

Bella Richards

My first teacher ^{outside the family} was Bella Koamoa from Keokaha. (The only kind of hula my father saw was the naughty kind that's why he hated the hula.)

My mother was taught by ^{Elizabeth} Louise Beamer. My mother taught me the bass & the piano. She was my first teacher in the hula. My mother didn't teach us chant so she sent us Auntie Edith Kamukahi's mother, Hula Kalihio at that time was called Olapa.

My mother stopped teaching hula for awhile and so I went to Bella Koamoa. My father used to see a singer named Haleloke perform w/ Arthur Godfrey & "Hawaii Calls". Her mother used to give luau for tourists.

When my father died my mother said nobody must mourn so she took us to a kumu. I was eight years old.

Bella Koamoa taught us the ten basic steps, no chanting in the ancient. Some of the modern-day hula kalihio today looks like fighting more than dancing.

I went to Edith's mother when I was 14 years old. If you talked back to the kumu in those days you would get whacked with the pili & if you went home & told your mother she would give you a whack. I studied under Auntie Edith 2 years. In those days you could not question the kumu. You just did what they told you to the beat or they're lost.

told you. Today's student needs to know
When I was being taught we had to listen to the kumu because they gave
us no choice to help learn the dance.

When I was young we were taught that you should leave what has been passed
down as it is. If you change it you will be kahehid forever. But today
all the motions for kahehid is created. I am not saying this is right
or wrong but they are not the same motions to the ancient dances
that I saw performed by the kumu hula of my time. I cannot judge
the contemporary groups today ^{in kahiko} because what I consider important in a
dancer is not considered important anymore.

I began teaching in 1942 in Kailua and I also taught with my mother in 1935
in Hilo.

I uniki'd w/ Bella Kaamoa. It was just a presentation. I uniki'd as a dancer
not a kumu. I studied w/ Bella for 3 years. We went to her house because
in those times there was no such thing as a hulan. Hulan was not freely
used like today. It meant a very choice group of people. A real hulan, the
students have to live w/ the kumu, eat and sleep w/ the kumu.

I believe only those people can call themselves students of a hulan.

My training was now there was no kapus.
My style is a reflection of my mother because she was so balance-conscious.
You had to paint a balanced picture on the stage. If the body went left,
your hands should be left.

I watch^{all} the dance programs on PBS and any ideas I get I put them
into my hula auwana. The heart has to be open & giving when you
dance. I was taught to stay in one place when I dance but I
like to make use of the space available.