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Leiana Long Woodside

I was No. 7 of seven girls in my family and was born and reared on Maui in an area called Kauahea; the same area which Kahekili used as practice grounds for combat. Our house was situated just below Kahekili's heiau "Hale Ki'i". My father was Henry Keao Long, originally from Kilauea, Kauai, and my mother was Ida Pakulani Kaaihue-Kaianui long. Mama was a Maui girl and in her early years was a hula student of Kamawae of Maui, and later, ^{she} herself, became a kumu hula. Therefore, I don't suppose I had a choice about learning the hula. Everyone in the family...brothers and sisters...learned the hula under Mama's tutorage. Mama was a very strict kumu hula, ^{and I suppose} (I have yet to meet someone of my vintage or earlier whose kumu hula was not strict). We had to dance with bended knees, elbows up, head turned toward the extended hand with eyes looking up beyond the finger tips. If our basic hula exercises were not exactly as she taught them, then the pu'ili was the next boss. It came flying so quickly, I used to swear she had the fastest hands on Maui. As children, my sister and I used to do the hula on the heiau "Hale Ki'i". Also, I remember seeing Tom Hi'ona as a young boy dancing the hula on the same heiau. He lived down the road from us.

I remember asking my mother about her hula training. I had not yet heard of the book, "The Unwritten Literature of Hawaii" on Maui, and at my probing and questioning she unfolded a story which seemed to me at that time, embarrassing, strange and exotic. She mentioned the ai lolo ceremony, and while I did not see the ritual, I actually, (on several occasions) saw her picking at the po'o pua'a and eating the "lolo". She also mentioned the cleansing rituals of bathing in the sea at midnight and returning to the halau which was an open lanai with coconut leaves for the roof...in the middle of that lanai was a fire pit around which the hula students slept on lauhala mats with their feet towards the fire. She said they were taught that the strength of the hula was with the feetwork, and if the feet was strong the rest of the dancer was good. She also told me:

"Today, you go to a hula halau and learn the basic steps and hula choreography all together with your kumu hula, but in my days we dreamt our hula. When I fell asleep I heard drumming and chanting and in my dreams see myself dancing a whole new hula, over and over, all night until the crow of the rooster and approaching dawn. I awoke and remembered everything...

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the chant and dance...shown to me in the dream. The next day at hula class the kumu would pa'i his ipu, the po'o pua'a would kahea and we all danced in unison...the same choreography... as I ~~as I~~ dreamt it the night before. If a student appeared unsure of the dance, the kumu knew that student went "auana" the night before and that student had to go through a whole cleansing ritual again or was asked to leave the halau".

She also mentioned that in her time the ages from about 3 or 4 up to about twelve years old were considered the prime age for hula dancing. They were reserved for the ancient kapu-kapu or sacred temple dances because they were believed to be clean and pure...virgins...and, therefore, dedicated to the Gods. Dances of the older girls were ~~more subtle~~ ^{a little more descriptive} with leanings towards the "auana"...as she said, "they were pua ua ako ia" ^{of plucked flowers}. ^{suggestive in the movement}

For many years, I kept these accounts of my mother's hidden with mixed feelings. ~~Many years later,~~ In 1951, I went to the Library of Hawaii and asked if they had any books on traditional Hawaiian chants and dances, and the librarian handed me, "The Unwritten Literature of Hawaii". Imagine my surprise when feasting my eyes on this recorded aspect of Hawaii's history. My whole inside just surged with understanding, pride, respect and love for my mother. (He Hawaii koko piha, (a full blooded Hawaiian).) ^{forward}

