, 30 some odd kids right in the yard and we danced right out there. (AND SHE TAUGHT YOU KAHIKO AND AUANA?) No, she was strictly auana and later on in the year she taught Tahitian, but when I first learned it, it was hula auana, she didn't care for the kahiko at that time and she was very auana, but her kahiko came from her mother. Her mother was strictly kahiko, but Auntie Bella, she was strictly auana. (HOW LONG DID YOU STAY UNDER HER?) I would say about 15 years. (DO YOU REMEMBER HER STYLE?) I don't know of going back from anywhere else, but I only remember what I learned from her and its a style that is graceful, it's very.. different from a lot. And it was my first teach too although I danced with a lot of people, you go with friends and you dance with them and you don't really...I never found that I like another style because you always come back. You know we followed, we had workshops, we had different places you'd go, but it was always the style that she had was so graceful, it flowed, it was... (DID SHE TALK ABOUT HER KUMU HULA BEFORE?) I knew her mom was her kumu hula and she studied under that and I understood that as I grew up and if I am not mistaken, it was Roseabella Kumaoi, you can correct me on that and she

was strictly kahiko and I guess because she was and she had to learn all of that when she taught her own she just didn't want to do kahiko and just fell in love with the auana. (WHY DID YOU LEAVE HER?) I went on, to my own, this is when I taught. And I branched out on my own because I could teach with Aunty Bella. (DO YOU REMEMBER OTHER TEACHERS THAT YOU TOOK FROM?) Yah, I took my kahiko under Aunty Lani Kalama and she's the one that got me into the kahiko style so I found it...it was a little hard for me to get acquired to the kahiko because I found it a little different and it was to me, I enjoyed it. The difference.... (YOU TOOK WORKSHOPS?) It was at the Kamehameha Schools. (THAT'S WHERE YOU LEARNED YOU CHANTING FROM?) Aunty Lani Kalama and the kahiko. (DID YOU UNIKI FROM AUNTY BELLA?) I got my certificate from Aunty Bella in 1958. (HOW DID YOU BECOME A TEACHER?) I just decided to...I had to show her that I could do all of this. So by getting up there I had to teach her classes. I had to, she gave me classes and also private classes. You know people would call for private lessons, that was my classes I had to take for her and I had to teach all these classes. Couple of the lessons...the first few lessons that I taught she was there, but I just had to get up there and teach and after that she just let me go and I taught her classes for her. I went out on the road, she had private classes all over that I would go to their homes and

teach for her. Those were my first classes, private lessons. Well my first lesson teaching was at Aunty Bella's when she had this new enrollment for 30 somewhat students all started from scratch. That was my first class, her class that I took, that I taught for her, yah, I taught at Aunty Bella's first and before she'd give me a certificate or anything. And then after teaching for her, with her, I started to branch out on my own. My first halau was on Uluniu street in Kailua. And that I branched out in 1960 or 1959. I branched out on my own. (WHAT GIVES YOU THE MOST JOY IN TEACHING TODAY?) My most joy is when I see my students perform. You know you work so hard for, with your students everything is striving to get where you want to and it's really not a joy because it's work until you see them up on stage when they perform and that is the beauty. People wonder why you keep doing what you're doing, competition after competition and how can you do that. How can I do that when I see the girls up on stage and the beauty, the finished product you put up and present on stage to see what they can present to everyone and that is the beauty and that makes hula even more. The beauty that just comes out of it, motivates you and you just want to keep going and that is the greatest joy. (DO YOU GIVE CERTIFICATE TO YOUR STUDENTS?) I have and I have given a few of my students certificate, not for teaching or anything like

that. It's a certificate that they have been with me and danced with me for the length of time that they have and that they have learned, but not as teachers, but I have done that only once. (HAVE YOU EVER TRAINED SOMEONE TO BECOME A KUMU?) Not yet, but I do plan to. (DID YOU GIVE A LOT OF CERTIFICATE OUT?) I have given seven, just seven so it's not too many, no. (WHAT DO YOU REQUIRE TO HAVE A CERTIFICATE?) So many years being with me just being involved in the hula, the halau, being part of the halau and working with me. (THEY BECOME LIKE YOUR ALAKAI?) Yes, but some of them don't continue it, but some of them have gone to the mainland. I've tried to train one of the girls. (WHAT IS YOUR ADVICE FOR YOUNG KUMU HULA?) Well, so many things are going around today, it's for them to strive for it and keep doing, getting into, I try to get them to get in to the Hawaiiana you know the language because I feel like such a great loss because I have from my family growing up speaking Hawaiian, you know Hawaiiana at home. But now coming over to the city, you don't have it here, I have completely lost it. I feel like such a great loss you know, like talk about gold. And I think that that is it, that I stress to the students if you can take it pick it up at the school and continue on. The language is very much important for them to get that because you can always use it and you can always fall back on that. (HULA KAHIKO OF TODAY?) I think

hula has changed a great deal, but then if you look at all the halaus everyone teaches differently you know so, although the changes... I think there's a good and bad in it both. I think it depends on the individuals and how you, you yourself will continue it. (DEFINITION OF HULA KAHIKO?)

