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Beverly Healani Sun Lan Apana Muraoka

Kumu hula and founder of Healani's Hula Halau & Music Academy on Kaua'i, Beverly Muraoka has been teaching hula for over twenty years.

My father bought a fifteen dollar guitar from Sears and we all learned how to play. My mother played the 'ukulele. We played with people like Victor and Ku'ulei Punua for the Aloha Week Festivals, Uncle Joe Kahaulilio, Auntie Genoa Keawe and Uncle Benny Rogers, one of the steel guitar greats. I also played with Peter Ahia and Auntie Kealoha Kalama. Everybody expected the Apana Sisters to dance and play music.

Kuchi Kuhns was a Polynesian entertainer who came to live in Kaua'i. She asked my mother if my sister, Lovey and I could learn from her. That's why we learned hula. Otherwise we probably never would have gotten started. She taught us in the Kapa'a Latter-day Saint's gym. I was eight years old at the time.

Auntie was known for her comedy. She was a feisty hula teacher and she loved fast numbers. She taught us comical numbers. The first dances we learned were "Hula Lolo", "Tutu E", and "Princess Pūpule". We were with her from 1957 to 1961.

Auntie left Kaua'i because she wasn't feeling well. After she discontinued, we joined the Mormon choir and learned under the tutorship of Jane Kina Goo and her daughter, Inoa Marilyn Aniu. We were there from 1964 to 1981, learning hula and dancing. Through them, I learned to dance the slow dance that I'm known for. I'm not bragging, but I have been known to be the smoothest, slowest dancer.

I learned a little bit from Auntie Sally Wood Naluai. I met Auntie Sally when my sister, Lovey Apana, was attending the Church College of Hawai'i. Auntie was the Hawaiian instructor and we entertained at the Polynesian Cultural Center in the 1960's.

In the meantime, I became associated with Auntie Genoa Keawe. She gave me instructions

and corrected the way I did my 'uwehe ^{and} or ka'o.

People were asking me to teach, but I was working for the government and I couldn't do both. Also my sister, Lovey, owned a hālau and I didn't think it was right for two sisters on the same island to compete. As Lovey's illness ^{was} progressing, she asked for my assistance. When she totally left the hula, people were still bugging me to teach, so I consented. I left the government and I embraced hula.

Up to this point, having my hula girls compete and declared winners at the Merrie Monarch was my greatest accomplishment. We took Auntie Lovey's name but I was the teacher. Another accomplishment is that I have allowed handicapped children in my hālau, ~~and~~ ^{to} see them ~~be able to~~ coordinate their motions and ~~see them~~ dance gives me tremendous joy.

To me, the hula that I see today is kind of mixed up. You are not sure if the dancers are dressed anciently but dancing modern or ~~are they~~ dancing a modernized kahiko. It can be confusing. When we were growing up, we were told to use only greens. Today, you see Baby's Breath and modern flowers in their hair when they are dancing ancient.

My hālau is small with an enrollment of around eighty students. I teach at the community center in Lihue and at my home in Kapa'a. My husband helps me with the costuming and I do some of the designing. I don't sew but I have a faithful seamstress.

Besides my mother, Auntie Genoa Keawe had the greatest influence on me. When I had the privilege of playing music with her, I watched her and observed her style; one of patience, one of soft speech and concern. She has ^{not} ~~yet~~ to change. Her honesty is ⁱⁿ ~~un~~comparable. Everything she does has always been for the benefit of the person she is working with. I trust her with all my heart and I love her.

Hula has made me blossom and ~~it made me become~~ more humble. It has made me able to endure hardships.