

Kent Ghirard

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I was born in San Francisco, California on September 1, 1918. I was twelve when I first became interested in the hula. My parents came over here on the old "Malolo" on a regular tourist vacation. Even at that age the minute I saw the hula I <sup>LOVED IT</sup> flipped out. It was the Bray family that I saw and I just took right to it. I bought some old 78 <sup>RPM</sup> hula records and I even bought a hula skirt. During my college years I learned how to play the uke from Hawaii students up at Stanford and I learned how to sing from listening to the records. I came over here in 1938 for summer school at the University but it was just an excuse to get over here.

"MARGUERITE"

In those days the Kodak Hula Show had just started and I was there every week. Every Boat Day I would go down and watch the dancers and listen to the music. That's when I started to pick things up on my own. The first person who taught me anything was <sup>ME</sup> Margerite Duane who had danced hula professionally <sup>ON THE MAINLAND</sup> and was a very good friend of Hilo Hattie. I was twenty-one at the time and we both were living <sup>UP</sup> in San Francisco. So it was through Margerite that I got my foundation and once I got the basics I just fell into it. I felt it inside, and as long as I could get a translation I could make up the rest because I knew the basic motions.

In 1947 I came to Hawaii to stay and <sup>ME</sup> Margerite and I took lessons from the Bill Lincoln Studio. At that time Bill Lincoln was the premier writer and singer of hula songs. Everyone was dancing to Bill Lincoln's songs. My teacher was Alice Garner and it is this style of dance that I am carrying on.

During that same year I began teaching at the Betty Lei Studio. It was located in Waikiki and movie stars like Shirley Temple would go there to learn hula. <sup>OWNER</sup> Margerite was living there and helping Dorothy Campbell teach hula and I was working in a Waikiki Hawaiian record store. I would hang around the Studio because of Margerite and I began to sit in on her classes. I began to pick things up, suggest ideas, and then help put on her little recitals.

After about a year I began to teach groups after hours at the record store when we closed at five o'clock. I never really made any money teaching but I <sup>ENJOYED IT SO MUCH</sup> never had any financial worries either. I was interested in putting on a good compact Hawaiian show that was appreciated by a receptive audience. The Kent Ghirard style is the style of the 1930's and 40's. It is a very simple style that keeps close to the basic steps. When I first saw hula performed I was attracted to the groups that relied on a very simple style. I felt it gave the dancer more of an opportunity to express emotion without being able to rely on the gimmicks of a fast pace and complicated motions. Of course today all of that has been turned upside down. The new kahiko of today is exciting and vital and I'm all for it, but it should be clarified and classified in a category all its own, otherwise what has been passed down from generation to generation, and what has been created last month, will become hopelessly muddled.

I never had a <sup>wealth</sup> of knowledge. What I brought to the hula was all <sup>FROM MY</sup> heart and a love for the <sup>MUSIC</sup> dance. I had seen hula at some of the big hotels and I felt there had to be a higher standard for the tourists. I did away with jewelry, inconsistent costume, differing hairstyles, and I <sup>TRIED TO BRING</sup> brought in a more professional style of staging. My greatest thrill still today is to perform in front of Hawaiians and be accepted, although I am haole. *when I hear the old song of "my era", played in the old style, preferably with steel guitar and a high lead voice, it still brings tears to my eyes.*



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In those days the Kodak Hula Show had just started and I was there every week. Every Boat Day I would go down and watch the dancers and listen to the music. That's when I started to pick things up on my own. The first person who taught me anything was Margarite Duane who had danced hula professionally and was a very good friend of Hilo Hattie. I was twenty-one at the time and we both were living up in San Francisco. So it was through Margarite that I got my foundation and once I got the basics I just fell into it. I felt it inside and as long as I could get a translation I could make up the rest because I knew the basic motions.

In 1947 I came to Hawaii to stay and Margarite and I took lessons from the Bill Lincoln Studio. At that time Bill Lincoln was the premier writer and singer of hula songs. Everyone was dancing to Bill Lincoln's songs. My teacher was ~~Alice Garner~~ and it is this style of dance that I am carrying on.

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During that same year I began teaching at the Betty Lei Studio. It was located in Waikiki and movie stars like Shirley Temple would go there to learn hula. Margarite was living there and helping Dorothy Campbell teach hula and I was working in a Waikiki Hawaiian record store. I would hang around the Studio because of Margarite and I began to sit in on her classes. I began to pick things up, suggest ideas, and then help put on her little recitals.

After about a year I began to teach groups after hours at the record store when we closed at five o'clock. I never really made any money teaching but I never had any financial worries either. I was interested in putting on a good compact Hawaiian show that was appreciated by a receptive audience. The Kent Ghirard style is the style of the 1930's and 40's. It is a very simple style that keeps close to the basic steps. When I first saw hula performed I was attracted to the groups that relied on a very simple style. I felt it gave the dancer more of an opportunity to express emotion without being able to rely on the gimmicks of a fast pace and complicated motions. Of course today all of that has been turned upside down. The new kahiko of today is exciting and vital and I'm all for it but it should be clarified and classified in a category all its own otherwise what has been passed down from generation to generation, and what has been created last month will become hopelessly muddled.

I never had a <sup>wealth</sup> ~~wealth~~ of knowledge. What I brought to the hula was all heart and a love for the dance. I had seen hula at some of the big hotels and I felt there had to be a higher standard for the tourists. I did away with jewelry, inconsistent costume, differing hairstyles, and I brought in a more professional style of staging. My greatest thrill still today is to perform in front of Hawaiians and be accepted although I am haole.