Another memory I have is watching Mama's hula classes and was especially fascinated by one of her students Alice Mahi, (later Alice Keawekane-Garner). At the age of 5 or 6, and in my fancy, childlike dreams, I thought she was the most beautiful hula dancer and I would walk around the yard emulating her hula as my mother instructed her, imagining that when I grew up I was going to be a ~~beautiful~~ ^{beautiful} hula dancer just like Alice Mahi. But as I grew older, my idol ~~was~~ ^{became} my sister, Mae Loebenstein. At that time, she was dancing at the Royal Hawaiian Hotel with Mama and Daddy Bray. Several times a year she would return to Maui and my mother wanted us to keep abreast of what was happening with the hula in Honolulu, so my sister Mae held hula classes every day. She was very strict and a perfectionist. Back then, the Royal Hawaiian Hotel was "the" spot in the Hawaiian Islands where the elite from all over the world met and because Mae danced there, ~~which was quite prestigious in those days,~~ I wanted to learn everything she had to teach us and to emulate every motion she taught to the nth degree.

In my early years, most of my dancing was performed in the basement of the Mormon Church in Wailuku or at the Territorial Building in Kahului

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where Mama held all of her hula concerts (which included all of her children) and, of course, private parties with family and friends. It was at these parties that I saw many different styles of the hula performed, by my father, who was quite good with the "oli" and hula kolani, and other oldtimers, both men and women.

During World War II, with some of the kids in the neighborhood, we formed a hula troupe, and with the USO (United Service Organization) we went around Maui entertaining the servicemen. My sisters, Mae Loebenstein and Kahili Cummings did most of the choreography for our shows.

I started dancing professionally in 1946 here in Honolulu for Lena Guerrero. I lived next door to her and she asked me to train with her, and that's when my hula career started. I worked as a secretary for Grace Brothers, Ltd., during the day and danced at night. We danced at many locations in one night. You might start for the cocktail hour at a private party, go to the nine o'clock floor show at the Moana Hotel, then go to the eleven o'clock floor show at the Royal Hawaiian Hotel. Costume change was made in the car as we drove to each place. When we arrived at the hotel, we just grabbed our hula implements and ran from the car onto the stage, just in time to the accompaniment of the musical fanfare. In those days the kumu hula thought nothing of sharing her haumana with other hula troupes and as a result I studied informally and danced with many other kumu hula... such as Alice Mahi Keawekane-Garner, Bill Lincoln, Joseph Kahaulilio, Sally Woods, Iolani Luahine, Vickie I'i. We even helped our Kumu hula choreograph some of our hula.

About 1947 I started my first hula class teaching a group of Punahou School teachers. One of them lived in an apartment across the campus and we met there for classes. ~~Then there was teaching the family on Maui...~~ sisters, cousins, nieces... Also, friends were great for calling up for free hula lessons. There were hula classes at St. Francis Hospital for some of the staff members; also instructed in the public schools, as a Hawaiian Artist in the Schools... my hobby as a hula dancer and-instructor has been most rewarding.

I have heard say that some kumu hula feel their way is the only way to dance, that traditional dances and motions have been handed down from generation to generation and must be kept unchanged. If so, why do we have such a great variety

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in style and motion of a particular dance? How monotonous the hula would be if all hula was passed down without change. Surely, our ancestors must have created on their own or we would not have such beauty in our culture. Today, the hula is being taught to people of all races, some with more interest than the Hawaiians themselves, and the wonderful thing about it is that the hula has helped these other races to understand the Hawaiian ^{a little more} socially and culturally. We have lost a lot but we still have a lot left. If the kupuna ^{were} ~~was~~ here today, surely they would ~~be~~ writing chants and perhaps choreographing dances about things that inspire them in today's world. May this same inspiration and tradition be allowed to continue in our young people of today.

Lei Woodside

A memory I have is that of watching my mother teaching Alice Mahi, Loyal Garner and Alicia Smith's mother. I used to walk around the yard and in my dreams I promised myself that one day I was going to be a beautiful hula dancer just like Alice Mahi. Alice Mahi was my first idol and then when my sister, Mae Loebenstein, came back from Honolulu she became my idol as well. I think what I admired about their dancing was that their motions were precise and articulate. They had poise and strength in their dancing, there was no sloppiness in their style. And they had a smile that just expressed everything that they were feeling inside. They took pride in what they were doing with just the tilt of their heads and I told myself that's the way I'm going to dance. Alice Kamehame (Garner) (Alicia Smith)

I was the seventh of seven girls in my family. I was born and raised on Maui and we lived just below Kahekili's heiau. The area had been used as Kahekili's practice ground for combat. It was a big plain confined by hills like a horseshoe. Our house back then was the only one in there and all of this was our playground. I don't think I had a choice about the hula. My mother was a kumu hula and we just had to get up there and dance. The Territorial Building in Kahului was where Maui held all of their concerts in the Thirties and everyone including my brothers had to dance in my mother's shows.

