

# Ma'iki remembered

By Paula Durbin

**I**F THE late Ma'iki Aiu could see hula flourishing today, said her daughter Coline, "My mother would be in celebration."

Considered by many to have laid the foundation for the Hawaiian renaissance, Ma'iki Aiu will be celebrated herself by Hālau Hula o Ma'iki when the dancers perform her legacy in "*Nani Ke Ao Nei, This is a Beautiful World*," scheduled for Aug. 19 at the Neal Blaisdell Concert Hall. "We will try to bring to life the Ma'iki who is no longer here," said Coline Aiu, who directs the 350-dancer school her mother founded 54 years ago. "Many people now know my mother only through their kumu," she continued, referring to the graduates her mother pro-



Mae Kamāmalu Klein as a Ma'iki Aiu dancer poses at Hānaiakamalama in Nu'uuanu.

PHOTO COURTESY: MAE KLEIN

duced, who are teaching today. "They all try to be faithful to her memory, and each one remembers her differently."

Few could remember more facets of this hula legend, however, than the student who became her kokua kumu. Mae Klein met Ma'iki Aiu when she took her tiny daughters to the hālau for lessons. Aiu's expert scan took in the young mother's potential, and Klein ended up dancing with Aiu's hālau from 1960 to 1984. "I was part of the peak years, loving every moment of it. We were strong, strong dancers. We knew 'auana and we began to learn kahiko."

Back then, Hālau Hula o Ma'iki performed at Waikīkī's Queen's Surf, the Moana, the Royal Hawaiian and the Princess Kai'ulani, among other select venues. The hālau was especially noted for the taste and elegance of its costuming. "Your wardrobe built up with every show," Klein recalled. "We ended up with more than 50 outfits. The first one you owned was a blue and white Alfred Shaheen holomu'u; if you didn't continue, your could always use it. That was very akamai on her part. Her gift was combining colors. For one show she had us do a rose pink gown with red carnation leis. Pink and red. Who ever heard of that? But under the light it was magic."

Aiu wanted to retire when she married musician Kahuanu Lake in 1972, but her elders directed her to first pass her knowledge of ancient hula to a new generation. "There was this ad in the papers calling the students back, the 14 girls dancing together in 1963," Klein recalled. "But because she couldn't get all of us, she opened the class to the public, and that's when Robert (Cazimero)

and these other people came in."

By then, Klein had interrupted her studies with Aiu, and she hesitated before seizing the opportunity to master kahiko – and the gamut of crafts necessary to its costuming and instrumentation. But five weeks into the course, Klein decided to join. "I called her that morning and low and behold the phone rang three times – she worked in three, five and seven – and she picked it up and said, 'I was waiting for your call.' How did she know it was me? I said I would come into class if I could sit in the back and try to catch up. So she said OK."

"It was hard. The trials were many, but it's OK because it was a test of resilience. She taught me so much," Klein said. "Watching her with little children, for example, as they learned how to make leis. When the student gave her the lei, she would make the little child feel so special, like that was the most precious gift. She was part of the court's ho'oponopono and she actually took people into her home to help them straighten their lives out."

**A**fter her 'ūniki with Aiu's first class of kumu, Klein became a hālau resource. "She was there throughout our training and helped us through the 'ūniki process," confirmed Vicky Holt Takamine, who graduated with Aiu's next group of kumu, known as the 'Ilima class. "We still look to her for advice." As she promised Aiu she would just four days before the kumu's untimely death of a massive heart attack in June of 1984, Klein now teaches in Kāne'ohe. She has 15 'ūniki graduates of her own, the most recent of whom are Kalei Aarona-Lorenzo and



Kumu Hula Ma'iki Aiu Lake in 1983 in her Puck's Alley studio during one of her last interviews. The portrait in the background is of Momi Aaron Kepilino.

Ella Kawahinehanalima Tokunaga-Aki.

Klein last performed with Hālau Hula o Ma'iki in the October 1984 posthumous tribute to Aiu. In their late teacher's honor, more than 100 former students committed not only to the sold-out concert but also to stringing strands of multicolored plumeria into a curtain that rose on them when the program started. "For all its simplicity, it was unforgettably elegant," said Manu Boyd who was in the audience.

The Ma'iki magic will be part of the Aug. 19 concert, Coline Aiu promises. "Those who have not seen the hālau perform lately," she said, "will be pleased to see Auntie Ma'iki's tradition is as alive today as in their memory." ■