Kent Ghirard

My original hula studio was called the Hula Nani hula studio. The dancers were called the Hula Nani Girls. My present group which was revived about two and a half years ago is called the Hula Nani Alumni. We try to revive the hula of the forties and fifties. We do it for fun and not money.

I was born in San Francisco , California, Sept. 1, 1918. I was twelve when I first became interested in the hula when my parents came over here on the old Malolo on a regular old tourist vacation. It was about 1931. Even at that age, the minute I saw the hula I flipped out. It was the Bray family that I saw and I just took right to it. I bought some old 78 hula records and I even bought a hula skirt. From that time on I always liked Hawaii, Hawaiian music. During my college years I learned how to play the uke from other students up at Stanford who were from Hawaii. We formed a group up there just for kicks and I learned how to sing from listening to the records. I came over here in '38 for summer school at the University. It was just an excuse to get over here. In those days the Kodak Hula School had just started. I was there every week. Every Boat Day I would go down and watch the dancers and listen to the music. I began to pick things up on my own at that time.

The first person who taught me anything was Margarite Duane. She taught me in San Francisco where we both lived at the time. She was an established dance instructor. She had danced professionally and was a very good friend of Hilo Hattie and many of the old timers and she had been to Hawaii many times. So it was through her that I got my real basic instruction. I was about 21 when I started.

Once I got the basics I just fell into it. I just had a knack for it. I felt it inside and as long as I could get a translation and I knew the basic motions I could make up the rest myself. I'd much rather do it on my own than be taught because I am not a good learner. I have a very hard time when someone tries to teach me an actual routine. I have a hard time retaining it. In '47 and '48 Margarite and I took lessons from Bill Lincoln's studio. Bill Lincoln and Margarite were the two great influences in my style of dance. My teacher was Alice Keawekane Garner, and sometimes some of Bill's dancers would help out and teach us. It is this style of dance that I am carrying on. At that time Bill Lincoln was number one in singing and writing hula songs. Everyone was dancing to Bill Lincoln's songs.



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I began teaching at the Betty Lei Hula Studio which was on Lewers Road. My friend Margarita was living there and helping Korothy K. Campbell teach hula. It was the only studio in Waikiki at that time and movie stars like Shirley Temple would go there to learn hula. I had a lot of influence from Hawaiian music because I was working in a Hawaiian record store right in Waikiki. I would hang around the Betty Lei Studio because of Margarite and began to sit in on her classes. I began to pick things up, suggest ideas, and then I began to help put on her little recitals. After about a year I began to teach groups after hours at the record store when we closed at five o'clock, and that's when I began to get started. I really never made any money teaching, but I never had any financial worries either. I kept working at the record store and later on I played for dance bands but I never considered my hula career as having to make sacrifices. When I came to Hawaii in '47 to stay I had been surrounded by Hawaiians in San Francisco. I would go to Hawaiian nightclubs to hear the music and see the dance. It all fell into place, I just loved it all and I didn't have to work hard for it.

I'm interested in putting on a good show, I'm interested in entertaining. I'm not a star and I've never professed to be one. Putting on a compact Hawaiian show that is appreciated by a receptive audience is my great joy.

In my day I didn't even know the word ~~auwana~~ auwana. Modern hula was the term then. The Kent Ghirard is the style of the 30's and 40's. It is a very simple style that is kept close to the basics. We never try to do anything fancy. When I first saw hula performed I was attracted to the groups that relied on a very simple style. I felt it gave the dancer more of an opportunity to express emotion without being able to rely on the gimmicks of a fast pace and complicated motion. Of course today all of that has been turned upside down.

This was the basic style that was being danced when I was learning. The big change has been the predominance of kahiko and ~~how~~ how the kahiko has been turned into a very exciting dance. When I was ~~learning~~ learning, Tahitian dance was first starting to appear in Waikiki and we all thought how is the hula going to compete with this/.

The hula kahiko of the 30's and 40's is subtle to the extent that it is dull if the audience does not have the feeling or the knowledge to appreciate it. It didn't have the variety or the action that the hitian or even the Maori dances have. Nowadays the hula movement of today are exciting and very innovative. I'm all for it and I think it's great. I have no objections about ~~this~~ this except one and Nona Beamer stated it perfectly. There should be two classifications for kahiko and modern kahiko. The boundary between the two should be that the modern kahiko is chants and motions composed today in the kahiko style. The traditional kahiko hulas that were taught to me by my kumu were danced the exact same way by Kawena Palani, Iolani Luahine, ~~Lokalia~~ Lokalia Montgomery. I consider those three to be great kumus and I know for a fact they did not change the kahiko that had been taught to them. The new kahiko is exciting and vital, and I'm all for it but it should be clarified and clarified in a category all of its own otherwise what has been passed down from generation to generation and what has been created last month will become hopelessly muddled.

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I ~~learned~~ learned three hula pahu from Cecelia Kau. I did away with jewelry and inconsistent costume hair style and staggering. We were the first Hawaiian group to go to Japan in 1955. We performed in Nichigeki theatre in Tokyo. One musician, 4 girls, and myself were backed by hundreds of Japanese girls in celophane skirts dancing on tiers that stretched up to the ceiling. The audience jammed the theatre and cheered like we were the Beatles. We were put down for performing "~~airport~~ "airport hula" but we had to make a living and we never jazzed it up.