The War came along and so we all joined the U.S.O. (United Service Organization) and did our bit for the War. My mother put together a little show with my sisters and some of the kids in the neighborhood, and we would go from camp to camp entertaining the servicemen.

My mother's kumu was a Hawaiian man named Kamawa'e who lived in Piiana. I remember my mother explaining her training to me but I had never heard of books like "The Unwritten Literature of Hawaii" on Maui so I found what she was saying strange and exotic and at time embarrassing. She told me of the ailolo, the kahea komo, and the cleansing rituals. Today they practice the basic steps over and over again but in my mother's time the hula was learned through dreams. The halau was an open lanai with coconut leaves on the top. In the middle of the room was a fire pit. The haumana lived and slept with their kumu and when they slept their feet were always toward the fire because they believed their strength came from their feet. At night when she fell asleep she would hear and see in her dreams chanting and drumming, and she would see herself dancing. She would dream throughout the whole night until dawn and when the rooster crowed she would rise and remember everything that had been shown to her in the dream. She would know exactly how to do the chant and dance. Her kumu would rise, bang on the ipu and the students would all kahea. Then they would all rise and dance what they had dreamt. Piiana

My second kumu was my sister, Mae Loebenstein, who was dancing at the Royal Hawaiian Hotel with the Bray family, & she would come to Maui to vacation several times a year. My mother wanted us to keep abreast of what was happening in the hula in Honolulu so my sister would hold classes every day. The Royal Hawaiian back then was "the" spot in the Hawaiian Islands so I wanted to learn everything she had to teach us. I wanted to emulate every motion she had to the nth degree so I tried very hard to be exactly like her. ABD

In 1945 I married and moved to Honolulu to live with my sister, Mae, in Kaimuki. She was a neighbor of Lena Guerrero and it was through Lena that I began to perform. Lena asked me to train with her and when I turned twenty-one I began dancing with her hula group "The Waikiki Girls" at the Royal. In those days you had to dance in many locations in one night. You might start at the cocktail hour at the Moana Hotel, go to a nine o'clock floor show at the Royal Hawaiian, then go to the eleven o'clock show at Don the Beachcomber's. In the end we had to change in the car as we drove to each place. When you arrived at the hotel you just grabbed your things and ran from the car onto the stage just in time to the accompaniment for the musical fanfare. Back in the Forties and Fifties the halaus were called hula troupes and the kumus thought nothing of sharing their haumana. As a result it was easy for me to study informally under people like Alice Mahi, Iolani Luahine, Joseph Kahaulilio, and Sally Wood Naluai. OF

I began to teach when I turned twenty-one at a Punahou teacher's apartment across from Punahou School. I encourage my haumana to create what they feel. Some of the old kumu feel their way is the only way of dancing. They say that traditional motions and dances have been handed down from generation to generation without changes. I don't believe that's the way it was done because it doesn't explain the great variety we have in our chants and dances. If everything had been passed down without change our dance would be so monotonous. Our ancestors must have created on their own or we wouldn't have such beauty in the culture. MUST

Today the hula is being learned by people of all races, some with more interest than the Hawaiians themselves. The wonderful thing about the hula is that it has helped other races understand the Hawaiian socially and culturally. They say we have lost a lot but we still have a lot left. In any case we can't be any worse off than our ancestors. If our ancestors were here today they would be writing chants about things that inspire them of the modern world so why can't our young people be allowed to continue that tradition?