Well, I describe hula kahiko as being... you mean in dance format or..The dance of old, the dance of old, and not so much as the auana graceful, you know the grace in it. I like my kahiko straight and not..traditional. You see everyone is different, I don't like the smiles on my kahiko, I like it straight. (SOME PEOPLE THINK THAT HULA KAHIKO IS HULA THAT WAS DONE 100 YEARS AGO AND SHOULD BE DONE THE SAME TODAY) No way we can be doing that. We try to and you know you can't. I don't see it being done any, anywhere here now and you know it's not even it's changed a great deal. [To me it should be more sacred, I feel it that way, it's a religious thing, of the dance of auana. I like to keep it straight, I like to keep it very..although it is entertainment in a sense, but not so much as open, you now free style, but it should be more a sacred thing, a very religious part of you and I like my kahiko straight. I don't like.. although they say you can smile in kahiko which is alright, you can if you don't want to that's fine, you can express yourself other ways, but I don't like the...I like mine very serious, I like it that way. (DO YOU HAVE A FAVORITE

CHANT?) No, they're all favorite for me, I just like... (DO YOU COMPOSE?)

I try to. I did with a friend, yah, Mahoe, that has helped me in putting together a chant for my home and that I was raised with kupuna, Puka'i and that's for, in hula and he helped me, so please put his name there, Mahoe, that he helped me. He was from Waiahole and he helped me put this kahiko together for my kupuna, Puka'i. And this speaks of my home in, my home that I was raised in, in Kaupu, Maui, and all the things as I remembered as I grew up. (DID YOU EVER DANCE THE DANCE YET?) Yes we did. We did it for, for Merry Monarch couple years back, I loved it, it's beautiful. (DO YOU PREFER KAHIKO OR AUANA?) I love auana, I like, I love kahiko, but I feel like I have to work extra hard on kahiko. I don't know why that is but I feel that way, I feel like I have to, it's more strenuous on kahiko, but then after it's finished it's a relief, after we see. (DO YOU HAVE A FAVORITE SONG IN AUANA?) Kamoikapulani is one of my favorites among many others, but there's a lot, I just love it, like Tahitian too. I teach Tahitian too, you know and I'm still learning. (OTHER THAN HULA?) I teach Tahitian and Maori. (YOU ARE INTO POLYNESIAN DANCE?) Yes, because I love it. And I learned all of this really from Aunty Bella. You know and I felt I was in an environment of what Aunty Bella got and I just love it. Putting it on shows especially when you go out and put shows on it's really nice to have

the variety. So I liked it, I love the Tahitian. (YOU SERVED AS A JUDGE BEFORE?) Yes, I went to San Francisco for Uncle Joe Kaholaliu's festival there and also in Hayward at Ehulani's Oikala. (HOW DID YOU LIKE BEING A JUDGE?) I love it. I think it's great to be a judge. I think everyone should have a chance to do that. All the kumu hula should have a chance to be up there and get a taste of it and then we would really appreciate when we get up and have our haumana up entering competitions, then we would appreciate having the judges there because we know what they have to go through and we understand that and I think all kumu hula at one time or another should have that chance. (DO YOU HAVE ANYONE THAT YOU CONSIDER A HULA MASTER?) Well, Auntie Bella will always be the one and another that I enjoyed watching was Iolani Luahine. (WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT HULA WORKSHOPS?) I think it's great, I think, I love it. I think it is good, they've had a few before at Kamehameha Schools. (KUMU HULA OR HAUMANA?) I would like one for kumu hula, I think for the kumu hula. Well, if you need to share that's fine, you know but I prefer to have a workshop for language. As far as the hula, chanting, I think, the kahiko, chanting, yeh the language. I think that the language. I think a lot of us want to go into oli, how do we get into that and I think that would be... The language will give you everything. So you understand that .. The young

ones now they are growing up and they're feeling it too, and they're getting into the language. I have a lot that really feel that they want to be a part of it and they want it. Not until you get older you realize that you wish before when you were younger... you want to grasp everything and there's only a limit amount of things that you can do.